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EDITORIAL

“CRIMES” OF PROGRESS.

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LOYALISTS of *Massachusetts on the Other Side of the Revolution* is the title of a book by James H. Stark of Dorchester, that “Old Stock Americans” who take pride in their ancestry, along with blind worshipers of the Revolutionary Fathers, in general, are reported to be much annoyed over.

A sentence in Mr. Stark’s book, summarizing a long list of data, will convey a complete idea of the work, and, along with the work, it will convey an insight into the mental attitude that a revolutionary class will slide into so soon as it has achieved success and, in its turn, faces another class rising against it into revolutionary dignity. The sentence is this:

“One fourth of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were bred to trade or to the command of ships, and *more than one of them was branded with the epithet smuggler.*”

The social system that the Revolutionary Fathers rose up against was the feudal. A feature of the feudal system was the restraint of trade. The colonists were forbidden to manufacture certain articles, and to conduct commerce with certain ports and nations. The oncoming social system that the British Crown strove to repress was the capitalist. A feature of the capitalist system was unrestrained trade. The colonists strove to manufacture what they pleased, and to export and import as they chose.

Every social system has its own interests. Free importation made against the interests of feudalism, while it made in favor of capitalism. “Legality,” with every social system, is a reflex of its own material interests. Accordingly, free importation was a criminal offence under feudalism, and it was called smuggling; accordingly, again, free importation was a virtuous aspiration under capitalism, hence

smuggling was a commendable act in the eyes of the colonists, and was practised by all who could as a measure of warfare against what, from their class interests, presented itself to the colonists in the light of an illegality.

The descendant's of the Revolutionary Fathers have no reason to be annoyed at the fact being brought forward that their ancestors were “smugglers.” Had they not been smugglers they would not have been revolutionists. When these descendants fret to-day under the imputation of smuggling, launched at their forebears, they thereby give evidence of the fact that, in the spirit, they have stepped into the shoes of the rulers whom their fathers fought, and whose glory it is to have overthrown; they thereby give evidence of the fact that they now stand in need of the same mystification of “lawfulness” which the rulers of the colonists needed to buttress up their material interests, by giving these the appearance of sanctity; finally, these descendants give evidence of the fact that their own material interests are now opposed to the material interests of a class, since arisen, whom they seek to keep down and in awe. Without there is such a class to be kept down there is no occasion for a “Criminal Code.” The only Crime conceivable in a rational social system is the crime of eating without working. The annoyance of the descendants at Mr. Stark's work is a symptom of the fact that the Revolution did not establish freedom.

There are “crimes” and “crimes,” under class rule. The “crimes” that proceed from the class interests of a struggling class are seeds of the plant to come. The “crimes” that proceed from individual interests, or temper, are like hailstones on the plant to come, destructive. The latter, called in French “sabotage,” are slummery, and a crime, indeed; the former are a badge of distinction: they make for progress.

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