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EDITORIAL

THE FORESIGHT FALLACY.

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EVER since the inception of Capitalism, its disciples have laid much emphasis on the foresight of the capitalist. To the possession of this faculty by the capitalist, not only the wealth of the capitalist class, but the greatness of the race has been attributed. It has even been argued that, thanks to this alleged fact, instead of the few capitalists being the plunderers of the many proletarians, the many proletarians are the plunderers of the few capitalists.

Of course, the capitalist claim to foresight is preposterous. The Socialist has all along pointed out that the capitalist is the product of social evolution and economic conditions and acts as they dictate; and that too often his acts are not in accord with that dictation, falling miserably short of it, thanks to capitalist infallibility and interests. A case in point, is that of the late A.J. Cassatt. This able man a short time ago foresaw the need of immense improvements on the Pennsylvania Railroad, growing out of the demands of a constantly increasing traffic. He expended hundreds of millions in meeting the same, to the consternation of men not in a position to be as well informed as himself. At present, after the short space of two or three years, it is found that even the "far-sighted" Cassatt, was short-sighted, to the extent of \$200,000,000 of necessary improvements. These are now to be inaugurated by his successor. Again, J.J. Hill makes the announcement that, in order to meet the requirements of the Western States in the matter of railroads, \$1,100,000,000 or twice the present amount, will have to be expended annually for new mileage for the period of five years. "But," he hastens to add, "it can't be done. We can't get the money, the rails or the men." Why can't the capital, the rails and the men be secured? Because the "far-sighted" capitalist has again proven his short-sightedness. He has made no preparation for the future, but has contented himself with concentrating and inflating the railroads of the present. He has played the dog

in the manger to progress, because his immediate interests demands it. Under the circumstances, how can he be expected to look beyond the morrow, and conduct himself accordingly?

But if the fallacy of foresight on the part of the capitalist needed further demolition, it will be found in an article, "The Mere Incident of Failure," in *Everybody's* for January. The writer, Will Payne, an anti-Socialist, well-known in financial circles, sizes up this capitalist fraud well. Says he:

"There is a general conspiracy to lie about business success. The newspapers, having roasted the rich citizen when alive, feel bound to say something flattering about him when dead. So in the obituary notices they make him out a seer who pierced the future with unerring vision, and laid out his money accordingly. They endow him with infallible judgment and great imagination....Of course, this is nonsense....Courage, not prescience, is what is chiefly needed to succeed. The best and safest business ability concerns itself exclusively with the thing immediately under its nose."

Then Mr. Payne proceeds to cite the story of Marshall Field, to prove his contention correct, after which he gives expression to the following truths:

"Power to see the future has a certain place in business—an exceedingly humble one, however. It is employed professionally by some ladies and gentlemen at an average price of about a dollar a sitting. They can see things afar off, but not the landlord who is coming up the stairs to throw them out, nor the policeman who is coming around the corner to run them in. Prescience and clairvoyance have no place in the equipment of men who are able to make a living in less hazardous and persecuted callings."

How true!

The capitalist clairvoyants, i.e., those who uphold the "foresight" theory, "see things afar off," but they cannot see Socialism coming around the corner and up the stairs to kick them down and out.

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