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EDITORIAL

THE PHILANTHROPIC APPLE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

PHILANTHROPY has been defined as “Plundering wholesale, and returning retail.” Representative Cowdrey [Coudrey] of Missouri has a bill in the House entitled “a bill to pension old age,” but the real name of which should be “Charity—or Prolonging Misery.”

Representative Cowdrey’s bill provides for pensions to all men who have reached the minimum of three score years, and whose income falls below \$102 a year. To all these charity is to be done by giving them a pension of \$1.24 a month.

To the uninitiated in Cowdreyian philosophy the Cowdrey bill will present itself as the exact opposite of charity. They will reason thus:

“The man sixty years of age who can earn only \$102 a year is a man who is committing suicide. With \$102 a year, even if a man did not work, that is, even if he had no expenditure of tissue over and above the normal expenditure involved in living, he could not possibly restore the normal expenditure. He would be sinking. If he has to work, then the expenditure of tissue is larger, and rises far above what \$102 a year, or 27 cents a day, could replace. Such a man would be sinking steadily into his grave, and smoothly too, like one who falls off into a slumber. What would be the effect of \$1.24 a month, or 4 cents more a day on such a man? Would it save him from the grave? Impossible. The only effect would be to prolong his agony.”

Is Representative Cowdrey’s purpose the prolongation of the agony of the worker, who, after a life of toil that has yielded affluence to capitalists is left empty-handed, and compelled still to work, but now for the diminished pittance of \$102 a year? Hardly. Representative Cowdrey’s purpose is to be a philanthropist. But bourgeois philanthropy being begotten of bourgeois class interests, like the apple in the proverb, never falls far from the tree. If the wind blows from the south the philanthropic apple falls to the north of the tree as a retail return for the wholesale

plunder: if the wind blows from the north, then the philanthropic apple falls to the south of the tree in the shape of 4 cents a day—in all instances the philanthropic apple spells s-t-u-p-i-d-i-t-y.

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