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EDITORIAL

MUTUALLY ILLUMINATING FACTS.

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As a step towards reform, harmony, and the solution of all the vexed questions of the day, a certain “annual dinner” took place last Wednesday evening in Brooklyn. The star speaker of the occasion was Bishop Potter. In the course of his remarks he said:

“It is important to come in contact with the different classes. And I believe that social progress is to be found in such gatherings and largely at table. I was asked in Washington what I thought was most important in connection with the meeting of the Board of Mediation and Arbitration Industrial Commission, and I am afraid I shocked the gentlemen by answering, ‘The puffing of a cigar.’ When the Board first got together they had a very cold time of it. But I managed to get them to my house, and on the table there were coffee—and another thing that I missed here to-night—a box of cigars. (Laughter.) Those things created a common atmosphere.”

And having thus at least suggested sufficient smoke to blind the intellect, the honorable Bishop proceeded and wound up with:

“The cement of human society is fraternal feeling, and you cannot build any co-operative service for the race unless you establish the feeling of brotherhood. You can’t establish the right feeling between the classes—I detest the word—unless you base it on brotherhood.”

On reading this, one may easily imagine the vampire, which while taking its repast on the body of a man, whose blood it is sucking, and whose feeling it is benumbing with a gentle fanning of its wings, soliloquizes thus:

“The oneness of Nature can be proven only by such gatherings as these of several species of Nature such as you, man, and I, vampire. A distant attitude between us generates coldness, hostility. The cement of Nature’s Kingdom is fraternal feeling. I detest the word species, unless it is based on brotherhood.”

The classes in modern society hold the relative positions of the man and vampire. The vampire's life depends upon the amount of blood it can suck from man; the man's life depends upon his alertness against the vampire. If the working class can not be plucked, the capitalist class must cease to exist. The wellbeing of the capitalist class is in direct ratio to the amount of plunder it can levy on the Working Class. Nay, more, it is in the interest of the vampire Capitalist Class to keep the Working Class in want and subjection, because only in the measure in which the Working Class is in want will it be found pliant to the process of being fleeced.

These are ugly facts, that the spokesmen, whether professorial or pulpitorial, of the Capitalist Class as a matter of course detest to have emphasized, and love to have blurred over. These, of course, are facts that Capitalism must seek to conceal or render invisible,—with cigar-smoke, if necessary,—and which Socialism must ever seek to bring out and underscore. Not until, and only in proportion as, the fact becomes clear of the irreconcilable nature of the two interests, of the two classes, can real harmony progress in society. Harmony can never be between the wrongdoer and his victim; nor are the ills that proceed from such wrongdoing to be reformed to a purpose so long as the real nature of the wrong remains dark.

To a great many, all this may be perfectly clear by this time: to these the “annual dinner” of last Wednesday with its “smoke” speeches and “detestation” of the word “classes” would convey no new light. Indeed, the affair would hardly deserve mention were it for the speeches alone. But the affair was accompanied by certain circumstances that help to throw special light upon the speeches, and thereby the speeches throw invaluable light upon the circumstances. The circumstances were these:

1. The “annual dinner” was held at the Brooklyn headquarters of the Social Democratic party, the Brooklyn Labor Lyceum;

2. It was presided over by Mr. John Phillips, the national secretary of the Hatters' Union, who, when on a recent occasion members of his union protested against the policemen's hats being non-union, came out in defence of the Police Commissioners;

3. One of the star speakers of the occasion was Mr. Ben. Hanford, the Social Democratic candidate for Governor in this State.

One dirty hand washes the other; facts mutually illuminate each other.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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