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EDITORIAL

WORK, AND WORK.

By DANIEL DE LEON

QUITE a flurry has been created in ministerial and physical culture circles by Thomas Edison's recent prophecy that in a few generations all unpleasant manual labor will be done by machinery. While in one case hypocritical and in the other sincere, both ministerial and physical culture objections spring from the same root, and can be handled and answered together.

The root they spring from is the notion that without compulsion to labor man will grow indolent and degenerate. The notion fails to grasp the pole-wide distinction between work and work—between work, in the sense of healthful physical activity, and work in the sense of humdrum drudgery.

In the latter sense, no doubt man looks down upon work, despises it, and endeavors to escape it in all possible ways. It would, indeed, be an insult to his intelligence if he did not. It is joyless, monotonous toil, nearly always uninteresting, often unwholesome or dangerous, and in the vast majority of cases selected not for its congeniality, but because of a dozen extraneous considerations—wages, stress of circumstances, or the like. That supreme pleasure of the early handicraftsman, of seeing his product grow into shape beneath his hand, and of ownership in it when completed, is denied the factory worker of to-day. His toil is not for himself, but for a master; he himself is but a galley-slave tugging at the oars.

Release man from this soul-numbing drudgery, and will he lie idle and slothful? Not a bit of it. Man is a creature of action. Activity is the law of his being. Knock off his galley-slave shackles, and his labors will straightway soar to higher things. The "Spiel-trieb," as the Germans call it, the play-impulse, is the heritage of man, as it is of all other animals. Every healthy child possesses it. Every artist carries it with him through life. Every piece of work worth doing is done in response to its dictates.

Only when work is so done for pure love of itself that it seems as play to the doer, does it really become great. It is only when the individual is harnessed down to uncongenial sunless toil in the struggle for existence that the spring of the Spiel-tieb breaks, and man longs for rest and idleness. Even then, remove the adverse circumstances, let him recover his normal spirit, and the old instinct revives itself and spurs him on. The boy who could not be driven to build lighthouses later wielded one of the most lovable pens in literature, and the youth who crept like snail unwillingly to law school, became the world's greatest political economist. It is all in finding the work one loves and is adapted to. That our modern system of industry cuts the workers off from. That the performance of all menial labor by means of machinery would leave the worker free to accomplish.

No; the performance of dull labor's daily round by the iron horse will not result in sloth and degeneracy. On the contrary, the energy, the life now consumed in ceaseless grubbing for existence, will then be devoted to the higher part of man, that higher part which cannot develop till its material foundation first be laid.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org