

in The Arena, **Volume 37** 1907

EMERSON THE ANARCHIST.

By BOLTON HALL.

SAID a conservative New York paper, the *Evening Mail*, commenting on the recent arrest of eleven Anarchists at a meeting called to eulogize Czolgosz:

"The adult Anarchist is past reasoning with and past reform. He is an enemy to society, worse than the Malay who runs amuck or the rabid dog. These rage openly and indiscriminately. The anarchist aims at the best and highest only, and strikes through the agency of dupes."

They do not know, these conservatives, that America's special pride and chief treasure, in literature and ethics; the bright, particular star of conventional and academic Massachusetts, Ralph Waldo Emerson, was an Anarchist.

Emerson was a great Teacher. His writings have the peculiar property, the same property as the Hebrew Scriptures, that you can find in them almost anything. There is no slur in this statement. Much can be found in the ancient philosophies and in the Hebrew Scriptures which in Emerson's writings shines today, forever new.

We must recognize that, as Emerson himself says, it is not instruction that we can give anyone; it is only provocation; nor can we teach anything to any body that he does not know for himself. Through experience we have to learn everything. We have to learn always through some experience of our own, or of others which we have made our own. Sinton says that if we should pray for anything, it should be for more experience of whatsoever sort; for it is only through experience, the knowledge of good and evil, that we can learn, that we can appropriate to ourselves the truth.

Emerson was a teacher, not a doer; one who never professed to put into practice what he taught. You remember the story of Thoreau; when he was in jail because he would not pay his taxes, — contributing thereby to the government and to the support of its Mexican war and of slavery, — Emerson went to see him and said, looking through the bars: "What are you doing in there, Henry?" "What are you doing out there, Ralph?" said Thoreau. A serious question for all of us, but a question that did not trouble Emerson at all; he relied merely upon the idea he strove to plant. He says: "The key to every man is his thought. Sturdy and defying though he look, he has a helm which he obeys, which is the idea, after which all his facts are classified. He can only be reformed by showing him a new idea which commands his own."

I am not forgetting Emerson's influence for the emancipation of the slaves, for he helped the abolitionists in the destruction of slavery, and he set an example all the more suitable for our following because the work he had laid upon him was the same as that laid upon us, — the work of agitation. But he disapproved of heat in agitation, and never could see that the high praise of future generations will be given to many a man whom we have despised and rejected, — that has had a price upon his head.

Emerson, however, unlike Tolstoi, had a clear conception of what constitutes man. He takes pains, time and again, to show us that the nature of man is threefold and tripartite. There is the physical or material, then the spiritual, and then the mental; and no man can understand where one begins and the other ends. It is like the three joints of the finger, the physical, the spiritual and the mental; but it is more like an elephant's trunk where the root is the physical, the center is the spiritual and the tip the mental, each dependent upon the others, but with no division between them. Angels may sit in empty seats, but man must have the physical as well as the spiritual and mental, and none can divide the spiritual from the mental or even from the physical.

The stupidest book I ever read, I think, was Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. In this he gratuitously assumes that there are two separate classes of matter, organic and inorganic, and from that assumption he concludes that there is dead matter and live matter, and that in order to become live it must be kindled with fire from Heaven. He utterly fails to see and he later learned and said that he had failed to see that the crystal, the tree, and man are equally alive, that each has a definite desire and tendency, which, in spite of anything we can do, each will follow. The crystal may be broken into a hundred fragments; the oil may be scattered in a thousand drops, yet instantly every fragment and every drop asserts its peculiar nature and its will.

When you lay your razor away, the dead thing sharpens itself; its life has survived the terror of the fire, when it was first made, and the wear of the world and becomes sharp again. Why? Who knows? Perhaps because it has had its life from the beginning; the life is in it and will assert itself.

It is not only the tripartite nature, the three states of man's nature, that we learn alike out of the Hebrew Scriptures and out of Emerson. There is something yet deeper. You will find its best exposition in the two Epistles of John. "I in you and you in me, that we all may be one." That is the solution of the theory of the world. Do not fret over the troubles of others; there are no "others," and do not fret over your own, for you know you could not do without them.

You who are familiar with Tolstoi's works are struck by his deep sense of the injustice of things, by that divine compassion for those who are suffering, for those less fortunate than ourselves, and those who are different from ourselves. He is bewildered by it all, and looks for the root of evil now in money and now in mind. That is because he looks from one point only.

Emerson never made the mistake of speaking to the physical as though it were the spiritual, or of talking from the standpoint of the mental as though he were talking from the standpoint of the spiritual. He spoke always as the spiritual man and always to the spiritual man, and he saw from that standpoint.

When we have realized the universality and the unity of Spirit we have solved the problem of the universe, we have justified the ways of God to man, and we have explained the suffering and have shared in the pain and the joy of others; we have the knowledge of good and evil; that everything that happens, everything that ever did happen, happened to you and to me, for we are all the family of God, and we are One. No man lives to himself, and no one of us even dieth to himself, for we are one in our best states and in our worst. Our most self-sacrificing deed benefits others, yet returns into our bosoms increased by the work it has done, and strengthened

by the exercising. That is what Whitman meant when he said: "The gift is to the giver and comes back most to him; the theft is to the thief and comes back most to him; the song is to the singer, and comes back most to him; the love is to the lover, and comes back most to him; and no one can see or understand any goodness or any greatness except what is in himself, or the reflection of what is in himself." That is the reason that we cannot give any instruction; we can only give provocation; we can only call out in some way what the person already knows. Now that intense sense of unity is what made Emerson an anarchist. He said: "The state exists only for the education of the wise man; when the wise man appears the state is at an end." He was only a theoretic anarchist. The method adopted by the abolitionists was to mitigate the iniquity of slave laws until they could be repealed. General Grant said: "The way to repeal a bad law is to enforce it." That was the view of a mere soldier. That course results in the oppression of the weak and the escape of the strong. The best way to repeal a bad law, the hardest blow that can be struck at a legalized iniquity, is to evade it, to do as they did in the slavery days, — steal away the slaves by night; persistently to do these things which are absolutely illegal, without regard to conventional conscience or rights of property, evading iniquitous laws and thus saving our suffering brethren from their sins. It is by such evasions of the law that we have practically repealed Prohibition, and by which we are now repealing taxation of personal property and the tariff.

We need legal restrictions because we think we need them. Helen Wilmans says: "He who wears a fetter needs it, and he who bears a kick deserves it." When we learn our real interest we dispense with statutes.

But until we know and understand, we need the law. Do I have to make a law for my fingers that they may bring the food to my mouth, that my throat shall swallow it and the stomach digest it, by saying that they shall do it for the good of the rest of the members? No. Why? Because they are a part of the body and work for it instinctively, and because they and the body are one. We are one; "I and my Father are One." We and our Father are One. We used to need the law, but the law is of no further use to us, meaning by "us" the men and the women who really and truly know and love. "Between lovers there are no rights and no duties." Love is the fulfilling of the law, and therefore we see that love is all that is to be desired. If a husband and wife are one, could you imagine her saying "These are mine," or his saying that "This belongs to me"? No, it is only when they come into the divorce courts that you hear of divisions of property; it is only then that you hear of support and alimony. So long as we are one, we ask not from one another, but for ourselves and those who are with us.

We try to restrict, restrain or prohibit our every action. The life of even a little girl in the State of New York is controlled and regulated by no less than 21,260 statute laws. From the standpoint of the Spirit, Democracy is not equality but Unity. Spirit is that universal and all-pervading Force, whatever it is, that moves the universe and moves in the universe. There is one definition in the Hebrew Scriptures of Love and there is one definition of God, and the definition of God is Love, and the definition of Love is God. The two are equivalent. Now when we think of the tripartite nature, the physical or material, the spiritual or emotional, and the intellectual nature as One, we lay the foundation of universal love. St. Paul vilified the physical nature as "the flesh," because he did not see that flesh and spirit are united, — are one. These are our internal natures, but there is external nature which still conditions and to some extent controls our inner nature. You do not get up in the clouds to preach your sermons there, or sail in

the air and stay there, because you are a land animal, and the great majority of mankind live upon the earth in their whole nature. **Man is primarily a land animal and on the land, and by the land, he lives and could not live otherwise. We have great aspirations of the soul, lofty thoughts, for which our minds crave, but suppose some giant should lift us off the earth and say: "Now, what do you want, — greater spiritual insight, better education, universal suffrage, civil service reform, proportional representation?" "Yes," we would say, "all these are good, but first — that we may get back to the earth; restore us to our heritage, and let us live upon the land, and we will get these things for ourselves."** That we may have the spiritual for which we long, we must first have the physical. We must live in love and in high thought, but we must first live upon the earth and upon its products. Therefore, just as Emerson's teachings forbade chattel slavery, so our teaching and preaching of these principles must forbid monopoly of land. The common ownership of that land upon which we live is the next step toward liberty. It is not possible that free men should live together like rats in a trap, as you and I, live under conditions that force us to take each other by the throat in order to live at all. When you go to the store and get things as cheap as you can, it means that some person has not got fully paid for his labor, which means that you are getting something for which the worker did not get an equivalent; that is to say you are a gambler. I am a gambler, too, betting upon the rise in land; that is my profession. But none of us can help participating in this taking each other by the throat. You cannot do otherwise; you have to live as the world is constituted. There is no distinction of guilty and innocent; we are one flesh, and until we can change conditions that make this unnatural strife, until we restore men to their natural environment, each must prey upon his fellows. I was talking with Wanamaker's manager one evening, and he was giving us what the boys call "a song and dance" about how necessary honesty was in business, and what a great success it had been in that store. I asked him if it was honest to take goods for less than they cost, taking the cut-price out of the laborer's wages. "Well," he said, "we can't make any investigation as to the prices the laborers are paid. If we were to investigate as to trades-union wages it would upset trade completely; that is none of our business; we get the goods and sell them to our customers at fair prices, and are honest in all our dealings with them; we cannot see to it that the workers get an equivalent for their labor." So you see that in the first attempt to apply this principle of honesty he spoke of, it broke down. He believed in honesty to customers, but that is attained only by giving them the marketworth of their money in goods and getting pay for it; and this is possible under present conditions only by taking from the wages of the laborer.

It is not well that we should have thus to prey upon our fellows; that we should have a class of men like the undertaker, who looks through the list of deaths with joy, not because he is not a good man, but because he must provide for his wife and children; or the doctor who is delighted when people are ill, not because he hates them, but because he too must take care of his family. You know those words of Margaret Haile: "My babies cry for bread, for all the babies in the world are mine." And all the babies in the world are yours and mine. The babies must have a chance to live upon the earth.

"In the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth" and in the end you and I gave them to the landlord. The Hebrew Scriptures say: "Let the earth bring forth her increase abundantly to satisfy the desire of every living thing." Just think of that generosity. Are their desires satisfied? Multitudes of workers have to be contented with \$12 a month, because we and our fellows shut up the earth from which they should draw good wages. While our physical constitution demands

that all of us live upon the earth and satisfy our desires from it, we allow it to be appropriated by a few. "The earth shall bring forth abundantly" to satisfy our desires, — when we are allowed to get at it. We have permitted the shutting up of the earth so that there is not enough to go around.

We ought all to be wealthy. Suppose a man owns a factory filled with goods ready for the season's business, or a dealer has a large stock of these goods adapted to the market and ready to sell, but has not one dollar in the bank or one penny in his pocket, you would still say: "He is a comparatively wealthy man; he has a lot of goods for which there will be a demand." Now, where did he get those goods? Look at this little desk-bell. The steel, which first was iron, came out of the earth by labor. The nickel with which it is decorated was worked by the labor of men from the mine to the foundry and the machinery used there came itself by the labor of men from the earth. If you examine a piano you will find that the strings are made of copper. This came from the earth, too, by the labor of man. So did the wood and the varnish, all that goes to make it, came from the same source, the earth, by labor. Now, if we were able to get at the earth, we should be able to produce wealth in such abundance that it would not be worth our while to hoard it, and money would be so cheap that so far from refusing him who wanted to borrow, we would lend freely out of good fellowship, and if we could not get it back again, it would be easier to make more than to

exact payment from some one who did not want to pay or who could not afford to pay. The Socialists have shown that did we save only the wastes of our present "civilization" as we call it, two to four hours work per day would produce the things we now use or consume. Now, suppose in addition to this, every one of us were free from the restrictions and restraints on production made by our laws, how easy it would be to gain wealth. The vacant lots in Flatbush and Harlem, and the land lying between the City of New York and Morristown and White Plains is more than sufficient to employ all the idle labor of the town; more than sufficient to give everyone a job with wages that would make him rich. This question of land-ownership, and consequent waste-land, is a question that no one can overlook; it is the taproot of social misery.

How was it that Emerson did not carry his principles — principles that he enunciated so clearly — into land agitation? "While any man is without land my title to mine and your title to yours is vitiated," he said. Why did he not carry this to its logical results?

The question that was up for settlement was the question of chattel-slavery; there was as yet abundant land that could be had for less than it was worth; "free land," as we called it. "Uncle Sam was rich enough to give us all a farm" and the time was not yet ripe to force that question of the right of all men to the use of the earth.

That was left to you and me.

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