

EDITORIAL

FATHER GASSONIANA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

V.

“We are all one before the law and in the sight of the Almighty, but are we all equal in regard to strength of body, of mind? Do we all have the same attractive manner or possess agility?”

THE above is the fifth of the general principles advanced against Socialism, as a practical proposition, by the Jesuit Father Thomas I. Gasson in his last February 6 address in Boston.

Father Gasson says either too little, or he says too much:—

If the sentence means that, because of the obvious inequalities between men, the more favored are entitled to lord it over the less favored—then he says too much.

If the sentence means that, because of the said inequality, there is left nothing to do but to bow down, and to be lorded, or to suffer others to be lorded—then he says too little.

If the former is the meaning of the sentence, then Father Gasson proclaims himself less charitable than the infidel John Stuart Mill. “I leave aside,” said Mill, “the propriety, or wisdom, of rewarding bountifully the racer who reaches the goal first, and leaving the rest out in the cold; But I can see neither wisdom nor propriety in a system, which, besides bountifully rewarding the winner in a race, administers lashes on the backs of the losers.”

If the latter is the meaning of the sentence, then Father Gasson confesses himself a Turk, a Mohammedan fatalist, who—forgetful of the favorite maxim of Joan of Arc, now beatified by the Roman Catholic Church, “God helps those who help themselves”—spinelessly submits to any visitation of Nature or Man as “the will of God.”

Whatever the meaning may be, whether the first or the second, of Father Gasson’s general principle, it goes to pieces upon the rock of the Declaration of

Independence, a “great divide” in the annals of the human race.

The Declaration of Independence was no idiot’s work. The very endeavors to deprive Thomas Jefferson of the glory of having produced it, and to trace it to a variety of other sources, proves it the product of its Age—the product of its Age’s experience and learning, coupled with the virgin conditions offered in the land in which it was put together. Seriously to cite human physical inequalities as an argument against that social proclamation of man’s “equality” is of the nature of an “Irish bull.” Where no such innocent non-sense marks the criticism the criticism is a Jesuitic twist.

The standard set up by the Declaration of Independence is the standard that turns down and nails down an old page, and opens a new in social polity. The old was typified by its individualistic ancestry. The new was marked with the loftiness that comes from knowledge. Greatly freed by experience from the trammels of individualism, collective society in America assumed the duty of guaranteeing to the individual a free field—EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITIES.

The equality of opportunities, which the American Revolution proclaimed, has not been realized. Material developments, unforeseen by most of the Revolutionary Fathers, arose to block its realization. That mattered not. Though Columbus, sailing westward in the expectation to strike the eastern coasts of Asia, found the realization of his purpose blocked by the continent of the Western Hemisphere, stretched across his path, the scientific principle, first grasped by him and that he started from, was not blunted, let alone abandoned. It remained in full force, a guide and spur to others. So with the principle of the American Revolution proclaiming “equality of opportunities” as a standard of civilized society. Though blocked{,} it has remained a vital force, propelling Socialism. Other navigators, the successors of Columbus, sailing westward, realized his scientific expectations. The goal that the American Revolution was prevented from reaching, its successor, the Socialist Revolution, proposes to attain.

The fifth general principle that Father Gasson advances against Socialism, is, in fact, leveled at the American Revolution. It is, accordingly, a principle that seeks to fight civilization—a puerile if not a dullard’s attempt.

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

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