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EDITORIAL

AN UNCOMFORTABLE PILLOW.

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THE Rochester, N.Y., *Democrat and Chronicle* of the 11th instant is suggestive of an amended version of the Shakespearean maxim “Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.” The amended version should read: “Uneasy lies the head that lies on thorns.”

“The average Socialist needs only to acquire a little private property of his own to be thoroughly cured of any itch of re-distribution”—such is the maxim that the *Democrat and Chronicle* sets up in the double category of a chunk of newly discovered wisdom, and as a soft pillow on which to rest its aching head. As to the chunk, it is neither new nor wise; as to the pillow, it is a thorn.

It is a cardinal principle of Socialism that material interests determine man’s actions. It is from the Capitalist camp that denials of this principle are heard, and it is from the Socialist howitzers that the plunging fire of facts is dropped into the Capitalist camp, shattering the capitalists’ hypocrisy that their conduct proceeds from “patriotism,” “godliness” or any of their favorite masks. The facts demonstrate that, with capitalists as with all other classes, material interests determine sentiment. It is not love of country or godliness that makes one capitalist a protectionist: he is protectionist out of love for his pocket, his interests requiring protection; it is not love of country that makes another capitalist a free trader: he is a free trader because it is to the interest of his special business to have cheap imported raw material and correspondingly cheaper labor. Taking the two together, it is neither godliness nor love of country that enthuses them for Capitalism; the well-spring of their enthusiasm is the desire to continue to live upon the backs of the workingmen: Capitalism enables them to, Socialism would end their ride. Similarly with the workingman. Human as he is, his actions are obedient to the identical law that governs the acts of all mankind. Stripped of the necessities for work, and enlightened by Socialist truth, he becomes alive to the interest of his class,

and strives for the Socialist Republic. It is quite possible that, the same as free trade capitalists have been known to turn protectionists and vice versa, and the same as free silver mine owners have been known to turn gold bugs and vice versa, according as their material interests changed, so likewise may a Socialist workingman, who becomes the recipient of some wind-fall, cease to be a Socialist, or, as the *Democrat and Chronicle* puts it in its ignorance, be cured of the itch for “redistribution.” Such instances are known. None understands the transformation better than the Socialist. It is only the capitalist “intellectuals” who, with their characteristic superficiality, wonder at such changes, and stupidly point to them as instances of “Socialist weakness.” Accordingly, the *Democrat and Chronicle’s* chunk is no newly discovered wisdom.

Neither is the chunk a soft pillow to rest on. Socialism would have no reason of existence if “windfalls” were frequent enough to raise the working masses out of their wage slave condition. On the contrary, the workings of capitalism see to it that, whatever else may happen with the exceptionally few, the overwhelming majority of the wage-slave class can not acquire even a “little private property.” Capitalism does its work of raising recruits for Socialism with even greater thoroughness. It steadily deprives those who have “a little private property” of their havings. It goes by the principle: “To those who have, more will be given; from those who have not, even that little will be taken away.”} Look at the statistics of failures of small firms. They are swept off like flies. Thus, the instance here and there of a workingman who acquires a little private property only goes to accentuate the bulk of the mass who do not, and whose bulk is ever increased by the steady flow of the freshly dispossessed—all recruits for Socialism, rendering Socialism more certain.

Then there is no balm in Gilead for the capitalist class? None at all. The pillow on which the *Democrat and Chronicle* would rest the aching heads of the capitalists, aching because of their dim apprehension of the wrath that is coming, is, accordingly, a mischievously sharp thorn. Aye, uneasy must rest the head that rests on such a “pillow.”

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