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EDITORIAL

## WISE AUSTRIAN MIDDLE CLASS.

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**A**USTRIA is just now going through what may be called the throes of her first general elections. Hitherto the working class was wholly disfranchised; by the recently passed suffrage law, defective though it is, the workers may be said to be substantially enfranchised. The present elections are taking place under the new law.

It goes without saying that the new law is a result of that social evolution that is drawing everywhere more sharply the distinctions and antagonisms that exist between the capitalist, the middle and the working class. As a result of this the political pronouncements of the three classes in any capitalist country bear close resemblance to those of the corresponding classes in all others. Whether one reads a capitalist, a middle class or a proletarian political document in the Italian, German, American, Danish, or any other language, he will find the arguments running on identical lines. Without furnishing an exception to this rule, the political manifesto of the middle class of Vienna furnishes a variation that is highly interesting and that places that Viennese class ahead, intellectually, of its fellow middle classes in all other countries, our own not excepted.

It is a feature of the "reformer" that he can see only the interest of the middle class; of the proletariat he knows little and cares less. To him, the middle class is the class to be saved. He lives on recollections of the past; he traces that class back; finds it to have been the bulk of the nation, and, in his ignorance of facts and of social evolution, he believes that class to be still as powerful numerically, and as essential socially. To that class accordingly, the "reformer" turns, and, like a quack, he seeks to cure it. Overrun with quack reformers as the proletariat has been in all

countries, and continues to be in ours, it does not attract, even approximately, the number of reform quacks that afflict the middle class and befuddle its intellect. Everywhere, accordingly, the middle class is the favorite social class for quack reformers to experiment upon. It is so in Vienna too, as a matter of course; but differently from everywhere else it is the Viennese middle class, as far as we can ascertain, that has first discovered this fact, and first sounds the note of warning against the quacks who are anxious to experiment upon it, and to whom everywhere else the middle class falls a ready prey. Viewed from this point, the most interesting political document issued in Austria during this campaign is one that proceeds from the Viennese middle class and in which this passage occurs:

“In the pending election for members of the Reichstag, we have to deal, not with the leaders of the Socialist working class only, but especially with a group of gentlemen, the so-called ‘Social Reformers,’ whom we should give a wide berth, because they seek to get into office upon our backs and to use us for objects upon which to practice their theoretical experiments. These people with their theories are infinitely more dangerous to us than the Socialists. The Socialists at least have a clear-cut programme which is strictly consistent with its promises. These ‘Social Reformers,’ however, with the jar of their confused notions, can do no end of mischief.”

What trials, tribulations, illusions and mortifications would not our own middle class save itself if it possessed at least as much clearness of political vision as do its Viennese fellows, and likewise give a wide berth to the Bryans, Peffers, Kyles, Georges and a score of such other moths!

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