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EDITORIAL

A GREAT THOUGHT TESTED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MRS. Potter Palmer, who performed the office of hostess to the late gathering of the Civic Federation in Chicago, is de-lighted. Besides being de-lighted the lady has suddenly developed an amount of socio-economic penetration that verges on genius, if it is not actually genius. She says, as the result of her observations at the gathering: "If one side only knew the other as it should, there would be less friction." No generalization on social questions, made by either Marx or Engels excels Mrs. Potter Palmer's.

Just consider:

"Friction" is a state of things that arises between bodies of men that think they can pull together, and try the feat.

In order successfully to pull together the two bodies must have a common starting point and a common goal.

Suppose "one side," say the Working Class, knew the other, the Capitalist Class, as it should. What would Labor ascertain? The first thing it would ascertain would be that all that the Capitalist Class has is wealth produced by, but stolen from the Working Class. The second thing that it would ascertain is that there could be no Capitalist Class unless there was a class that in some one of a score of ways had been stripped of the necessities for independent production. The third thing that it would ascertain is that the ratio of fat on the ribs of the Capitalist Class is in inverse relation to the fat on the ribs of the Working Class. The fourth thing that it would ascertain is that for there to be one Mrs. Potter Palmer, prancing in silks and satins, there must be at least 1,000 women of the Working Class shivering in calico. Having ascertained these various facts, that "one side" would "know the other as it should," and so knowing it would realize that its salvation involves the damnation of the other, the Capitalist Class.

Now, suppose the “other side,” say the Capitalist Class, knew the other, the Working Class, as it should. What would Capital ascertain? The first thing it would ascertain would be that, in order to live the “other side” has to work for it. The second thing that Capital would ascertain would be that, in order to live still better, the “other side” has to work for it still harder. The third thing that Capital would ascertain would be that, in order to live better still, the “other side” has to work for it harder and harder still. Having ascertained these various facts that “one side,” Capital, would “know the other as it should,” and so knowing it would realize that its safety and salvation involves the degradation and damnation of the Working Class.

Each side having reached the point where it “knew the other as it should” the two would “tear away.” There might be a clash. Probably there would be, but only for an instant. Friction, never.

The test of great thoughts is their obviousness, once stated. Mrs. Potter Palmer’s thought stands the test triumphantly.

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