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EDITORIAL

THE CARNEGIE ISSUE.

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NEW York City is the metropolis of the nation. It is the economic and, in that way, the natural capital. It is the power behind the throne at Washington. What occurs here is, accordingly, no local occurrence. What occurs here is of national significance. Here, accordingly, is seen in condensed form all the leading manifestations of the Social Struggle, and here it is that will be detected the leading features in the physiognomy of the contending classes. Just now an incident in the municipal campaign places under the lime-light a certain line in the physiognomy of the capitalist class that is its leading characteristic, and that repays the time spent in observing it.

It is a leading argument—if statements can be termed argument—with the capitalist class that Socialism would destroy Individuality. The implication is that Capitalism fosters Individuality. The Socialist meets the charge with a flat denial of both statements. He asserts and proves that Individuality is suffering shipwreck, and the rock it is suffering shipwreck on is Capitalism. The Socialist goes further and demonstrates that the safety of Individuality lies in Socialism. The pending municipal campaign furnishes an illustration that cannot fail to bring conviction to those capable of thinking. It brings out with rare clearness that Individuality is not a forte of Capitalism; that capitalism is predicated on a mass of dumb-driven cattle, not expected to think, not expected to exercise Individuality, but expected only to “see and follow headlights.”

On what is the present municipal campaign in New York turning, as far as the capitalist contestants are concerned? It is turning upon what “Mr. Carnegie Said,” and what “Mr. Carnegie Did.”

The capitalist organization that is marshalled around Mr. Edward Shepard has placarded the city, not with arguments and allegations of fact touching its own acts but with a declaration of what “Mr. Carnegie Said and Did.” The masses that are expected to vote the Democratic ticket are not given a thought or a fact to digest and

to enable them to pick their way intelligently over the political field. They are treated like cattle that are to follow the tinkling of the bell of the leader. Carnegie is set up as the bell-wether: “follow the sound!” is the word of command. “Carnegie said so, consequently it is so,”—such is the rudimental cattle logic that the followers are expected to exercise.—No Individuality there.

And as to the anti-Shepard, the Low forces? Are they treated by their leaders as if standing upon a higher plane? Despite all pretences of superiority, both intellectual and moral, the “Reform” forces betray the identical lineaments. Nay, they betray these non-Individuality lineaments in pronounced manner, in a manner pronounced with double emphasis. They also have placarded the city with Carnegie; also they try to catch the eye with what “Mr. Carnegie Said and Did.” In view of the fact that the Low placards on Carnegie are not “original,” in view of the fact that they are not “answers” to the Tammany placards, it becomes obvious that the “intellectual” forces, that Reformer Low depends on to prevail, are of identical stamp with those that are appealed to in behalf of Tammany Shepard: these are also to be caught by the bell-wether; the tinkling of the bellwether’s bell is to lure them away from Tammany pasture and corral them into the Republican, or Reform, or Low pasture!—No Individuality there either.

Capitalist society implies blind followers of headships: No wonder Capitalist society breeds the Anarchist notion of government. Socialist society implies intelligent membership,—capable of individual mental effort, unsuited for blind following: No wonder the Socialist Labor Party must make head against the stupid Anarchist ferocity that is the breath in the nostrils of Capitalism together with its multifarious props of high and low degree.

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

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