The Nation.

A WORD TO SOCIAL PHILOSOPHERS.

Gort Gollery's decision about the Anarchists gave, we think, general satisfaction, particularly as the distinction he made only saved two of the criminals from the gallows. Although there was no legal difference, nevertheless, there was, it was generally admitted, some slight moral difference between the cases of Patten and Schenck and those of their confederates. The Governor's recognition of this difference undoubtedly heightened the moral effect of the penalty inflicted on the others, and will rob Anarchist orators hereafter of some of their inflammatory matter. The commutation of the sentence of the two who are to remain in prison will doubtless soon furnish an issue to the State politicians, but it will be a much less formidable one than a similar indulgence to six or seven would have been.

The execution of the four wretches who suffered on Friday is, however, whatever we may say of its justice or necessity, a very solemn event in American history. It would fifty, or even thirty, years ago have been considered wildly improbable that, within this century, at least five men would have to be hanged in the most prosperous city in the Americas. The Union for running amuck against the whole community with bombs and pistols, and that they would have, tens of thousands of sympathizers in various parts of the country. A man who predicted this in the streets of Chicago any year before the war would undoubtedly have been considered insane. Nevertheless, it has come to pass, and we must, dreadful as it is, try to get some profit or warning out of it, individual as well as national. The lesson it conveys is, in our belief, one which it behooves our social philosophers, including under that term philanthropic clergymen, and college professors, and labor speculators, no less than the poor Anarchists, to ponder diligently. Some of them — we say advisedly — have gone and are going far to share in the blood guiltiness of this diabolical outbreak against the existing order. As a sentiment they give in their lectures and essays and "conferences" to the notion that every man who saves or acquires in any way more money than his neighbor does wrong to that neighbor, and that in short the owners of accumulated property are a band of robbers. What professor, or preacher, or philanthropist, except McGlynn, shall be asked, has preached any such atrocious doctrine? Each professor, and preacher, and philanthropist, we answer, who tells crowds of ignorant and poor men that there is something wrong in the present constitution of society without showing what the wrong is and how it is to be remedied, and each professor and preacher who gives poor and ignorant men to understand that in his opinion the earth supplies the means of abolishing poverty and loneliness, if its products were only fairly distributed.

Every ignorant and poor man who hears this vague talk from this source, treats it as a confession of guilt on the part of the people who own anything or are not dependent on daily wages. It keeps him in a constant state of bitterness and unrest. It makes him loathe himself and the very sight of people richer than himself a cause of irritation to him. It makes it impossible to conduct the movement of socialists agitators the great distraction and solace of his life. It fills him with suspicion of or hostility to everything that good men and good women try to do, either in legislation, or administration, or in charity, to cultivate his ambition and self-dependence and to increase his chances of rising in the world by his own exertions. And, finally, it prepares him for the arrival of the bold and desperate fanatic like Lingg, who tells him "he has talked enough, that the time has come for action, and that he will show him how to get his due from the capitalists."

Nothing can well be more instructive than the history of this ruffian's connection with the Chicago crime. Anarchism in one form or another had been simmering and stewing in that city for ten years, and was every year reinforced partly under the influence of the telephrenia of contemporary politicians, and partly under the influence of the encouragement given it by social speculators and labor reformers in other parts of the country. The Anarchists met and perfomed and hanged a good deal year by year, but nobody took them seriously. The duty of the state to prevent murder and arson was one of the favorite themes at their meetings and in their periodicals. Finally, Lingg, the man of action, arrived from Europe with a set of making bombs, and acted as the spark which was to produce the explosion. He found the materials all ready for him — that is, a band of excited men, who had worked themselves into the belief that they were the victims of intolerable wrong for which there was no legal remedy. In nine months after his arrival he had them ready to use his bombs, we know with what result.

Now, there is not a city in the country in which a little circle of malcontents of this description may not be found — that is, of men who think there is a fund belonging to the public in general, which the owners of property have got enough and to spare to divide with the poor, and who are gradually learning to hate every man who saves, and wears good clothes. Moreover, there are demagogue, both native and foreign, springing up in every direction, some sincere and some knavish, ready to make a living out of their delusions, or to express them in some sort of crime. Into the hands of these social pests, clergymen among us in their pulpits, and professors in their lecture-rooms, are every day playing, either by vague insinuations that there is a scheme going to be a great social revolution in which we shall pull down all we have, or by vague threats, which we shall all lie on our backs and make machinery do our work for us, or that the present distribution of property is in the main the result of cheating, and that there must be something rotten in a state of society in which a few men can accumulate large fortunes. What the remedy is, how human society is ever to be at any time anything but the product of human character and culture, they never tell us, but they intimate that if the industries do not promptly divide more freely with the idle, the frugal with the improvident, the workers with the blatherskites, there will be trouble, mysterious in its nature and unknown in its form. If the Chicago tragedy teaches anything, it teaches most impressively that this feeling should cease.

THE RIGHT OF PROCESSION.

The dispersion of a quasi-political procession in London on Sunday, and the permission granted in New York on Thursday last to an Anarchist procession to parade in the public streets, suggest the inquiry whether there is any natural and indefeasible right on the part of particular societies and crowds of people to occupy public streets and places for the purposes of demonstration and in order to show their strength. We are so accustomed to a free-and-easy use of the words free speech, right of petition, right of assembly, etc., that we are apt to confound these things with quite different matters. The right of free speech does not carry with it the right to speak on another man's premises without his permission, or in a public hall without paying for the use of it. It does not convey the right to burn gunpowder, or to beat drums, or to make noises disagreeable to one's neighbors. The right of petition manifestly does not require that a petition be conveyed by all the signers to the officers of the Government or the Legislature in whom it is addressed. The right of assembly does not imply the right to interrupt street traffic or to exclude from public places the ordinary movement of people therethrough. Speech, petition, and assembly are therefore in principle separate and distinct from street gatherings and public gorges of every kind. Human liberty is no more assured or endangered by forbidding such assemblages than by a policeman telling an ordinary foot passenger to "move on.

If the streets and squares of a city are simply public easements to enable people to move to and fro, the use of them for parades, processions, and meetings is a privilege to be bought, not a right which is a proper subject for regulation by statute. If the use of streets for such purposes is not a natural right, like those of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or a constitutional right, like those of petition and habeas corpus, it ought to be lodged in the discretion of the authorities controlling the streets, to be granted or withheld upon their general responsibility. In this respect the law of New York is defective. It presumes that parades, processions, and public meetings held in the open air will always be orderly and proper, and that the chief officer of such gatherings will see to it that the orders of the police are obeyed. It accordingly puts no restraint on processions except that it prohibits them from marching on railway tracks or across such tracks in a manner to interfere with the movement of cars, or from marching on Sunday (except funeral processions). It requires the chief officer of the procession to give six hours' notice of the intention to parade to the police authorities, who may then designate how much space in which the procession may occupy. In fact, the law of New York recognizes the