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EDITORIAL

PROSPERITY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Christmas issue of the New York *Herald* contained among its “Situations Wanted” advertisements the following:

“Fireman, with starving family, wishes any position; want no wages; only warm meal; sell his skin and blood.”

Inquiry at the address given brought out the following facts:

The applicant is an American citizen; served in the 201st N.Y. Volunteers in the late Spanish-American war, during which he was two months at the front in Cuba, and was finally honorably mustered out; he is sober, industrious and decent. With all this the man’s family is starving; one child has already succumbed; he, with wife and three others, stands on the ragged edge, at the foot of which yawns the dark abyss, and from which his advertisement to the public sounds like the despairing cry of one about to be engulfed.

To-day, when comfort for all is possible and involuntary poverty is no longer a visitation against which man stands impotent, one such case as that of this ex-soldier is enough to condemn the social system that can so mismanage its resources. But every intelligent man knows that this one case is not an exception, that it is a type of a numerous class. Capitalism—Hanna-led and Gompers-buttressed—has produced the miracle of industry in full run accompanied with extensive misery. Time was when the machinery of production was as yet so undeveloped that “prosperity”—that is to say, the full running of the industrial plants—, was synonymous with “prosperity”—that is to say, the full occupation of Labor. Never at such times did Labor receive more than a pittance of its product; never at such time did labor work under other than the degrading condition of wage-slavery. Despite that, however, Labor being fully engaged, downright starvation was not possible. To-day, the Capitalist System has reached the point when workingmen are ready

“to sell their skin and blood” and work simply for “food,” notwithstanding the “prosperity” which consists in the full running of the plants. That in this particular instance the victim had fought for the country only aggravates the case; it does not take the case out of the class.

When the Capitalist Class was still young and inexperienced in the art of chicanery, it bluntly admitted the trail of human suffering that marked its track. In those early days it threw the blame upon Providence, and set up the “Malthusian Theory” to quiet its conscience. To-day, a veteran in the art of chicanery, the Capitalist Class has changed its tactics, it brazenly denies that there is any such human suffering, it even goes so far as pretend that it is productive only of manifold blessings, with Labor as the special blessingee. But the fraud is so periodically broken through that it is full of holes. One of these ghastly holes is made by that Christmas-day advertisement.

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

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