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EDITORIAL

DE TOCQUEVILLE SUPPLEMENTED.

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THE intellectually spineless observation of Mr. Ben Tillet that class-lines in America are less strong than in England, seeing that American capitalists treat a passenger on board a ship with courtesy, tho' he be a workingman, recalls to mind certain utterances by a leading American capitalist politician. Speaking in Indianapolis, Ind., on Sept. 15, 1888, Benjamin Harrison, at that time the Republican nominee for President of the United States, said:

“I do not believe that a republic can live whose wage earners do not receive enough to make life comfortable, who do not have some upward avenue of hope before them. When wage earners of this land lose hope, when, then the star goes out—after that anarchy or a Czar.”

These words do more than help illustrate the justice of the dictum of de Tocqueville, touching the external kindness with which the American capitalist conceals the mailed hand with which he treats the workingman: the words also supplement de Tocqueville's estimate.

It needs only a passing notice of the fact that the American capitalist politician, who oiled the wheels of the electoral machine that landed him into the Presidency, with language that sounded so considerate of the workingman, was, directly upon his election, the President who initiated the policy of furnishing Federal troops to capitalists to bayonet their workingmen into subjection. The long list of governmental outrages against the miners of Idaho was started by troops sent thither by President Harrison. Since then such outrages have become common there, and have been repeated elsewhere. In the speech one sees the velvet, in the act one feels the mailed hand that de Tocqueville long before pointed out.

But the speech also supplements de Tocqueville. What de Tocqueville probably had no opportunity to perceive is that, besides the mailed hand, the American capitalist has furnished himself with another weapon of subjugation, to wit: the SUPERTERRESTRIAL. This weapon he imported from his British cousins. What

caused the working class unrest and despair—brought on in England by the era of rapidly improving machinery, especially in the textile industries—to pass over the land without scathing the capitalist class, and without leaving a sufficient sediment of intelligent, class-conscious understanding of the Labor Question in the ranks of the Working Class, was the Methodist religion, that sprang up simultaneously. The unrest and despair, that, intelligently handled, would have at least laid a broad and sound corner-stone for a healthy revolutionary Labor Movement, was caused by Methodism, to evaporate in prayers and “hope.” Instead of the sufferers being taught to rely on themselves, to understand their duty on earth and act accordingly, their faces were turned by the Methodist revivalists towards the sky, where their aspirations melted away with the clouds. The tip has been taken by the American capitalist. Harrison’s speech betrays the fact. The “upward avenue of hope” on his lips is no figure of speech with him and his. It is a means known to be potent by the American capitalist, whereby to continue the social system where the “wage earner”—a euphonious term for “wage-slave”—shall continue to be. “Hope,” accordingly, is a valuable mystification with the aid of which the thing being dangled up before the workers, the American capitalist is able to rifle their pockets.

Can he, who holds up “Hope” and speaks of “Stars,” be otherwise than courteous towards his victims? If he were otherwise, he would defeat his own plans.

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

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