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EDITORIAL

The Sins of the Fathers

By DANIEL DE LEON

At the extreme West and the extreme East of the country two events are now simultaneously on the tapis, both of which are children of identical parentage, however unlike they may seem.

In Seattle, Wash., there is now awaiting trial in jail a bold malefactor by the name of LOGUE. He is under indictment for burglary and highway robbery.

In the city of Washington, D.C., a Miss FLAGLER is under indictment for manslaughter. A negro, GREEN by name, was espied by her poaching pears in her orchard, and was shot dead on the spot by herself.

The kinship between these two wretches and their crime is unwittingly pointed out by MARY LOGUE, the mother of the former. She has just died, and left this valuable message to the world in a letter to her son. Says this distressed mother:

“ I found it very hard to get any money from my husband for our bread and meat. At last it got so hard that the only way I could get his money was by waiting until he was asleep at night and picking his pockets. Many and many a night have I got up when he was asleep in the bed by my side and like a thief gone through his pockets and taken what money I found there. Then he had a hot temper, and I was always afraid when I was picking his pockets he would awake and find me doing it. Thus I went through all the brain sensations of a daring burglar, even such as I am informed you have become. Shortly after that you were born, and I firmly believe you came into the world a thief owing to that crime-like, though necessary practise of mine. ”

The father of Miss FLAGLER could supply the companion piece to this. He is a general; has been trained a soldier; if he had the wit of MARY LOGUE he could address his daughter and the world with this epistle:

“To labor manually, or even in intellectual professions, has become hard, profitless and grinding. Everywhere I saw those engaged in such pursuits pushed harder to the wall for their bread and meat. At last it got so hard that the only way I could get money for bread and meat was to go into the mankilling business. I went into that, and was trained to shed blood and to look upon corpses of my own raising as a matter of fact. Thus by degrees I went through all the brain sensations of a daring manslayer, even as I see you have become. You were engendered by such a father, and I firmly believe you, my daughter, came into the world a manslayer owing to that crime-like, though necessary practise of mine.”

These pictures may be luscious tidbits for “Ethical Culturists” and flapdood lists generally to spout their nauseous nonsense over. To the Socialist they are matter of the deepest, of practical significance. They are twin facts that shed a clear light athwart the path of the practical reformer, as he threads his way through the tangle of the confused ideology and sentimentalism that blocks his progress.

Material conditions shape character; it is a clear understanding of the facts born of material conditions that enables the mind’s eye to perceive JUSTICE and LIGHT; in proportion to the darkness upon them the veil will remain down; he who sees and perceives them, will also see and perceive the ultimate goal and strike the path that leads thereto; he who don’t will be lost in the wilderness.

Sentimentalism may ridicule the idea of “the children’s teeth being set on edge because their fathers ate sour grapes.” Science, that picks its way upon facts, knows it to be true. The deeds of the fathers will be cropped by their children. If the deeds be good, the crop will be happiness; if they be bad, the crop will be misery.

The highwayman LOGUE, the manslayer Miss FLAGLER are but species of a large genus. These may well be deemed guiltless. They are the products of their parentage: and into their parentage come all the social conditions under which they are born and reared.

He who would change character for the better must change the social conditions that deprave man. The social system that places a premium upon idleness and lashes industry with the lash of want is the great culprit of our day. At the bar of mankind there is but one criminal—the CAPITALIST SYSTEM. And the frontmost places, among the myriad accusers that throng to the bar, should be yielded by those who have not yet succumbed, the innocent so-called, to the victims—to the LOGUES and the Miss FLAGLERS.

A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the Official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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