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EDITORIAL

THE GAMUT OF TURPITUDE.

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THIS week's quotation or thesis is taken from a novel, a classic passage from Rienzi's impassioned address.¹ Almost anything may seem more kindred to it than the maxim of the Class Struggle; and yet it is the solid fact of the Class Struggle that is the underlying truth from which the passage derives its beauty. Keir Hardie's recent performance in the British Parliament, introducing and speaking to a motion calling upon the capitalist Government to inaugurate the Socialist Commonwealth: here in America the Social Democrat Woodbridge accepting a political job from the capitalist Mayor of Cleveland, O., are but modern illustrations of the turpitude inveighed against by Rienzi, and that violates the scientific principle that underlies his scorn, and imparts vigor to it.

The principle that establishes the relative identity between Classes in sociology and Species in biology, establishes the fact that no social Class ever cuts off its own head, but must have that operation performed for it by the Class historically called upon to do the amputation. "Did they ever elevate a plebeian if he sympathized with plebeians?" Such is the quotation that the Class Struggle hurls both at the man, who, to-day, claiming to be a Socialist, strikes the attitude that implies that the emancipation of the Working Class can be the suicidal gift of the Capitalist Class; and at that other, who accepts admission to the capitalist robber castle, by the grace of a capitalist: "Can Capitalism love its executioner, Socialism?" or "Did capitalists ever elevate a workingman if they did not know they were securing a traitor?" But the infamy does not end there.

Take the case of Keir Hardie. In slapping the Class Struggle in the face by his motion, he was not merely imbecile, he was guilty of turpitude: no Truth can be

¹ ["If there be a vile thing in the world, it is a plebeian, advanced by patricians, not for the purpose of righting his own order, but for playing the pander to the worst interests of theirs. He who is of the people but makes himself a traitor to his birth, if he furnishes the excuse for these tyrant hypocrites to lift up their heads and cry, 'See what liberty exists in Rome, when WE, the patricians, thus elevate a plebeian.' Did they ever elevate a plebeian if he sympathized with plebeians?"—From Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1835 novel, *Rienzi: The Last of the Roman Tribunes*.]

violated without disgrace to the violator. Hardly a day passes in Parliament without some project of law being on the tapis. The parliamentary opportunities are numerous, by means of proposed amendments or otherwise, to tear big holes into the fabric of capitalist theory, and plant conspicuous solid chunks of Socialism. Such a conduct would serve as an educator to the Working Class constituencies: they would learn the positive and the negative lessons that would enlighten them during the hurly of campaigns, and guide them on election day. But such conduct implies struggle: no wordy declamation of set speeches, spoken in safety, would stand; such a conduct implies knowledge: no phrase-mongering would do. To avoid such conduct, and substitute it with the one Keir Hardie did, denotes the craven who would be taken for a fighter, the ignoramus who would be taken for a fit leader,—the stage-strutting misleader, in short.

Take the case of Woodbridge. The political field is the field of born adversaries. No political party has any business there except on the theory that no other can justify its existence. The political field implies mutually contemplated extermination. This is especially so with a revolutionary party, above all with a party that claims to represent the Working Class, and to aim at the uprooting of the Capitalist Class. He, accordingly, who acts with a party, that he advocates as Socialist, and afterwards allows himself to be elevated by the party he fought, brands himself a speculator on Labor votes, which he sought to gather only for the purpose of raising his own price, his bribe.

The dictates of the Class Struggle can not be violated with impunity. Just now, with Millerand and Keir Hardie in Europe, and the Social Democrats Morris Eichmann in the East, Woodbridge in the West, and a batch of two others of the same ilk in San Francisco, the gamut of “practical” turpitude runs from antipode to antipode.

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

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