

*Elbert Hubbard*

# I Am an Anarkist

November, 1899

# Contents

The Better Part .....	3
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## The Better Part

I Am an Anarkist.

All good men are Anarkists.

All cultured, kindly men all gentle men; all just men are Anarkists.

Jesus was an Anarkist.

A Monarkist is one who believes a monarch should govern. A Plutokrat believes in the rule of the rich. A Demokrat holds that the majority should dictate. An Aristokrat thinks only the wise should decide; while an Anarkist does not believe in government at all.

Richard Croker is a Monarkist; Mark Hanna a Plutokrat; Cleveland a Demokrat; Cabot Lodge an Aristokrat; William Penn, Henry D. Thoreau, Bronson Alcott and Walt Whitman were Anarkists.

An Anarkist is one who minds his own business. An Anarkist does not believe in sending warships across wide oceans to kill brown men, & lay waste rice fields, and burn the homes of people who are fighting for liberty. An Anarkist does not drive women with babes at their breasts and other women with babes unborn, children and old men into the jungle to be devoured by beasts or fever or fear, or die of hunger, homeless, unhouseled and undone.

Destruction, violence, ravages, murder, are perpetrated by statute law. Without law there would be no infernal machines, no war ships, no dynamite guns, no flat nosed bullets, no pointed cartridges, no bayonets, no policemen's billies, no night sticks, no come-alongs, no hand-cuffs, no straight jackets, no dark cells, no gallows, no prison walls to conceal the infamies therein inflicted. Without law no little souls fresh from God would be branded "illegitimate", indelibly, as soon as they reach Earth. Without law there would be less liars, no lawyers, fewer hypocrites, and no Devil's Island.

"The Cry of the Little Peoples goes up to God in vain,  
For the world is given over to the cruel sons of Cain;  
The hand that would bless us is weak, the hand that would break us is strong,  
And the power of pity is nought but the power of a song.  
The dreams that our fathers dreamed to-day are laughter and dust,  
And nothing at all in the world is left for a man to trust.  
Let us hope no more, nor dream, nor profesy, nor pray,  
For the iron world no less will crash on its iron way;  
And nothing is left but to watch, with a helpless pitying eye,  
The kind old aims for the world, and the kind old fashions die."

I do not go quite so far as that — I'm a pessimistic-optimist, Dearie, — I believe that brutality tends to defeat itself. Prize fighters die young, gourmands get the gout, hate hurts worse the man who nurses it, & all selfishness robs the mind of its divine insight, and cheats the soul that would know. Mind alone is eternal! He, watching over Israel, slumbers not nor sleeps. My faith is great: out of the transient darkness of the present the shadows will flee away, and Day will yet dawn.

I am an Anarkist.

No man who believes in force & violence is an Anarkist. The true Anarkist decries all influences save those of love and reason. Ideas are his only arms.

Being an Anarkist I am also a Socialist. Socialism is the antithesis of Anarchy. One is the North Pole of Truth, the other the South. The Socialist believes in working for the good of all, while Anarchy is pure Individualism. I believe in every man working for the good of self; and in working for the good of self, he works for the good of all. To think, to see, to feel, to know; to deal justly; to bear all patiently; to act quietly; to speak cheerfully; to moderate one's voice — these things will bring you the highest good. They will bring you the love of the best, and the esteem of that Sacred Few, whose good opinion alone is worth cultivating. And further than this, it is the best way you can serve Society — live your life. The wise way to benefit humanity is to attend to your own affairs, and thus give other people an opportunity to look after theirs.

If there is any better way to teach virtue than by practicing it, I do not know it.

Would you make men better — set them an example.

The Millenium will never come until governments cease from governing, and the meddle is at rest. Politicians are men who volunteer the task of governing us, for a consideration. The political boss is intent on living off your labor. A man may seek an office in order to do away with the rascal who now occupies it, but for the most part office seekers are rank rogues. Shakespeare uses the word politician five times, and each time it is synonymous with knave. That is to say, a politician is one who sacrifices truth and honor for policy. The highest motive of his life is expediency-policy. In King Lear it is the "scurvy politician," who thru tattered clothes beholds small vices, while robes and furred gowns, for him, covers all.

Europe is divided up between eight great governments, and in time of peace over three million men are taken from the ranks of industry and are under arms, not to protect the people but to protect one government from another. Mankind is governed by the worst — the strongest example of this is to be seen in American municipalities, but it is true of every government.

We are governed by rogues who hold their grip upon us by & thru statute law. Were it not for law the people could protect themselves against these thieves, but now we are powerless and are robbed legally.

One mild form of coercion these rogues resort to is to call us unpatriotic when we speak the truth about them. Not long ago they would have cut off our heads. The world moves.

Governments cannot be done away with instantaneously, but progress will come, as it has in the past by lessening the number of laws. We want less governing, and the Ideal Government will arrive when there is no government at all. So long as governments set the example of killing their enemies, private individuals will occasionally kill theirs.

So long as men are clubbed, robbed, imprisoned, disgraced, hanged by the governing class, just so long will the idea of violence and brutality be born in the souls of men.

Governments imprison men, and then hound them when they are released.

Hate springs eternal in the human breast.

And hate will never die so long as men are taken from useful production on the specious plea of patriotism, and bayonets gleam in God's pure sunshine. And the worst part about making a soldier of a man is, not that the soldier kills brown men or black men or white men, but it is that the soldier loses his own soul.

I am an Anarkist.

I do not believe in bolts or bars or brutality. I make my appeal to the Divinity in men, and they, in some mysterious way, feeling this, do not fail me.

I send valuable books, without question, on a postal card request, to every part of the Earth where the mail can carry them, and my confidence is never abused. The Roycroft Shop is never lockt, employees and visitors come and go at pleasure, and nothing is molested. My library is for anyone who cares to use it.

Out in the great world women occasionally walk off the dock in the darkness, and then struggle for life in the deep waters. Society jigs and ambles by, with a coil of rope, but before throwing it, demands of the drowning one a certificate of karacter from her Pastor, or a letter of recommendation from her Sunday School Superintendent, or a testimonial from a School Principal. Not being able to produce the document the struggler is left to go down to her death in the darkness.

A so-called "bad woman" is usually one whose soul is being rent in an awful travail of prayer to God that she may get back upon solid footing and lead an honest life. Believing this, the Roycroft principle is to never ask for such a preposterous thing as a letter of recommendation from anyone. We have a hundred helpers, and while it must not be imagined by any means that we operate a reform school or a charitable institution, I wish to say that I distinctly and positively refuse to

discriminate between “good” and “bad” people. I will not condemn, nor for an instant imagine that it is my duty to resolve myself into a section of the Day of Judgment.

I fix my thought on the good that is in every soul and make my appeal to that. And the plan is a wise one, judged by results. It secures you loyal helpers, worthy friends, gets the work done, aids digestion & tends to sleep o’ nights. And I say to you, that if you have never known the love, loyalty & integrity of a proscribed person, you have never known what love, loyalty and integrity are.

I do not believe in governing by force, or threat, or any other form of coercion. I would not arouse in the heart of any of God’s creatures a thought of fear, or discord, or hate, or revenge. I will influence men, if I can, but it shall be only by aiding them to think for themselves; and so mayhap, they, of their own accord will choose the better part — the ways that lead to life and light.

— Fra Elbertus.

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