

EDITORIAL

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MRS. Elsie Clews Parsons' book *The Family*, just published by G.P. Putnam's Sons, is a work that typifies the Age that gives it birth—for, after all, it is the Age rather than any one individual that produces aught, whether mentally or physically. The Age of Sappho produced the Lesbian verse; the Age of Boccaccio produced the *Decameron*; the Age of Voltaire produced *Candide*, so justly ruthless an exposure of prevailing hypocritical habits that it shocks itself; the Age of chattel slavery in America produced *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, so true a fruit of that Age that the "Abolitionist" North was exhibited as entertaining less human feeling towards the Negro than the Negro's slave-holding massa; and so forth; and so likewise *The Family*,—the work of a banker's daughter and a Republican Congressman's wife, no doubt the product of an Age of matchless hypocrisy, rant and unscientific tenets regarding matrimony and the family—takes a position in the matter of the suggestion of "trial marriages" that can only detract from its real merit.

Mrs. Parsons correctly recognizes that the marriage question is pivoted upon the general labor question; she justly rejects the dogma of marriage being a "sacrament" exclusively; she cleverly generalizes upon the clan spirit which marks the theories of "parental ownership" and the "privacy of the home"; and unerring is the shaft couched in the sentence: "the voluntarily childless marriage of to-day is an indication of A TENDENCY TOWARD FREEDOM BEFORE MARRIAGE." From such premises, correct each of them, the conclusion that suggests "trial marriages" is inevitable. Nothing could prevent it except the full acceptance of the historic genesis of marriage—and that Mrs. Parsons rejects, or seems to reject, in the passage that condemns as a "dam" to the solution of the question the dictum that monogamy is a form of property-holding.

To say that the “trial marriage” proposition in so chaste and exemplary and timely a work as Mrs. Parsons’s is in the nature of the prurient passages of Voltaire’s *Candide*, is neither to disparage the former nor exalt the latter. It is merely the stating of a fact. Mrs. Parsons’s *The Family* is at any rate a breath of sincerity blown upon a question that the Pharisee world of to-day dare treat insincerely only.

Capitalism renders modern marriage a cloak for immorality, and under that cloak the human race suffers.

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