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EDITORIAL

COWES NEWS UPSETS “INDIVIDUALITY.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

Is it all pure sentimentalism, this widespread anxiety about **Queen Victoria**? Is it all a manifestation of that morbid curiosity that typifies unthinking masses? Or is it, perchance, a manifestation of that cur-like superstition that causes many people to look at the fate of the “great” in the same spirit that they look with gaping jaws and bated breath at some unusual phenomenon in the skies? No doubt there is much of all this in the feelings with which the bulletins from **Cowes** are being scanned. If that were all, the incident would deserve no mention in these columns. At best, it would be entitled to a chapter or passing paragraph in some **Lombroso** article. But the incident does not fall wholly within either or all of these categories. It is of infinitely greater import.

Which is the argument, heard with greatest frequency and advanced with greatest honesty, in simultaneous support of the existing Social Order and opposition to Socialism? Individuality. It is a rooted belief with many that, whatever the evils may be of the existing Order—and the self-respecting admit these evils often, to the full extent of the Socialist indictment—nevertheless it promotes Individuality, while Socialism would destroy it. Superstitions of this nature can not be reasoned down, because they never were reasoned up. If at all to be shaken, it must be by glaring illustrations. The attitude of the civilized world at Queen Victoria’s deathbed should, it is to be hoped, be the illustration needed.

The pulse of modern society is the stock exchange. It is not sentiment, it is not curiosity, least of all is it superstition that sets the “ticker” in motion. Just the reverse of all these. Interest of the most material, interest of the most individual character both dictate and watch its throbbings. In its tick there may be life or death; a warrant for affluence and corresponding might, or a decree of ruin with corresponding servitude. Now, then, this “ticker” it is around which anxiety has centered with the first news from Cowes of Queen Victoria’s possible passing away. The “market” is upset and indisposed. The life of this one human being is the hook

upon which the material welfare, the future and fate depend of thousands upon thousands of individuals, themselves the pillars of "Individuality," in this "Individuality-promoting" Order of to-day! What effect, they ask, will the Queen's death have upon the quotations, and they shiver.

The suspended breath, chattering jaws and knocking knees with which capitalist-bred Individuality all over civilization is awaiting, in helpless impotence, the news from Cowes, presents a truthful picture of the sorry thing that this much-vaunted Individuality is. Who would raise a hand to perpetuate it, and thus perpetuate the completest negation of Individuality, by resisting the introduction of Socialist conditions, from which alone Individuality can spring in all its radiance?

While the possessing class of "Individualists" is being caught in the cogs of its own "matchless" social machinery, and is making a rare exhibition of its Individuality, the class whose pulse is left unstirred by slumps in stock exchanges, moves onward to the achievement of the work that, fortunately to say, does not depend upon whether stock speculators learn from experience or not.

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