

Shoes, Pigs and Problems

By EVELYN GLADYS

Pocket Library of Socialism

No. 58



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Thoughts of a Fool. By Evelyn Gladys. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company. Cloth, \$1.00

All books fall naturally into three classes. There are the books which we do not want, the books which we borrow, and the books which we prefer to own. Of the first class nothing need be said. The second comprises that vast mass of literature which one easily assimilates at a first reading. The third consists of those books to which one returns, again and again, and always with renewed delight.

The collection of miniature essays recently published under the title, "Thoughts of a Fool," belongs to this last named class. It is a series of reflections on life's problems, discursive, as thought is discursive, effervescent with wit, often pregnant with profound philosophy. The author imagines that she is not a socialist. There is a passage in which she sets up a straw man, called socialism, and causes it to cut but a sorry figure. Eliminate this passage, however, and you have the most brilliant defense of the ideals of the co-operative commonwealth which American literature contains. After reading the earlier chapters of the book one is tempted to exclaim—"at last the radicalism of the new world has found its satirist." After reading the concluding chapters one questions—"is this, indeed, the work of one person?"

For the mood of the writer suddenly changes. Satire is replaced by allegory, and one misses the originality which distinguishes the introductory essays. Still you lay down the volume with the devout wish that our republic may give birth to many more such fools.

LILIAN HILLER UDELL.

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SHOES, PIGS, AND PROBLEMS.

While trying on shoes at a shop one morning I was meditating on the nature of problems, and why it was that I had none to solve, and was not even sure that I would recognize one should I encounter it in my rambles. Presently I heard myself asking, "What is a problem?" and the clerk, probably thinking that the question had been addressed to him, replied:

"A problem, miss, is to get a number six foot in a number three shoe. The way I've seen it solved seems satisfactory. The last place I worked we used to mark down shoes on bargain Fridays. I was new at the place when I learned about problems. I asked the manager one Thursday night how much to mark down our neat six-dollar gaiters. The manager instructed me to put up a sign, 'Shoes marked down one-half.' Then he directed me to mark down the size accordingly, and not bother about the price at all."

"We don't do such things in this house," he went on to state, seeing that I was more interested in problems at the moment than in footgear, "but at that place we used to tell our customer we were not sure that we had anything in stock quite small enough to fit her, unless perhaps a couple of pairs we happen to have in stock that were ordered especially for Cinderella (but proved, a trifle snug) might serve. We rarely failed to solve the problem that way."

While I was down at the farm, I heard a great commotion in the direction of the sty one morning. Investigation showed that two fat pigs were lying in the trough, and the remainder of the drove were exclaiming against

that bit of pre-emption with more vehemence than euphony.

I asked the assembled disputants the cause of the uproar, and was given to understand that they were discussing the problems of life. I asked them what were the problems of life, and they said that the pigs on the outside wanted to set on the inside. I asked why they did not let them in, and a great big fat hog said:

“We have natural rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”; and all pigdom squealed:

“We have natural rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

“And the object of life is not swill,” said the hog on the inside.

“And the object of life is not swill,” responded the pigs on the outside.

“We have a right to free assembly and free grunts,” said the hog on the inside.

“We have a right to free assembly and free grunts,” they all grunted.

“We must restrain our piggish nature,” he said.

“We must restrain our piggish nature,” the echo replied.

And the pigs on the outside were on the outside, and the pigs on the inside were on the inside.

My intention was to write a chapter on the Philosophy of Pigville. You see we have books on almost everything except the pig. Our younger brother is being awfully neglected, though there is much to say and write on pigs. Carlyle says they are so human. Yet there are some points of difference between the swine and the human species. I have seen “gentlemen” who were said to be “as drunk as a

hog," but I have never seen a pig as "drunk as a gentleman."

On the surface it appears that all you can say about pigs is swill, but swill is only a small part. There is the religion of the pigs; the political economy of the hog; there is the educated pig—he must not be neglected; then there is a pig morality—why should not our dear little brother have a morality? I studied them closely and discovered that they have no monogamastic marriages, and I asked them why they practiced polygamy. The reply was that to do otherwise would interfere with the stock market, and anything that interferes with the stock market is a crime. The same old sow suggested that I should solve their economic problems. So I called them together and said to them:

"You are pigs, and have pig natures; it is a mistake for you to restrain your pig nature. You really never do it, but only make a piggish bluff at repression, which reduces the volume of your lard and the delicacy of flavor of your hams. Being pigs you should be candid in your lives. Your natures demand that you root, feed, love, serve and reproduce your kind, and that you offer your bodies a smoked, salt, or sugarcured sacrifice to man, which is your reasonable service and in consonance with pig destiny. This talk about restraining your piggish natures is all squeal, and there is neither coherence nor music in it. You'll find no peace in resistance, rights, or repression. Be good."

There was an educated pig in the assembly, and he took issue with me. "There are certain natural rights," he proclaimed, "and it is a mistake to declare that we should not restrain the other pigs from invading the natural rights of pigs. We deny that any one has the right to deprive us of our happiness. And my solution

of this problem is that the pigs in the trough, while they have a perfect right to be there, should submit to a system of taxation whereby their occupancy will tend to the benefit of the whole drove."

I never cared for educated pigs, and of all educated pigs I deem the single-tax variety the least attractive. However, his contention being based on the wisdom of natural rights, his pig philosophy is of a piece with that of his human confrere.

Then I went to an entertainment and there saw a problem solved. The performer had on a table before him two hats. Into one he dropped a little ball.

"With your kind permission, ladies and gentlemen, one and all," he pattered, "I will now, by the mere waving of this magic wand, cause the little ball to pass from the hat into which you saw me deposit it, into the other * * * So, now it has passed through the substantial material of both hats without in anywise injuring the fabric of either. But that is not the most wonderful feature of this act. Observe me now, as I cause the little ball to return to the hat into which you saw me place it. By the mere utterance of a magic formula, accompanied with the proper manipulation of my all-powerful wand, I command the little ball to get back to the first hat, and * * * here, ladies and gentlemen, it is; and you will observe as I pass the hats around among the audience that they have not been injured by the passage of the balls." Everybody applauded. I have a strong suspicion that the ball never left the hat, but should I see things like the wise do I would be no fool.

I came very near solving a problem once by guessing the solution. My guess was right, but the problem turned out to be no problem at all,

else my guess would have proved futile. The problem was stated in these terms: Given a tub full to the brim with water, and another tub full of live fish, how comes it that one may drop all the fish, one by one, into the tub of water, without causing the water to overflow?

My guess was that it was a lie.

I think that there are many problems just like that one. Perhaps they are all that way.

I rather suspect that one of the chiefest problems of life is of that same fishy flavor. The problem is: Given a God that is All in All, and humanity that has only what God grants. How comes it that God gives his creatures desires which he expects them to suppress?

My guess is that the premises contain a lie.

You are entitled to a guess in your turn. If you get more comfort from your guess than I get from mine you must have a wonderful capacity for comfort, and in that case I may be justified in the assumption that you are a greater (because happier) fool than I.

The religious problem, as I have been told by those in the business, is how to save man. Human beings, to all appearance, seem to be well content and loving, but they say they are not. They have information from somewhere—I know not where—that man is lost; and the problem is how to save him.

After looking carefully at the problems which people are trying to solve, I find that a problem is to do things in an "undoable way."

The social problem that worries our wise men a great deal I have heard discussed a number of times and various remedies suggested. I once heard a lecture by a wise man and the problem of peace was his subject; and the trend of his conversation was that, by having arbitration

instead of war, we will have peace in society, and the problem of life will then be solved.

Nature has ordained that if you do not comply with her rules that that particular member of your physical body which violates the law suffers. When that member escapes punishment another organ or member suffers. When a man overloads his stomach with liquor, headache follows. It is identical in the social world. The disregarding of natures' rules brings pain in the physical body, or discord in the social organism, and that pain or discord is not a punishment but a warning. To live in harmony and peace is nature obeyed. All our troubles come from the unnatural isms and wasisms which create problems. Nature is broad and great and openhanded. It is the broad, big, untrammelled highway. And because the wasisms and isms are forever crowding us in the narrow little alley, men find no room; consequently, we are constantly falling over one another, and the result is discord and pain. To keep us in this narrow alley and maintain peace is the problem, and the suggestion of the wise man is, "The way to have peace is to have peace, and that is by arbitration to make one or the other of the parties in dispute shut up, and thereby not annoy the rest."

It seems to me that all problems are about like this: How can I pinch the cat's tail and escape the scratches that are the penalty for squeezing cats' tails? The only way that could be done would be for the cat to take a non-resistant attitude, and if the cat could do that (which by the way is not cat nature) you could not then pinch its tail.

It seems to me that you cannot have peace by force. You can only have peace when you remove the inharmonious cause, otherwise it will

only prevent discord from expressing itself. When my child is crying because of a toothache, it is no remedy for me to tell it to shut up because the noise annoys me. Suppose she complies with my request (arbitration having been applied to prevent the expression of discord) would that stop the toothache? Would you get peace by stopping the expression of discord? It seems to me if there is anything wrong in the physical or social world it would be better to remove the cause, and until the cause is removed, let us have as much discord as possible. If your home is on fire, you want a 4:11 alarm to wake up the household; and you are willing that the din and clamor of the alarm should continue until the wake-up process is complete. The way to remove the cause is to understand that nature has not given man desires to suppress them. It is not in prevailing upon man to do things he does not like to do, or restraining him from things he does like to do that will give us peace.

However, the wise ones are not satisfied to have things natural. That would be too easy; and therefore they must have problems which can never be solved. I have no problems and no philosophy of Life to bother me,—I just live. This conglomeration, the I, with feelings, emotions, thoughts, pleasures, ambitions, is a wonderful communistic society of organs harmoniously co-operating with no dictatorship—an anarchistic dream—each performing for the good of the whole. They have no wish, no desire, save the desire of the whole. When I walk on the street my eyes pick out nice clean spots for my feet to step on; when it would please my stomach to churn some good fruit, my eyes carefully select, my arms reach out, and my hands pluck the fruit. There is no jealousy, no bicker-

ing. In case of an accident to one member, all the others rush to assist it. This morning I thought I felt a commotion in myself. Investigation proved that different members of my body were each claiming recognition. The eyes claimed that if it would not be for them the other members could not see a thing and would be helpless; therefore they ought to have all the glory. The ears said without them you could not hear. The legs said if they refuse to take me from place to place I would be in a bad fix. The stomach said that it grinds all the food for the nourishment. Sex claimed that it is the real thing, for it is impossible for any other member to have existence except by its action. And so on every member set up its claim. Before I had time to straighten things out for them I slipped on a banana peel and then I saw that it was only imagination, for up went my hands, my body, and all to regain my equilibrium. No one member can have any pleasure without sharing in company with all. In milk there is cream, sour milk, and water. In cream there is butter and buttermilk. In sour milk there is cheese and water. Can you tell me which drop of it when it comes from the cow is cream, which is water, and which is cheese? Each part, each drop of milk, contains all. There is a stomach, a liver, and all organs of my being in my eye, and still they are eyes. More than that, everything in this universe is in the I—trees, cows, fishes, the sun, the sunshine, the rain and wind, the moon and the stars are in the I. I am the universe, and I in turn am in the trees, in the cow, and in the sun, being all that I am in the eye. I have eyes and they see certain things which it pleases me for them to see, and I see that they see. I have ears and they hear. Certain sounds give me pleasure, and

I seek them, and shun those which give me pain. I have a sense of touch—I feel with my hands and my body. There are certain things it pleases me to touch and I touch them; and the touch of others being repulsive, I avoid them. All members work in harmony without any philosophy. My stomach (I used to have two) is always at work, and when it is empty it sets up a clamor; so it gives me pleasure to have my stomach filled, and neither myself nor my stomach care whether we conflict with the rights and the wrongs of society so long as we get our stomach filled. I am very careful of my stomach. I have it surrounded by a wall. My principal organ, sex, is the most delicate of me! It is protected by a pair of hips, that no harm may come to it. I am very careful of my eyes, and let down the lids and cover them when they are not in use or are in danger. I am very careful of my ears, and they are protected by frames. I have a brain that does the thinking, and I have a hard skull to protect it—its private office.

Is it any wonder that we poor fools, we happy fools, laugh at you wise, whose wisdom undertakes to establish peace by force?

A fool will tell you wise ones that the only way to establish and maintain peace is to remove the inharmonious conditions that disturb peace. You have crowded us off nature's broad highway, and you punish us for climbing your silly fences, and even for laughing at your flimsy barriers. Whenever we think it worth while we'll ignore your imaginary fences and enjoy our inheritance to the earth unobstructed and unafraid.

Then, ye wise ones, "What are you going to do about it?"

It seems to me that the real problems of the wisest are still before them.

"Thoughts of a Fool."

"Shoes, Pigs and Problems" is one of twenty-five essays issued in a volume by Evelyn Gladys, under the title "Thoughts of a Fool." On the second page of this booklet will be found a discriminating review of the book by Mrs. Udell, a socialist party member in whose literary judgment I have a good deal of confidence.

The question has been asked several times, and will probably be asked many more times, why our socialist co-operative publishing house should promote the circulation of a book which contains a few shallow criticisms of socialism. I think Mrs. Udell's review gives a pretty satisfactory answer, but it may be worth while to publish here the correspondence which I had with the author on this very point, before I entered into a contract for the publication of the book. Here it is:

Chicago, Aug. 25, 1905.

Evelyn Gladys, Chicago.

Dear Comrade—I like your "Thoughts of a Fool" and want others to like them. But I am sorry for one passage where I am sure you have made a mistake, and I want you to help me prevent others from making the same mistake.

I refer to the passage on page 223, where you say, "The triumph of socialism would centralize it" (wealth) and where you go on to imply that the international socialists of the world are seeking to establish centralized authority over people. Now for this misconception and mistake I do not in the least blame you; I blame the crudeness of our American propaganda in the past. But I want to tell you that the essential program of the social democracy of America and

of every other civilized country is to do away with the coercion of persons, to confine the activities of the state to providing for the necessities of its members co-operatively, and furthermore to decentralize the control of industry to the greatest possible extent, which would be to an extent far greater than is possible under capitalism.

In other words, the organized socialists of the world want what you want; we are in a fair way of getting it, and we should welcome your help. Are you with us?

Yours fraternally,

CHARLES H. KERR.

Chicago, Aug. 29, 1905.

Comrade Kerr: How lovely it would be if I were the definition-maker. Then I should have selected all the beautiful words for my ideas. But as it is, I must take the words which have not been monopolized by the wise people. Socialism as defined by William Morris, George D. Herron, Simons and yourself is exactly my ideal. But I know from experience that ninety-nine per cent of the socialists that are paying dues are under the impression that a socialist movement is only a bread movement. Now I believe that the struggle for existence is only the stepping stone to a greater ideal, and that is the democratization of art. Therefore I can not according to their conception call myself a socialist. Admitting their right to the word I should have to call myself a socialist *plus*.

To define my idea in just as few words as possible, I should like to see a condition of society where every child in it would have the opportunity to develop himself in all his faculties without any interference or restraint whatever. That is what I should like to call social-

ism, but I do not care to fight for a tag. However, I shall devote all my energies to obtaining the thing I want, tag or no tag.

EVELYN GLADYS.

I think every well-informed socialist who reads this letter and Evelyn Gladys's book will readily see that she has simply been misled by the persistent misrepresentations of capitalist writers, with the aid of a few ill-informed socialists, until she imagines that the program of international socialism is to set up a tyranny over the private actions of people. On the contrary, this tyranny, which is exercised by the capitalist governments of America and every other civilized country today, is of use simply to keep the laborers under the control of the capitalist. When we have abolished the capitalists, the whole machinery for making people "good" by means of judges and policemen will at once become superfluous and obsolete. Normal people will then be "good" to each other because it will give them pleasure to do so, and abnormal people will soon find by experience that they can get along more comfortably by doing as the rest do. Besides, they will not live always, and the new generation will be growing up under normal instead of abnormal conditions.

As Evelyn Gladys is not a party member herself, I think we must put a grain of salt with her remark about the views of ninety-nine per cent of our party members. I think thirty-nine per cent would be nearer the truth. But even so, what of it? Simply this, that as long as people are deprived of securing possession of the food, clothing and shelter that they need for themselves and their children, so long their minds will be mainly taken up with these material things, otherwise they would die off. The

democratization of art is a fine thing for people that have plenty to eat, and such people will get it too, but it is distinctly irrational to look for an appreciation of art from those who are uncertain about tomorrow's dinner.

Meanwhile I want to say that in my opinion Evelyn Gladys, in spite of this little misconception of hers, has stated in her book, more attractively than any other writer thus far, some of the most fundamental ideas held by the socialists of the world. She has written in a way that makes reading easy, she has shown how deliciously absurd our capitalistic society with its capitalistic ethics really is, and one who has read her book will be eager to know more about socialism.

So I have no apology to offer for including "Thoughts of a Fool" in our list of publications. And in closing I want to add a word regarding the mechanical features of the book, and the favorable arrangement I have succeeded in making for our stockholders. The book was exquisitely printed and bound at an establishment which we have found too high-priced to patronize. It was designed for putting on the market to sell for \$1.50, and mechanically it compares well with any of the books sold at the stores at that figure. The original publishers found, however, that the book could not be sold through capitalist channels. They have therefore given us an option on the entire edition at 4,000 copies at a figure which enables us to retail it at \$1.00 with our usual terms to stockholders, while in the event of the sale exceeding 4,000 we have an option on a second edition at a figure which will give a handsome profit to be used in bringing out more socialist books.

CHARLES H. KERR.

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