

**LOOKING FURTHER FORWARD
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AN ANSWER TO
LOOKING BACKWARD
BY
EDWARD BELLAMY**

PREFACE.

Every seeker after truth and reform is entitled to recognition, even if his ways and methods are not ours. Mr. Edward Bellamy's book: "Looking Backward", is an effort to improve the lot of mankind and therefore commendable, but his reform proposition, stripped of its fine coloring, is nothing but communism, a state of society, which has proved a failure whenever established without a religious basis and which without such basis is en vogue today only among some barbarous and cannibal tribes.

Chicago has for the last fourteen years been the centre of the communistic and anarchistic agitation in the United States, and in defending the fundamental principles of American institutions against these theories, that were imported from the overcrowded

industrial centres of Europe, I became quite familiar with them as well as with the notions and peculiarities of social reformers, who imagine themselves in possession of an infallible receipt to perfect not only all human institutions but also human nature.

Of course Mr. Bellamy holds more moderate views than those Spies and Parsons proclaimed, but he has this much in common with the Anarchists and Communists of Chicago: he has become incapable of passing a fair judgement upon our present institutions, conditions and men; he overlooks all difficulties in the introduction of his proposed changes, he really believes his socialistic air-castles must spring into existence very soon and without obstruction, and he populates his fairy palaces with angelic human beings, who would never by any possibility do anything wrong. The surmise, that men and women in a communistic state, would put off all selfishness, envy, hate, jealousy, wrangling and desire to rule is just as reasonable as the supposition, that a man can sleep one hundred and thirteen years and rise thereafter as young and fresh as he went to bed.

What queer methods reformers sometimes advocate! John Most would in the name of equal rights to all, first kill all men who are not in absolute sympathy with his opinions, then abolish all laws and all officers, and then let nature take its course.-Mr. Bellamy on the other hand would, also in the name of

equal rights, deprive all the clever and industrious workers of a large or the largest part of the products of their labor for the benefit of their awkward, stupid or lazy comrades! And this would be what Mr. Bellamy is pleased to style justice and equality!

And for the purpose of reaching this state of mock-equality, Mr. Bellamy would as a matter of course have to *sacrifice competition*, the gigantic power that elevated us all and Mr. Bellamy with us to the present state of evolution! It is true that competition has been and is now abused, but every institution is subject to abuse and the misuse of a thing does not demonstrate that the thing in itself is wrong. Nobody can deny that competition during the centuries of Christian civilization has developed the brains and muscles of the human race and that the continuous best efforts of humanity, stimulated by competition during these many centuries, have lifted our race to a standard where the mode of living of common laborers is more comfortable and desirable than the everyday existence of the Kings of which Homer sings.

Every generation has to battle with certain problems, and it is the lot of ours to overcome the difficulties between capital and labor, that have been increased by the change in the methods of production since the discovery of steam power.

We have to find ways and means not to avoid productive *work* (-spoken of by Mr. Bellamy as an

evil -), but to cure the brain cancer of our days: the permanent uncertainty of subsistence and the fear of poverty. And we accomplish this by co-operation and by mutual insurance companies, without retrograding to communism, that most barbarous state of society.

The imperfect nature of man characterizes, as a matter of course, all human institutions and it is the easiest thing in the world, by "*looking backward*", to find fault with living men as well as with the present state of affairs and to build air castles inhabited by angels only.

I will now *look forward* ! By demonstrating what would be the logical conclusion of Mr. Bellamy's story, if fairly continued, I purpose to show that he first tries to establish absolute equality and then, despairing of success, advocates an inequality in many respects more oppressive than the present state of things. I intend to demonstrate, that under the regime, proposed by Mr. Bellamy, favoritism and corruption would be very potent factors in public life. I expect to set forth that personal liberty would fare so badly in Mr. Bellamy's United States, that the proud and independent American people would never tolerate such a system, and to prove beyond a reasonable doubt, that the people would be much poorer in Mr. Bellamy's condition of affairs, than at the present time.

I do not deny that our society stands in need of many desirable reforms; but I am not prepared to

follow blindly Mr. Bellamy, John Most, or anybody else, who pretends that he is ready to deliver humanity from all evils on short notice, and I do not intend to jump head over heels into the dark.

If Mr. Bellamy and his followers are quite sure that they can establish the millennium, *let them try it*, like the communists of the Amana Society who have started a community in the state of Iowa on a religious basis. There are many thousands of acres of good government lands left, where Mr. Bellamy and his friends may settle and show the world what they can do! But they should not ask the people of the United States to break up their present form of government and state of society, before they have given their theories a trial and proved that their calculations are correct.

Richard Michaelis.

Chicago, April 1890.

CHAPTER I.

For the purpose of introducing myself to those readers of this book, who are not familiar with the contents of "Looking Backward", edited by Mr. Edward Bellamy, I will recapitulate the remarkable

events of my life up to the end of that extraordinary narrative.

Born in Boston on the 26th day of December 1857, I was baptized Julian West, was educated in the schools and colleges of my city, but, being in possession of a handsome fortune, did not devote myself to any particular profession or trade. I became engaged to Miss Edith Bartlett, a young lady of great beauty, and it was our intention to marry as soon as my new house should be ready for occupation. The completion of the building was frequently delayed by strikes of masons and carpenters, and I occupied still the old fashioned house, where my family had lived for three generations.

Suffering from insomnia, I had prepared in the basement and under the foundations of the old building, a large vault, where the noises of a great city would not disturb me. This vault was absolutely fire-proof, and fresh air was assured by means of a small pipe running up to the roof of the house.

To obtain sleep I was frequently forced to avail myself of the services of a mesmerist, and it happened that on the 30th day of May 1887, after two sleepless nights, I sent my colored servant Sawyer to a Dr. Pillsbury, whom I was in the habit of employing. The doctor was about to leave the city to establish himself in New Orleans, and this was therefore the last time he would be able to treat me. I instructed Sawyer to rouse

me at nine o'clock the next morning, and under the manipulations of the mesmerist I soon fell into a deep slumber.

When I opened my eyes again I found that I had slept 113 years, 3 months, and 11 days.

I discovered that the old house had been destroyed by fire and that Sawyer had perished in the flames. Dr. Pillsbury had left Boston, the existence of the vault where I slept was unknown to my friends, the house had not been rebuilt and so I remained in a mesmerized condition for over a hundred years, until a Dr. Leete, the occupant of a house which was being erected on a part of the old lot, commenced to build a laboratory and unearthed my vault in the year 2000.

I learned that Edith Bartlett, after mourning my loss fourteen years, had married, that Dr. Leete's wife was Edith Bartlett's granddaughter, and that his daughter Edith was therefore the great-granddaughter of the young lady who had been my promised bride 113 years before.

The vigor of my manhood of thirty years overcame the shock of these discoveries. I soon felt myself at home in Dr. Leete's house, the more so, because young Edith soon occupied the place in my heart once filled by Edith Bartlett, and it was not long before Edith Leete, a somewhat romantic, compassionate girl, consented with grace to become the successor of her great-grandmother; to be my bride.

But the turn of my own fate is even less remarkable, than the change that has taken place in the social order of things. Dr. Leete explained to me the new organization of society.

Individual enterprises have ended. The nation creates everything that individuals and corporations were producing at the end of the nineteenth century. Every able bodied man, every healthy woman belongs to the "industrial army". They enter the force at the age of 21 and are released at 45. Only in rare cases of necessity are men over 45 years of age summoned to work.

Money is abolished, but all inhabitants of the United States receive an equal share of the results of the work of the industrial army in the form of a credit card, a piece of paste board on which dollars and cents are marked. There is one store in each ward where people can select such goods as they may desire. The value of the goods, one purchases, is pricked out of his credit card and his account is charged in the Government books with the amount of goods so purchased.

The meals are furnished by large cooking houses. Washing and repairing are done in large laundries. One may take his meals home or eat them at the cooking house. The bill of fare is very elaborate and one may have even a special dining room. The amount to be paid for the meals differs of course according to the bill of fare ordered and to the place where the meal is taken.

Each family occupies a separate house; the furniture being the property of the tenant. The rent, which depends on the size of the house, is also pricked out of the credit card.

All inhabitants of the United States are obliged to attend school until they have reached the age of 21. Then they become members of the industrial army. During the first three years of their services they are called recruits or apprentices and have to do the common labor under the absolute command of the officers or overseers. A *record* is kept, in which are entered the ability and behavior of each recruit.

After the first three years of service, each recruit may select a profession or a trade. As far as possible the volunteers are placed in the trades they prefer. Recruits with the best records are given the first choice. Some of them have to take a second or third choice, and some are obliged to accept positions assigned to them by their superiors.

All members of the army are, according to their ability and behavior, divided into three grades, and apprentices with a first-class record may, after their three years service, enter at once the first grades of the different trades selected by them.

The general of the guild appoints all the officers of his trade. The lieutenants must be taken from the members of the first grades. The captains are chosen by the general from the lieutenants, the colonels from the

captains. The general of the guild himself is elected by the former members of the trade, that is, those who have passed the age of forty-five. The ex-members of all the guilds also elect the chiefs of the ten great departments or groups of allied trades. The chiefs are taken from the generals of the guilds. And the former guild members also elect the President of the United States, who is taken from the ranks of the retired chiefs of the ten great departments. The President, the ten chiefs of the great departments and the generals of all the guilds live in Washington.

The members of the industrial army have not the right to vote for any of the officers by whom they are governed. They have no representation during their 24 years of service; but if they have a complaint against one of their superiors, they may bring their case before a judge whose decision is final.

The judges are appointed by the President from the ranks of the retired members of the guild for the term of five years.

Courts, lawyers, jails, sheriffs, tax-assessors, collectors and many other officers have been abolished. Criminals are treated in hospitals as persons mentally ill.

The National Government regulates the production. When it sees that certain trades attract a very large number of volunteers, while other trades fall short, the administration increases the working time of

the preferred trades and shortens the working hours of those needing more volunteers.

The women have their own officers, generals, judges, and form an auxiliary army of industry. They receive the same credit cards as the men. Since the cooking and washing and repairing of household goods are done outside, the women of the twentieth century have more time for productive labor than had the women of a hundred years ago.

Recruits who have passed three years service, during which they are assignable to any work at the discretion of their superiors, may enter schools of technology, medicine, art, etc.; but if they cannot keep pace with the classes, they must withdraw. Physicians, who do not find sufficient employment, are assigned to work of another character.

If people desire the publication of a newspaper, they must club together and give up enough of their credit cards to compensate the nation for the loss of the work of the persons editing and printing the paper.

If one desires to publish a book, he can write it in his hours of leisure and can have it printed by giving up a part of his credit card. For the copies sold he receives again a new credit.

Preachers are in a similar way employed by persons who desire to hear their sermons.

Cripples or other people unable to do full work or any work at all, receive their full credit cards, because

the fact, that they are human beings, entitles them to their full share of all good things produced on earth.

The state governments within the United States have been abolished as useless.

All other civilized nations have organized themselves on a similar basis and are exchanging goods with each other. The yearly balances are settled with national staple articles.

The new order of things enables people to live without cares, and one of the consequences is the fact, that most of the men and women of an average constitution live from eighty-five to ninety years.-

Such was the description of the new order of things given me by Dr. Leete in a number of conversations. The doctor is very enthusiastic over the organization of society of the twentieth century and does not hesitate to call it the millennium.

The fear and uncertainty which I entertained in regard to my employment were set at rest by Dr. Leete, who said, that I could, if I wished, have the position of professor of the history of the nineteenth century in the Shawmut College of Boston. I have accepted the offer and shall enter upon my duties next Monday.

CHAPTER II.

When I first entered the large hall of Shawmut College, where I was to deliver my lectures, I noticed

near the door of the room a gentleman of about forty years of age. He was too old to be one of the students and as I had not seen him when Dr. Leete introduced me to the professors of the institution, I was somewhat curious to know in what capacity he honored my debut.

The cordial reception I had met at the hands of the professors, the fact that every seat of the large hall was occupied, acted as a stimulus and when Dr. White, the president of Shawmut College had introduced me with a few complimentary remarks as a living witness of the nineteenth century, I began my first lecture in the best of spirits.

My speech contained naturally many of the points that Dr. Leete had most dwelt upon, when, in his conversations with me, he had compared the organization of society of the nineteenth and that of the twentieth centuries.

I said in substance, that my hearers must not expect a synopsis of the civilization of the two centuries or a panegyric of the present state of affairs. I would point out but a few conditions, regulations and institutions that could serve as criterion of the spirit of their times.

As characteristic of the spirit of the civilization of the nineteenth century, I described the insane competition, where a man in a foul fight must "cheat, overreach, supplant, defraud, buy below worth and sell above, break down the business by which his neighbor

fed his young ones, tempt men to buy what they ought not and to sell what they should not, grind their laborers, sweat their debtors, cozen their creditors,”¹ in order to be able to support those dependent on him. I showed “that there had been many a man among the people of the nineteenth century who, if it had been merely a question of his own life would sooner have given it up than nourished it by bread snatched from others.”² I pictured the consequences of this insane and annihilating competition as a constant wear on the brains and bodies of the past generation, intensified by the permanent fear of poverty. The spectre of uncertainty walked constantly beside the man of the nineteenth century, sat at his table and went to bed with him, even whispering in his ears: “Do your work ever so well, rise early and toil till late, rob cunningly or serve faithfully, you shall never know security. Rich you may be now and still come to poverty at last. Leave ever so much wealth to your children, you can not buy

¹ Such parts of Mr. Bellamy’s book as are characteristic of his manner of dealing with the present and with the future, I give with marks of quotation, adding in a foot note the page of “Looking Backward,” where the sentence may be found. The above remarks are taken from page 277.

² Page 277.

the assurance, that your son may not be the servant of your servant or that your daughter will not sell herself for bread.”³

And while one hundred and thirteen years ago all men worked like slaves, until completely exhausted, without having even a guaranty that they would not die in poverty or from hunger, the men of the twentieth century were walking in the sunlight of freedom, security, happiness and equality. After receiving an excellent education in standard schools and then passing through an apprenticeship of three years, the young people of the twentieth century select their vocation. Short hours of work permit them, even during the years of service in the industrial army, to spend more time for the continuation of their studies and for recreation than the people who lived a hundred years ago had ever believed to be consistent with a successful management of industries, farming or public affairs.

Free from all cares, in perfect harmony with each other, without the disturbing influence of political parties, enjoying a wealth unprecedented in the history of nations, we might verily say: “The long and weary winter of our race is ended. Its summer has begun. Humanity has burst the chrysalis. The heavens are

before it!”⁴

I had spoken with enthusiasm, yes, even with deep emotion and I expected, if not a warm, at least a sympathetic reception of my address. But only a faint and very cold applause followed my remarks. I had the impression that not one fourth of the young men present had found it worth their while to show their approval of my lecture, and that the applause of even these few had been an act of courtesy rather than a spontaneous outburst of feeling. The chilly reception was such a great disappointment to me that I could not rally courage enough to leave my chair and pass through the students as they were leaving the hall.

I busied myself at the little desk before me until everybody had gone with the exception of the gentleman who had arrested my attention when I entered the room. He remained at the door evidently waiting for me.

“You belong to the college?” I asked, to hide my embarrassment.

“Indeed I do”, he answered with a light smile, that challenged another question.

“I suppose I have the pleasure of meeting one of my colleagues”, I continued. “My name is West”.

“Until about a month ago I was Professor Forest,

your predecessor in teaching the history of the nineteenth century; to-day I am one of the janitors and my chief has been good enough to recommend this room to my care.”

I had during the last few days seen and heard so many new and strange things, that I was prepared to be surprised at nothing, however astounding.

But the information, that to a professor of history was assigned the duty of cleaning the rooms, where he had once lectured, sounded so incredible and opened such an unpleasing prospect for my own career, that I could not conceal my amazement.

“And what has caused this singular change of position”, I inquired.

“In comparing the lot of humanity in 1900 and 2000 I came to conclusions very different from yours”, responded Mr. Forest.

“You do not mean to say, that the condition of the people of the nineteenth century was better than that of the present generation?” I asked with some curiosity.

“That is my opinion”, said Mr. Forest.

“The only way I can understand you holding such extraordinary views, is that you are personally quite unacquainted with the civilization of which you speak so highly,” I declared.

“I have as a matter of course, drawn my information from our libraries, and I am forced to admit that you can support your argument in regard to the

civilization of the last century by pointing to your personal knowledge. But I am afraid that you are not so familiar with the present state of affairs, at the fountain of your information in regard to the twentieth century is only one man, Dr. Leete. I may therefore claim that my information of the civilization of your days is better than yours of our institutions, because mine is based on the testimony of more witnesses than one.”

“Then you must of course disapprove the views developed in my lecture?”

“Your address will undoubtedly be published in extenso in all the administration organs, that is, in nearly every newspaper in the land”, said Mr. Forest, evading a direct answer to my question.

“Administration organs you say”, I asked with surprise: “Has the administration organs, and why does it need them?”

“Of course the administration has organs”, answered Forest. “And it is both difficult and unpleasant to edit an opposition paper. Therefore we have only a few of them.”

“But Dr. Leete said: “We have no parties or politicians and as for demagoguery and corruption, they are words having only a historical significance.”⁵ And yet you speak of opposition and of administration

papers?" I said this very likely with an expression of some doubt in my eyes.

My companion broke into a loud laugh, after which he asked: "Excuse, please, my merriment, but Dr. Leete is a great joker, who never fails to "bring down the house." Well! Well! That is too good. I wish I could have seen his face when he gave you that information."

And Mr. Forest laughed again.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. West", he continued, when I met his merriment with silence; "but you would not only excuse but share my laughter, if you were familiar with our public life, if you knew Dr. Leete as well as I do and then learned that he had claimed, we were suffering from a want of politicians. But I wish to say right here", added Mr. Forest in a more composed tone, "that I have not a poor opinion of Dr. Leete. He is a practical joker, a shrewd politician, but otherwise as good a man as our time can produce."

"Dr. Leete is a politician?" I asked in the utmost astonishment.

"Yes. Dr. Leete is the most influential leader of the administration party in Boston. I owe it to his kind interference, that I am still connected with the college."

Noticing that I did not know how to construe this statement, Mr. Forest added:

"When, in comparing the civilization of your days with ours, I came to the conclusion, that

communism had proved a failure, I was accused of misleading and corrupting the students and the usual sentence in such cases: "confinement in an insane asylum", was passed. Because, it is claimed, that only a madman could find fault with the best organization of society ever introduced. Dr. Leete, however, declared, that my insanity was so harmless, that confinement in an asylum seemed unnecessary, besides being too expensive. I could still earn my living by doing light work about the college building; and my case would serve as a warning to all the professors and students to be careful in their expressions and teachings. So I retained the liberty in which we glory and was spared doing street cleaning or some such work, which is generally awarded to "kickers" against the administration."

"The students seem to share your opinion, at least they received my remarks very coldly," I remarked, in order to avoid a discussion of the qualities of my host.

Mr. Forest's keen grey eyes rested for a moment upon my face, and then he said in a friendly tone:

"I believe you were convinced of what you said, Mr. West; but did it not occur to you, that you treated your time and your contemporaries very severely? Did competition really demand, that one should defraud his neighbor, grind his laborers, sweat his debtors and snatch the bread from others? Were the majority of the men of your time swindlers and Shylocks? Were the

laborers all slaves, working each day until completely exhausted? I remember distinctly, that the wage-workers of your time struck frequently for eight hours, declining to work nine or ten hours per diem for good pay. I think you had a strong, proud and independent class of laborers, who could not fairly be regarded as slaves. And as for the girls, I have seen the statements and complaints, that help for housekeeping was very scarce in your days and was paid from \$2. to \$5. per week, with board, so that there was no excuse for any decent girl to sell herself for bread.-Of course your state of civilization was very far from being faultless; in fact there is no such thing as perfection in anything. But your description of the civilization of the nineteenth century is painted in such dark colors, that our students, who are somewhat familiar with the history of those days, could not very well enthuse over your lecture; especially as many of these young men do not regard our present institutions with such complete admiration as you do. I speak frankly, Mr. West, and I hope you will excuse my frankness, because of my desire to serve you in describing men, things and institutions as I see them.”

The warm tone of his voice and the sympathetic expression of his eyes caused me to shake hands with Forest, although everything he had said went directly against my friends, my views, my feelings and my interests. I left him in an uneasy mood and walked

home revolving in my mind his criticism of my lecture.

I met Dr. Leete and the ladies, and Edith inquired whether my debut as professor had satisfied my expectations.

I have always tried to be frank and true: so I gave Dr. Leete and his family a synopsis of my speech, mentioned the cool reception of my address and my disappointment. I spoke of Mr. Forest's criticism, leaving out, of course, his observations relative to Dr. Leete, and confessed that his censure was not wholly undeserved inasmuch as I had gone too far in charging upon the whole people the bad qualities which reckless competition had stamped on certain individuals.

Dr. Leete was evidently not altogether pleased with my remarks. After a short pause he said: "I think the reckless competition of the last part of the nineteenth century could not fail to demoralize more or less, in most cases more, all the people, who were conducting a business or who had to work for a living. I think furthermore that your lecture was an excellent exposition of principles and that you have no reason to yield an inch of your position. The cold reception you met with, ought not to worry you. It is due to Forest, who has planted in the hearts of our students his idiosyncrasy, his blind admiration of competition and his aversion to our form of civilization. It is your task to enlighten the young men in regard to the comparative merits of the two orders of things.-Mr. Forest is placing

a heavy tax on the patience of his fellow citizens by his persistent efforts to mislead the students.-Did he mention the fact that he was your predecessor?”

“He did, when I asked him if he were a member of the college staff of teachers. He said that he was discharged for his heresy and that he owed his comparatively lenient treatment to you.”

“It is not Forest’s habit to conceal his opinions and he may have given you a nice idea of Dr. Leete”, my host said with a smile.

I thought best under the circumstances to repeat Forest’s remarks in regard to Dr. Leete, which remarks were very good natured and rather complimentary to my host. I may add that I desired very much to know what Dr. Leete would say in answer to the charge of being a politician and a leader of the administration party.

So I said: “Mr. Forest laughed heartily when I repeated your remarks that you have no party nor politicians. He called you a great practical joker, a shrewd politician, the leader of the administration party in Boston and a good man.”

Dr. Leete smiled somewhat grimly as he replied: “That is a character I ought to be grateful for, considering that it comes from a faultfinder like Forest. Concerning his references to me as a politician I will say that I never held an office, but that the administration has occasionally consulted me and other

citizens on important questions. Political parties we have not. There are of course a few incurable faultfinders like Mr. Forest and a few radical growlers, but we pay but little attention to them so long as they do not disturb the public peace. If they do, we send them to a hospital where they receive proper treatment.”

Although these words were spoken in the tone of light conversation, they impressed me deeply. “If they do, we send them to a hospital, where they receive proper treatment.” Did not this confirm Forest’s statement, that the usual sentence against the opponents of communism was confinement in an insane asylum?

My unpleasant thoughts were interrupted by Edith’s sweet voice remarking: “I think Mr. Forest is an honest well meaning gentleman and he should be permitted to express his views, even if they are wrong and queer. The students will certainly eventually be convinced that our order of things is as good as it can be made, and besides it is so entertaining to hear once in a while another opinion.”

With an expression of fatherly love, Dr. Leete placed his right hand on Edith’s thick hair and said: “The ladies of the court of Louis XVI. of France also considered very entertaining the ideas that caused the revolution and cost many of the “entertained” ladies and gentlemen their heads beneath the guillotine.-Ideas are little sparks. They may easily cause a conflagration

if not watched”.

CHAPTER III.

My studies had never been directed to questions of national economy. I had never thought of comparing the merits of competition with those of communism. When Dr. Leete had explained in his positive and still fascinating manner the new order of things I had hardly noticed that it was based on communistic principles. I thought humanity had reached at last the millennium, and when Dr. Leete stated that his easy and even luxurious way of living represented the average style of the people of the twentieth century, I had no doubt that everybody was satisfied with the new order of things.

My cool reception by the students and my conversation with Mr. Forest had convinced me, that not every inhabitant of the United States in the 2000th year of our Lord considered the present order of things the millennium and I must say that I noticed the dissatisfaction with sincere sorrow. For a sweet peace, a tranquillity never felt before, had filled my heart, when Dr. Leete spoke of the absolute happiness of the men of the twentieth century.

My new profession imposed upon me the duty of studying national economy. Of course I could have pictured simply the social and political circumstances, in which the people of the United States had lived 113