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EDITORIAL

THE VOTING MACHINE AS A CREMATORY.

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THERE is no little color of truth in the joke cracked at the expense of physicians that they are the most enthusiastic people in favor of cremation. Cremation insures their safety.

In the eighteenth century Beaumarchais satirized physicians by declaring their art to be the noblest of all—"its great achievements are illumined by the sun, while its blunders are concealed under the sod." And before Beaumarchais, Molière's shafts at the doctors were numerous and witty: "the dead were so discreet." But those days have gone by. The sod has ceased to conceal medical blunders; the dead have ceased to be discreet. They are exhumed, and then they frequently talk with a loudness, a directness, an eloquence that has resulted in heavy damages to doctors, occasionally even in imprisonment. Cremation insures the discreetness of babbling corpses, and, therewith, the impunity of physicians.

What cremation is expected by physicians to do for them, that is expected by the capitalist politicians to be done for political crookedness by the voting machine. The election frauds that the Hearst recount is exhuming out of the ballot boxes, together with the utter lack of discreetness on the part of the exhumed ballots, has given a new impulse to the cry for the voting machine on the part of the long-headed capitalist politicians. And wise they are in their generation. The path being once found by which to cause ballots to speak after they are buried, what Rep-Dem politician could enjoy his life in peace with the specter of the possibly resurrected ballots dogging his heels?

Capitalism is a self-haunted criminal—it needs peace, yet it is the breeder of unavoidable war; it needs wealth, yet its law of supply and demand compels it to blight production; it needs commerce, the tunneling of rivers and mountains, the cutting of canals, in short, the removal of impediments to traffic, yet the law of its

very existence drives it to raise the artificial impediments of tariff-walls; it needs science, yet enlightenment summons it to the bar of the Reason and adjudges it guilty; etc., etc. So with regard to the voting machine.

The mission of capitalism is to lick society into shape for that co-operative labor without which production can not be as plentiful as civilization requires. This implies the machine. The machine saves labor and multiplies the product. The transfer of the machine from the field of production to the hustings is natural. It is a progressive thought. The voting machine saves labor. More expeditiously and accurately than with the ballot, the work of voting, recording and announcing the result can be done by the voting machine. But no sooner is the idea hit upon than the evil genius which marks Capitalism Ichabod comes to blight the invention. Under capitalist conditions of fraudulency, the voting machine would promote fraud and hold the defrauder scathless. The machine can be “fixed” in advance. It has been known to be “fixed”—registers a certain number of votes for a hostile candidate, and then stops registering any more, while continuing to seem to operate. What golden opportunities for fraud with impunity the voting machine offers may be judged from the shouts that, led by the organ of the banker Jacob Schiff, the *New York Times*, has gone up from the capitalist camp in favor of the machine the moment the Hearst recount began to expose the false counting of the Mayoralty campaign of 1905.

So long as capitalism prevails the blessings of human genius become curses. Voting machines are to operate as crematory obliterators of election frauds.

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