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EDITORIAL

## CARDINAL GIBBONS, BISHOP POTTER, MARK HANNA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**he highest dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States has followed the example of the Protestant **Bishop Potter**, and given his views on “Labor” to the public, using as a medium one of the vilest of the sensational yellow journals of New York. The article is entitled “Rights and Duties of Labor,” by **Cardinal Gibbons**, and it takes up over half a page of a paper which has become notorious by reason of the merciless advantage it takes to fleece the little workmen who contribute so largely to its evil success: the newsboys.

Significant as is the selection of a labor-defrauding paper to state his views in, more significant are the views stated. They sound in places like the wail of the going-to-the-wall middle class, and in other spots it is the voice of the orthodox, cynical economist, drooling out copy-book maxims which intelligent men have long since relegated to the lumber-room of exploded theories.

“The honest, industrious man is honored among us, whether he work with his hands or with his brains, because he is an indispensable factor in the nation’s progress. He is the bee in the social hive; he is the benefactor of his race, because he is always producing for the commonwealth.”

How much the “bee” is honored we are not told, but the hundreds of thousands of “bees” who slave in the underground hells of Pennsylvania and who are compelled by the scanty wages they receive to live in kennels unfit for a dog, and who are about to be “honored” by rifle-balls and police clubs as they were in 1897, these “bees” might a tale unfold as to the degree of “honor” conferred on them.

The writer then proceeds to indite a few paragraphs of denunciations of the “Monopolies” and the “Trusts” which could be used impartially by Republican, Democratic or Single Tax spell-binders. He sees nothing wrong in capitalism, per se; nothing evil about a system which produces a vast army of wage-slaves who **MUST** live in soul- and body-destroying poverty; whose lot here on earth is so sordid

and hateful that the theological Hell which the reverend writer believes in would be but an anti-climax to a life of suffering. No, his condemnation is only of that concentration of wealth which lessens the number of those who “keep back the hire of the laborer.”

“While applauding the tender feelings and magnanimity of many capitalists, I am constrained in the interests of truth, humanity and religion to protest against the heartless conduct of others whose number, for the honor of our country, is, I hope, comparatively small.

“They are so intolerant of honest rivalry as to use unlawful means in driving from the market all competing industries. They compel their operatives to work for starving wages, especially in mining districts and factories, where protests have but a feeble echo, and are easily stifled by intimidation.”

How “starving wages” can be reconciled with the “honoring” of the “honest and industrious” is hard to see, but that is really not what the Cardinal is concerned about. A worse evil than compelling “their operatives to work for starving wages” is that of “driving from the market” those “honest rivals.” This is the echo of a wailing cry from the gulf of bankruptcy into which would bunches of “honest rivals” have been incontinently dumped by the no less honest but stronger capitalist.

But the Cardinal sounds a different note as he closes. He is encouraging the “bees” to do their duties. Their rights, as far as he could see, were only infringed on when the “Trusts” drove away the myriads of drones who used to rob the hive, and settled down to that delectable task itself. Here are some of the duties and rewards:

“A life of patient industry is sure to be blessed with a competence, if it is not crowned with an abundant remuneration. The great majority of our leading men of wealth are indebted for their fortunes to their own untiring industry.

“Foster habits of economy and self-denial. No matter how modest your income may be, always live under it.

“While honestly striving to better your condition, be content with your station in life.”

These “duties” should be framed and hung up in every sweat-shop, department store, factory and tenement hell in this United States. They should be read at every meeting of locked-out, black-listed or striking “bees.”

Cardinal Gibbons, [Mark Hanna](#) and Bishop Potter all agree on the “Duties of Labor,” and those “duties” are enforced. The laborers should now agree on the

“Rights of Labor” and enforce them. This would relieve those eminent “friends” of the “bees” from worrying over the “Duty.”

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

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