

Correspondence.

THE COLLEGE ANARCHIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR Your statement in the last *Nation*, to the effect that there is a sort of moral justification for attacks upon life and property based upon a theory which comes from the colleges, libraries, and lecture-rooms, and latterly from the churches, is supported by the teaching and the practice of the University of Wisconsin.

Prof. Ely, director of the School of Economics, believes in strikes and boycotts, justifying and encouraging the one while practising the other. Somewhat more than a year ago a strike occurred in the office of the *Democrat* Printing Company, the State printers. An agitator or a walking-delegate came from Kansas City to counsel and assist the strikers. He was entertained at Prof. Ely's house and was in constant consultation with him. A little later a strike occurred in another printing office in this city, in which Prof. Ely was also an abettor and counsellor. He also demanded of the proprietors that their office should be made a union office, threatening to take his printing away if they did not comply. (They were publishing a paper for him as secretary of some organization or association.) Upon the refusal of his repeated demands, Prof. Ely withdrew his printing, informing them that he had always been in the habit of dealing with union offices. In conversation with one of the proprietors he asserted that where a skilled workman was needed, a dirty, dissipated, unmarried, unreliable, and unskilled tramp, if a union man, should be employed in preference to an industrious, skilful, trustworthy non-union man who is the head of a family. He

also stated that the latter would have no ground of complaint, as he could easily remove the objections to him by joining the union, and that conscientious scruples against joining the union would prove the individual to be a crank.

Such is Ely, the citizen and business man—an individual who can say to citizens and taxpayers, "Stand and deliver, or down goes your business," and to laboring men, "Join the union or starve with your families." Prof. Ely, director of the School of Economics, differs from Ely the socialist only in the adroit and covert method of his advocacy. A careful reading of his books will discover essentially the same principles, but masked by glittering generalities and mystical and metaphysical statements susceptible of various interpretations according as a too literal interpretation might seem for the time likely to work discomfort or loss to the writer. His books are having a considerable sale, being recommended and advertised by the University and pushed by publishers and dealers. Except where studiously indefinite and ambiguous, they have the merit of such simplicity of statement as makes them easily read by the uneducated. They abound in sanctimonious and pious cant, pander to the prohibitionists, and ostentatiously sympathize with all who are in distress. So manifest an appeal to the religious, the moral, and the unfortunate, with promise of help to all, insures at the outset a large public. Only the careful student will discover their utopian, impracticable, or pernicious doctrines, but their general acceptance would furnish a seeming moral justification of attacks upon life and property such as the country has already become too familiar with.

Very truly yours, OLIVER E. WELLS.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION,
MADISON, WIS., July 5, 1894.