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EDITORIAL

THE NEW HARMONY MOVEMENT.

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THE work of George B. Lockwood, published by D. Appleton and Company, on *The New Harmony Movement*, is, despite all its imperfections, a first class contribution to the literature of the Socialist Movement.

New Harmony was the “Socialist Colony” established by Robert Owen in the present state of Indiana over eighty years ago. It was intended by Owen to be a half-way station to that beautiful social system of which he dreamed; it was to redeem humanity. The colony lived a few years. Its life, almost from the start, was a series of convulsions, until death overtook it.

It is well, at this season, for the Socialist to refresh his memory on the early history of Socialism. Lockwood’s work, which, oddly enough, takes in Josiah Warren’s experiment, does the refreshing to perfection in more respects than one.

The telephone, the steam engine, the derrick, the telescope, in fact, all great inventions started as toys. The great Socialist Movement, though no invention but a social growth, also had its toy stage. One of these magnificent toys was New Harmony. The ruling class has loved to point to the failure of New Harmony and other “Socialist Colonies” as proof of the impracticability of Socialism. Lockwood’s work, though purely historic and though a work that may be called a “Record of Failures,” condenses for the militant Socialist the facts from which he can gather priceless instruction and draw inexhaustible encouragement.

It could not be otherwise but that Socialism should have begun standing upon its head. Before Owen Franklin’s genius had penetrated the facts of production to the extent of declaring that “if every man worked three hours a day, none would need to work longer than three hours.” The inhumanity that capitalist condition brought forth could not choose but arouse the early indignation of noble minds. The foundation failed, however; and, failing all but too naturally, Socialism made its

first appearance “heels over head.”

The experience of New Harmony is proof of the weakness of mere human sentiment. It is proof of that feature of mankind that it must be compelled to act wisely before it does so. It is proof that no artificial, and, of course, no fist-force compulsion will do the work. It is proof that just because Socialism was an impossibility a century ago, it has become a necessity to-day—to-day when the compelling force is the mammoth plant of production that compels co-operation—to-day when the choice is either serfdom through refusal to co-operate, or freedom by falling in line. In short, to-day, when neither superstition nor sentiment is the binding force, but a material condition that renders co-operation a racial compulsion as completely as man’s physical make-up compels him to breathe through his lungs.

Lockwood’s book closes with these words:

“With the death of Robert Dale Owen the last of the great figures conspicuous in the New Harmony communism passed away, but the great movements to which they had given origin and direction still sweep onward in an ever-widening current.” Indeed, the movement sweeps onward in an ever-widening current. It has swept onward with the development of the material conditions that render it practical, and assures its triumph.

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

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