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EDITORIAL

DIVORCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

EITHER the Socialists are right and society is RISING by a return to the social standards of the old-time tribal communities; or the Socialists are wrong, and bourgeois philosophy is right, to the effect that a return to the social standards of olden days is a decline, and then society must be in the course of DISSOLUTION.

The social status of woman under Class Rule stands out in marked contrast to her status in the tribal and pre-Class Rule era.

From being, in the tribal era, the mistress in her home, she has become a chattel under Class Rule. From being the owner of her children, she became the breeder of heirs for her husband, lord and master, whom she pledged herself at the altar to obey. From being the namer of her children, she lost her own name-identity, the same going up into that of her husband. The new status was extolled as “chastity,” “virtue,” “duty,” and what not, the praises bestowed upon it being but cloaks to conceal the actual vassal, if not chattel status of the wife.

It goes without saying that where such a state of things exists two different standards of morality are raised—one for the vassal, the wife, a strict standard; one for the master, the husband, a loose standard. The fact came into strongest prominence in the matter of divorce. Chastity was demanded of the wife—a breach of the same at first forfeited her life, later punished her with a forfeiture of home. And all this was put down as the top-flower of civilization.

All the time Socialism has been holding a different language. It tore the veil that covered woman’s degradation, and it pointed the finger upon the degradation itself. It denied that what was extolled as choice flowers of civilization was such. Socialism did more. It pronounced the “flowers” thorns, and it foretold that the “flow-

ers” would wither to make room for the restoration of woman’s freedom; along with that, as a consequence, the purification of man.

By degrees, the Socialist position is being made good; its prognostics are being realized. The changing laws on divorce are the beam which denotes the current’s steady direction. Quite such a beam is the report of the British Royal Commission recommending positively drastic changes in the existing laws on divorce.

Leaving aside a minute consideration of details that rather tends to confuse than enlighten, the recommendations of the Royal Commission,—beginning with the placing of husband and wife on an equality of duty in the matters of chastity,—look to the restoration of conjugal relations to where the same stood in the pre-Class Rule tribal days. Then, marriage lasted so long as it had the consent of both the parties; and it ended when the consent ended.

It is an easy matter to yell: “Free Love!” and look the picture of “outraged decency.” Those from whom the yell and the look usually proceed are well known to be “Stop-thief!” criers. Upholders of asocial order under which prostitution is “a necessary evil” can earn contempt only for the hypocrisy of their yell and look. The fact remains that with developing material conditions, the race is steadily retracing its steps, and, consciously or unconsciously, is endeavoring to regain the social status that it abandoned temporarily—tho’ the temporariness covers thousands of years—in order to secure the material basis (plentiful wealth with absence of arduous toil) whereby to free the pre-Class Struggle status from the ills that beset it. The report of the British Royal Commission enlarging the field for divorce is an unmistakable sign of the times. As society tends with ever more powerful tendencies towards Socialism—the sublimated communism of the pre-Class Struggle status of the tribal social order—inevitable are the manifestations of the tendency to free conjugal life of the ills of Class Rule conditions. It is better for the man, it is better for the woman, it is better for the children, it is better for society that matches that have suffered shipwreck be not perpetuated by shams.

Whether, indeed, the change is for the better or for the worse, there will be differences of opinion, according as class interests or habits of thought may dictate.

Upon one thing there can be no difference of opinion—society increasingly recognizes the immorality of keeping them coupled whom Love has uncoupled.

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