

EDITORIAL

## THE CASE OF FATHER SCHMIDT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**M**URDER is, unfortunately, no rare thing in our country—out of the columns of the *Sun* and the *Post* alone, two days ago, the reports of twenty-three murders can be picked.

Nor is the murdering of a young woman facing maternity, and murdered by the father in order to cover up his infamy, a thing unheard of in the land.

Nor yet is the superaddition of cold-blooded quartering of the victim's body, and the scattering of the victim's head, trunk and limbs to bewilder the blood-hounds of Justice,—nor yet is that horror a novelty.

All of these happenings are unfortunately too common; nor are they any longer peculiarly instructive.

It is otherwise with the combination of horrors that [Father Johannes Schmidt](#) of St. Joseph's Catholic Church confesses himself guilty of.

The decree imposing celibacy upon the priesthood was, no doubt, a master-stroke on the part of the papal mind that issued and enforced it. The decree marked the complete shaping of the Ultramontane Catholic organization as a terrestrial entity, with religion as a pretext, and political ambition as the dominant fact. Nevertheless, however masterly, in a way, the stroke was, it, at the same time, flew in the face of Nature's laws, and thereby became a source of untold evil—a double-edged sword that gashes both prelacy and parishioners.

That which flies in the face of Nature is impossible of permanence. Its continuance can, in the long run, be on the surface only; and then the surface is periodically broken through by tell-tale events, like pimples and carbuncles that break through a skin which stretches over diseased muscles. Minor eruptions have occurred before, and are occurring plentifully in the land. Father Phillips of Scranton, found dead in

a bourdel {bordello?} in this city, and so many kindred occurrences North, South, East and West, are of the number. As has happened everywhere else, where Ultramontane Catholicism has held sway, larger and louder eruptions were sure to happen in the United States, where Ultramontanism is boasting of making miraculous progress,—eruptions of such nature that to hush them up, as many others have been hushed, would be impossible.

Such an eruption is the case of Father Schmidt.

“Well did the Vatican its bus’ness know  
When, at the goal of universal power aiming,  
And the creation of a fighting army,  
That, free from all entangling hindrances,  
On one great aim its complete efforts bends,  
Upon the clergy imposed the sinful duty  
Of celibacy.”

Such is the estimate of the institution of celibacy—“a sinful duty”—expressed by Ferdinand Lassalle in his drama, *Franz von Sickingen*.”

Before Lassalle—whose dictum Ultramontanism might reject on the ground of his being a Socialist—another giant mind, in a way a greater, whom Ultramontanism cannot so lightly affect to brush aside, summed up the institution of celibacy from another, the moral viewpoint. The summary was made by François Rabelais, himself a Franciscan and then a Benedictine monk, and all the time the friend and protégé of no less a Catholic dignitary than Cardinal Du Bellay. The summary, delivered with Rabelaisian humor, is to the effect that “the very shadow of the steeple of an abbey is fruitful.”

Finally, long after Lassalle, from what country and what parishioners has the demand come of late in loudest notes for the abolition of celibacy? It came from among the Catholic laity and clergy of the Catholic Kingdom of Bavaria—Father Schmidt’s own native land.

The atrocious crime of Father Schmidt was due. It has been for some time. It is the timely warning that Nature and History combine to give to the country against a political organization whose disciplinary system begets such a monster among its ex-officio holy officials.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)