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EDITORIAL

THE MOULTING EAGLE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

NEWPORT furnishes a bit of society news that is head and shoulders above the news that usually blows from that quarter. As a rule Newport society news is trivial. This one is weighted. It is to the effect that the deputy sheriff of the town was seen walking leisurely the Casino grounds, while the élite were at play, carefully “scanning the faces of the rich.” The item further states that thousands of dollars had been collected by the deputy sheriff for the town traders from the “Summer colony,” and adds that hundreds of eyes, some curious and other{s} anxious, followed the deputy sheriff to see whom he was after.

This is a bit of news pregnant with sociologic significance. It denotes Progress—the Progress made by “the rich” in their evolution.

Everybody who knows anything knows that, to-day, the word “nobleman” in Europe is not synonymous with the wealth the word implies and once went with it. There was a time when the nobleman was a man of means. Even then, some nobleman or other squandered his income and was in need; never, however{,} was he a “dead beat.” The then social institutions preserved him from the disgrace. He retained possession over his serfs: the same well from which he drew the bucketfuls of wealth which he squandered would furnish him later with more. Those days have gone by. What with the semi-bourgeois revolutions that took place in European countries, and what with the natural process of concentration that had preceded the bourgeois revolution, rafts of noblemen became paupers. They kept their titles, but their poverty and their habits earned for them the title of “beggars.” By that name they are known now in Europe, as many of our heiresses have learned from personal experience. Such was the development or evolution of the feudal “nobleman.”

The Newport society news informs the observer that the identical development

has taken place among our bourgeois “the rich.” Time was when to be of capitalist extraction was to be “rich.” “Rich” was the bourgeois title of nobility. A squanderer might be put to it to pay his debts, temporarily. But he retained possession. The source of his previous squanderings was certain to furnish fresh wealth at the next regular dividends day; in the meantime he could fight off the vulgar tradesman and the unfeeling Sheriff. That those days are gone by, the Newport item attests. The concentration of capital has played among many a “rich family” the havoc that events played in Europe among many a “noble family.” The modern “beggar” of European “noble families” has been overtaken by the “dead beat” of American “rich families.”

This is progress; welcome progress. The eagle when he moults is sickly. Before the fresh new feathers can bud, the old must decay and rot. Our rich are rotting. The Socialist feather is budding.

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