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EDITORIAL

FOURTH EPISTLE AT THE LAMBERTIANS.

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HAVING in previous articles knocked three wide breaches into the outworks of Father Lambert's anti-Socialism article, that appeared in the last April 16 issue of the *Freeman's Journal and Catholic Register*, we shall now march through them upon his main positions. These are several. We shall first storm a neat and pretentious-looking fort, which is the key to the rest. Father Lambert says:

“The day of individual production is not past, and never will be, so long as anything is produced.”

This reasoning, if an assertion can be called a reasoning, is tantamount to saying: “The day of the mastodon is not past, and never will be, so long as there are any elephants.” The mastodon may be and is akin to the elephant, nevertheless, despite the general elephantine features of the mastodon, geologic conditions may and have so changed that the specific and importantly specific geologic conditions that made the mastodon possible have ceased to exist, and consequently the mastodon elephantine type is no more. Exactly so with “individual” production, notwithstanding the fact that production continues.

“Individual production” is a term of technical significance in Socialist economics. Production is said to be “individual” when, given the raw material, the individual artisan can himself produce an article of use. Time was when, given the raw material, the shoemaker could and did produce a shoe from sole to finish. That time is no more. Whatever may still be going on in some out-of-the-way corner of society, the staple of shoes no longer is produced that way. It now takes at least twenty different artisans to produce one shoe, each working upon a different part of the shoe, and only jointly producing it. What is said of the shoe holds good of all

other staples, or lines of industry. Accordingly, as a matter of fact, “individual production” has ceased to be, and something else has taken its place—“collective production.” This is a fact that no amount of assertion to the contrary can gainsay. The mastodon has vanished, the elephant has appeared.

It would be of no importance to expose Father Lambert’s ignorance of the method of modern industry, but for the consequences of the changed method, and for the false conclusions which he arrives at from his false premises.

What is the resultant feature of the change or evolution of production, from the “individual” to the “collective” or “co-operative” stage? The answer is given by Marx in the following summary:

“Just as the offensive power of a squadron of cavalry or the defensive power of a regiment of infantry is essentially different from the sum of the offensive or defensive powers of the individual cavalry or infantry soldiers taken separately, so the sum total of the mechanical forces exerted by isolated workmen differs from the social force that is developed when many hands take part simultaneously in one and the same undivided operation, such as raising a heavy weight, turning a winch, or removing an obstacle. In such cases the effect of the combined labor could either not be produced at all by isolated individual labor, or it could only be produced by a great expenditure of time, or on a dwarfed scale. Not only have we here an increase in the productive power of the individual, by means of co-operation, but THE CREATION OF A NEW POWER, NAMELY, THE COLLECTIVE POWER OF THE MASSES.”

In other words, “collective” or “co-operative” production produces a larger quantity of wealth than the sum of “individual” production. A pregnant fact is hereby uncovered. It is this:—The result to Labor from “collective” production under the capitalist system, where the workman is paid only the market price of his INDIVIDUAL labor power, is that he is robbed by the capitalist of that additional wealth latent in and that flows from him the moment he is put to the COLLECTIVE work that he is hired for.

And, now, to the storm of the neat and pretentious fort that we have just been but marshalling our columns upon.

Father Lambert grants that “things may be produced by the concurrent action of men,” but, he claims, each has “a right to the part that he produced,” and he

concludes:

“This right he, by contract, cedes to his employer for a consideration called wages.”

In other words, if a pistol is put at a man’s head and {he is} told to surrender his purse or his life, it is the exercise of a right on his part when he plunks out {plunks down?} his money;

If a man is placed before a pyre into which he will be hurled if he does not renounce his views, his renunciation of his views is the exercise of a right!

The workingman, placed before the pyre of capitalism and with the capitalist pistol at his head, accepts wages (pay for his INDIVIDUAL labor power) and cedes to his employer, among other things, that new power that flows from his COLLECTIVE effort—and that is called the exercise of a “right” and the entering into a “contract”!

Civilization calls the act highway robbery, and it brands the attempt of decking out a manifestation of slavery in the light of an act of freedom as fathomless immorality.

Scaled by the ladder of the obvious fact that individual production is not to-day the controlling system; forced into by the blows of the clear, though not as obvious, fact that collective labor is more fruitful than individual; battered from within by the fact that the additional fruitfulness of collective labor falls wholly into the pockets of the capitalist; dismantled by the unquestionable fact that nobody contracts to be robbed of what is his; and, finally, knocked to pieces by the fact, a corollary of the preceding ones, that the circumstance of the workingman’s ceding his collective power and wealth-flow in return for his individual labor power, is an indication of his economic status being one of duress;—in short, stormed and overthrown, the key to Father Lambert’s fortifications in favor of the plunder system of capitalism lies a heap of ruins.

There is a fort or two left. The demolishing of them will be the subject of subsequent epistles.

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