

EDITORIAL

## EUGENICS AND EUGENISTS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE saying current in Germany, “Die Schweiss waere schoen wenn die Schweitzer nicht waeren”<sup>1</sup>—Switzerland would be beautiful were it not for the Swiss—involuntarily occurs, in the adapted form of “Eugenics would be admirable were it not for the eugenists,” when one reads the moan emitted in the American edition of *La Tribune Medicale* over the jesting spirit generally assumed by the public press towards the late international congress of eugenics, aggravated by the opinion of “even such learned men as Balfour,” who appear to think “eugenics were utilized chiefly by faddists.”

Can the public be blamed when the eugenicist A.J. Rosanoff is approvingly quoted by {the} identical *La Tribune Medicale* as claiming that statistics prove that the feeble-minded, and those afflicted with epilepsy, insanity and brutal tendencies “are the most prolific source of our present difficulties in raising the status of the race?”

Of course, eugenists are human. As such they are “flesh, and blood, and apprehensive.” Being human beings, eugenists respond to the calls of necessity. These being urgent and increasingly difficult to satisfy, eugenists frequently succumb. The necessity to make a living thus but too often dictates the eugenicist’s views. As the living is to be made out of the class that has livings to bestow, and as the truths of eugenics frequently run counter to this class, the long and short of it is that the Science of Eugenics becomes commercialized, and is debauched—like so many other sciences, art and literature included.

In the instance of eugenics, there is an additional source of danger. Eugenics is still in its infancy. The facts, necessary for safe conclusions are yet few, and insuffi-

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<sup>1</sup> [Schweiz wäre schön, wenn es nicht für die Schweizer?—R.B.]

ciently organized. Thus eugenics is still a science in outlines—of all fields the most attractive for shallow brilliancy, imaginative ignorance, and the insolence of defective knowledge to browse on.

The net result of these combined causes is just such statements as that of A.J. Rosanoff—the flippant imputing of causal force to the consequences of a social system that itself is the “prolific source of our present difficulties in raising the status of the race”—in other words, the acquitting of the real social malefactors—or, in still other words that sum up the final outcome, the easing of the conscience of the malefactors for a job-consideration, in consideration of a job that, besides having the practical cash foundation, swells with its windiness the sails of vainglory. It is not on the unscientific field of heathendom alone that candles are burned to demons. The phenomenon is witnessed on the field of Science also.

Socialism blazes on its banner the Emancipation of the Proletariat. The proletariat is not the only captive from whose limbs the modern Perseus will have to strike the shackles. Science is another brood of captives, and the Science of Eugenics is just now among the most pitiable specimen in the brood.

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