

EDITORIAL

THE CONVICTION OF BECKER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE prompt unanimity with which a jury of twelve men of above average intelligence, who had listened to all the evidence and had full opportunity to watch the witnesses,—the prompt unanimity with which these men reached the conclusion of Becker's guilt, only four of them differing slightly at first from the majority and inclined to hold Becker guilty of second degree murder, but finally falling in one by one with the majority's opinion of fullest guilt—that fact wrings from one's chest the exclamation: “Another potentially master human being warped into a criminal by modern society!”

Becker may be said to have sat for his photograph during the two weeks of the trial. He was weighed. His dimensions were taken. His capabilities, mental and physical, were tested. The picture is one of Nature's potential masterpieces. Strong of physique, without the muscles that place the physically strong man on that side of the line where the beasts are ranked. Stronger yet in mentality—possessed of a will power that Society would be much the better for if found more frequently. With a heart, at once the seat of tender love, and capable of imparting the same—well have Science and Poetry fixed upon a man's capacity to attract and keep a woman's devotion as the test of his worthiness. Yet with all this, Becker is a wretch.

Whose the blame?

What power was that that unmuscled the athlete to deeds of cowardice?

What power was that that sapped the master will to schemes of turpitude?

What power was that that quickened the kind heart to throbs of cruelty?

All magnitudes are relative. However absolutely large a magnitude, relatively it may dwindle into insignificance. The gauge of a prevailing magnitude is the size of that which it overtops.

To the power of such superior power the for-good-powerful personality of Becker

succumbed. In the hands of a social “order” that places the sword of Damocles over the head of man, that perpetually endangers his existence, that forces his thoughts down to material needs, that presses his stomach up into his heart and brain,—in the clutches of such a titan monster a Becker became like putty, nor, alas! is he the only one.

Guilty of murder in the first degree,—of vilely premeditated, still more vilely concocted murder, is the verdict that the Becker jury has rendered against modern Society. That verdict is not entered in the record book of filthy Courts. It is entered in the Record Book of a far different, a broader, a higher Court—a Court that is taking shape and whose sentence will remove the Arch Criminal, Capitalist, Class Rule{d} Society.

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