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EDITORIAL

## BARRETT'S CLEAN BREAST.

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**A** CHARACTER that has been vividly thrown on the canvass of the labor movement by the Haywood trial, by evidence piled high and deep, is that of the “agent provocateur.” The “agent provocateur,” or “provocative agent” has for years plied his nefarious calling to the joy and profit of the capitalist class. While well known to the bosses, in whose employ he has ever served as a servile tool to break a union or to wreck a strike, the provocative agent has been but meagerly known to the men. It is but recently that his true character is meeting exposure.

The peculiar work of the provocative agent falls into two distinct yet related methods. Either he may, while himself keeping out of reach of the law, urge and incite others to deeds of violence, which serve as pretexts for their own persecution or even death; or, failing in that, he may commit the deeds himself and blame them on the person or persons whom it is “desirable” to have out of the way. By a skilful combination of these two methods James McParland broke up in Pennsylvania thirty years ago an economic organization known as the Molly Maguires. It was in this way that A.W. Gratias and George W. Riddell worked for the dissolution of locals of the Western Federation of Miners. It was by the use of these two methods that a murderous conspiracy was built up against William D. Haywood and his fellow officers of the W.F.M. To borrow an illustration from abroad, these two methods, combined at times with open massacre, are the stock in trade of the League of True Russians and the Czar’s Black Hundreds to break up the Russian Revolution.

Of course, to the proper fruition of the machinations of the provocative agent, secrecy was necessary. He had to masquerade as an honest working man; he had to cloak himself in the mantle of innocence. Accordingly we find him working along in shop, mill or mine, with the other employes, at the same or lower wages, and no favors from the boss. We find him submitting to all the toil, indignity and want of

the wage-slave's life, not that he might aid the wage-slave in his struggle for emancipation, but that he might the more effectually work in hostility to that very emancipation. We find the capitalist press, ever the spokesman of the master class, on every occasion defending and white-washing the traitor, and loading him with praises in his moments of success. It was the capitalist press that showered its praises on McParland when the case concocted by him was sprung against William D. Haywood; it is that same press which now that the case has been exploded, defends the provocative agent by declaring that "if the unions had behaved themselves in the first place, he never would have sought admission into them," and by further alleging that the yarns of the Pinkerton spies are not "manufactured evidence" but "real evidence."

But a man's evidence against himself is the best evidence. Likewise a class's or profession's evidence against itself is the best. The "agent provocateur," or provocative agent has out of his own mouth condemned himself. In the midst of all the vaporings of the capitalist press trying to prove the provocative agent an uncrowned saint, scattering those vaporings like the morning's sun on the pestilential vapors of a swamp, has fallen the confession of Constable Barrett, of the Belfast police force.

Barrett, an old and tried member of the force, speaks with authority. He says promotion in the Belfast police is impossible unless a man make of himself a provocative agent. And how does he define a "provocative agent"? The character is amply defined in the statement he makes in the name of his brother officers, that they desire "to put an end to this abominable system of MANUFACTURING CRIME"!

Barrett's evidence is evidence at first hand, and can not be disputed. Barrett well knew by experience the system used by the master class in its fight against the producing class. Barrett made a clean breast. By it he has condemned and exposed for ever that despicable character, the agent provocateur.

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