

EDITORIAL

EASY LESSON NO. 5.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WE purpose, dear Father F.N. Van Nistelroy, to impart to you in a manner easily to be comprehended some information that may serve to enlighten you regarding another of the fundamental errors that underlie your letter on Socialism in the Huntington, Ind., *Our Sunday Visitor*.

You speak as a patriot—consequently the feeling that impels you is love for the country; you speak one versed in the law—consequently your instincts are law-abiding; you speak in favor of the right—consequently righteousness is the steam in the boiler of your heart. Out of patriotism, respect for the law, and righteousness you condemn Socialism; and as an illustration of the unpatriotic, illegal and unrighteous breath of Socialism you set up the principle that a man's private property should be his to do as he pleases, and not to be taken from him, of course, not even after death, the right to his property continuing even after he has ceased to be, according as he has willed it.

We believe that so much patriotism, such profound veneration for the Law, such sublime righteousness should not be allowed to waste themselves upon the desert air through lack of knowledge, and thereby to redound to the interest of unpatriotism, of contempt for the Law and of unrighteousness. So believing, and prompted by the desire to promote your education, Father dear, we wish to impart to you the following little pills of information:

1st. In the first place, we would make you acquainted with one Thomas R. Marshall. The gentleman is a lawyer by profession. Just now he is not working at his trade. He is occupying the office of Vice-President of the United States, to which he was elected last November by an overwhelming majority of electoral votes.

2nd. The next pill we would administer to you is the following passage from

Vice-President Marshall's recent and loud-echoes-evoking speech: "I think it was the State Bar Association of Illinois which at one time recommended that a large part of estates revert to the State. I have never recommended such a thing, but I have simply pointed to it to show that the power to inherit and to devise are simply privileges given by the State to its citizens."

These two pills should cause you, Father dear, to exude the ignorance that you are now afflicted with touching the supreme right of a person over his property. The pill will also serve as a tip for further inquiry. You will find that private property is a creature of society. And you will find that the fact was grasped by the great and good Franklin, who, after stating the principle, added that society had a right to every farthing of such property, whenever society believed it needed the same.

Now, then, this being thus your patriotism, respect for the law and righteousness stand upon a false philosophy, while Socialism stands squarely planted upon the facts in the case and the conclusions that legitimately flow therefrom. Hasten to learn, Father Van Nistelroy.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded August 2015

slpns@slp.org