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EDITORIAL

“GOING HIGHER.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHEN the now Recorder Goff was conducting the investigations before the Lexow Committee in this city, he began by exposing the smaller fry of Tammany delinquents. When he got through with that, the visionaries imagined Mr. Goff was through for good. They found themselves mistaken. Mr. Goff “went higher,” and took up another layer of malefactors; and he kept it up, “going higher” and still higher, till the whole structure of corruption stood exposed, from top to bottom, and lay ready to be thrown into the ditch at the next election. Stick a pin there.

And now comes another investigation, conducted by another investigator. This time they are not the appointees of any Legislature. The appointer is social evolution, the investigator is the upper and the nether millstones of economics, and the concern investigated is a no less rotten affair than Tammany Hall,—it is Capitalist Society. It is exhilarating to see on what strictly parallel lines of “going higher,” and ever higher the investigator is proceeding in this investigation; also, how the higher culprits imagine that the investigation is at an end when the smaller fry has been “soaked,” but soon find that the investigator, going ever higher, reaches out into ever higher layers, and lays hands upon them also.

The investigation in question amounts to an inquiry into the solidity and solvency of capitalism. That, of course, implies the solvency of the individual capitalist, and the results of the investigation are read in the lists of failures.

In 1901, there were 10,657 failures reported in *Bradstreet's*. The liabilities were small. It was the small fry that was convicted. The layer just above rubbed its hands; it had been left untouched. But, just as happened in the case of Tammany, the higher culprits sang too soon. Economic evolution “went higher.” For the year of 1903, we find 9,768 failures—a decrease in numbers—but an increase in liabilities,

\$154,277,093 with assets of only \$84,060,471; in other words the richer, that is, the higher culprits have been attainted and exposed.

And so it goes on, until the periodical crashes are reached that pull down the big colonels and captains of industry. Economic evolution is a relentless investigator. None of its fault if the people do not grab Capitalist Hall, as they did Tammany Hall, and overthrow it. None of its fault, if tutored by the investigator's steady revelations, the people fail to realize that from top to bottom Capitalist Hall spells rottenness, with insecurity for all and the resulting evils that flow therefrom.

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