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EDITORIAL

THE PRAYER IN POLITICS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

The *Woman's Christian Temperance Union* is extremely wroth because the present incumbent of the White House has refused to suppress the canteen Devil. He has, moreover, aided and encouraged that enemy of prohibition and morality, the unofficial rum seller, whose habitat is just over the line from the military reserve where soldiers are wont to barrack. These ladies have linked themselves into an endless chain of prayer and are going to imitate Emperor William's plan of drowning the enemy by a continuous performance on the prayer wheel.

This plan appears to have several serious defects. If the efficacy of prayer to accomplish the purpose desired is admitted, what is the use of praying for the half-loafs? "That He will give the United States a better man for President [falling out of a hammock would be hard work compared with that], who will be a total abstainer himself and will do all he can to overthrow the liquor traffic."

Four years ago these pious women were mostly praying for McKinley's election; whether he "bruk his pledge" since we are not informed by the W.C.T.U., but it seems to be delicately hinted at in this passage: "One who will keep wine off the White House table."

But the canteen is the real bone of contention. Mac is to be wrestled with by the earnest petitioners: all on account of the canteen is he to be prayed out of his job.

Of the 75 or 80 million people in the United States, there may be as many as 25,000 who have a drinking acquaintance with the canteen. It is for the use of soldiers. "Soldiers have souls," says the W.C.T.U., "which must be saved from the demon rum." "Soldiers have stomachs," says Mac, "which must be protected from the adulterated booze of the bootlegger and other un-official dealers in drinkables."

A weak stomach might incapacitate the soldier from the strenuous work of shooting unarmed strikers at home or looting heathen palaces abroad. What effect the loss of his soul would have on one of these cheap janissaries it would be hard to say. So far, the mercenary who foregathers with the chaplain and sings psalms has

never allowed the roisterer who consorts with the barkeep and makes the air blue with curses to outdo him in butchery.

The sniveling hypocrisy, the hardly concealed cynical blasphemy contained in this endless chain of prayer scheme, is well worthy of those Pharisees who pretend to attack drunkenness, one of the evil effects of the vicious social system, while supporting with might and main the cause of that evil: capitalism.

McKinley, a hypocrite himself, should be invited to join them in their prayer. He would be as sincere in desiring to remove himself from the White House as they are in desiring temperance.

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

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