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EDITORIAL

A LIFE-LIE THAT KILLS.

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“**T**O most men life would become impossible without their life-lie,” said Ibsen. Though crustily expressed, there is a wealth of truth in the epigram. Well known is the sustaining power of an ideal, an illusion even. Physicians invoke it beside the sick-bed; great generals appeal to it on the eve of decisive engagements. Its efficacy is a standing rebuke to that school of materialism that would deny any influence of mind on matter.

But what shall be said of a life-lie whose direct result is not to sustain, but to cast down? not to cause to live, but to lead to death?

Every workingman who has ever endeavored to work among his fellow-workmen, every dilettante settlement worker who has ever made a picnic out of “investigating” working class conditions, every census enumerator who has ever been set to work on that portion of census-taking, has encountered this lie. It seems to be bred by false teaching into the very bone of the wage worker. From the veriest tot in a New Jersey glass mill to the gray-haired care-taker allowed to putter around some welfare-working concern’s office as an example of the company’s benevolence in all trades and occupations, in all ages and conditions can be met wage earners who labor under its influence. It is the life-lie of overstating the wages they receive.

For the capitalist to overstate the wages he pays is natural. He must conceal the vast discrepancy between his fleecings and the workers’ pittance. He must make as large as possible the percentage “received by labor.” He must prop up the “prosperity” idea, and have a big “pay roll” to point the worker to when the latter asks for a raise. But for the worker himself, the victim of the game, to help his exploiter play it on him, is nothing short of suicidal. While his body writhes under the pinch of poverty, his mind lies supine under the delusion of the high wages he

tells himself and others he is getting. He prevents the statistician from fathoming, and thereby helping set the basis for a correction of his poverty. He but pours cocaine on the wound of his exploitation, instead of rising to resist all further wounding.

And as long as he is content so to salve his anguish, the boss will laugh in his sleeve and let him.

'Tis about time the workers decided to quit uttering this life-lie that kills.

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