

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 12, NO. 289.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 1912.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

PAGANISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE has been recently filed in the Surrogate Court of Toronto, Canada, the will of the late Rev. Elmore Harris, who died on last December 19 at Delhi, India.

The Rev. Harris' will is a document that deserves close scrutiny.

When first informed that a minister's will is filed in a Surrogate Court, one, that is, an unsophisticated one, is apt to start. What, a minister, an apostle of the Nazarene who admonished, and whose admonition must frequently have been read from the pulpit by the minister, against laying up for oneself treasures upon earth, where moth and rust does corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal,—can he have laid up treasures enough upon earth to require the offices of a Surrogate Court?

Upon further reading, the unsophisticated will receive a series of fresh starts. The minister in question did lay up treasures for himself upon earth—manifold treasures. In stock securities only he had laid up more than \$100,000—stock in manufacturing, telephone, gas, power and telegraph companies. In other words, the \$100,000 and odd of “treasure” was not treasure to be consumed; it was not \$100,000 in bread, or lamb and mutton chops, or clothing, or footgear, or headgear; it was a \$100,000 power to extract from the wage slave class more than 50 per cent. of the fruit of their labor.

Nor would the starts, administered to the unsophisticated by our minister's will, end there. The will is accompanied with “A Declaration of Faith.” What? Does he pronounce himself “Unbeliever”? No. The declaration is one of “full faith in the Gospel of Christ”; it expresses the wish that the ministerial testator's wife and children “shall ever keep their faith in the absolute integrity and truthfulness of the Holy Scriptures”; and he adds: “which faith I have humbly maintained during my life.”

Not unlikely, when he reaches his climax, the unsophisticated reader of the “last will and testament” will indignantly exclaim: “The hypocrite!” It takes an unsophisticated individual to break out into such an exclamation upon no further evidence.

Paganism is a conviction. It is a comforting conviction, no doubt, yet a conviction, all the same. As such, paganism excludes hypocrisy. The God of the pagan is a God that squares with the pagan’s material needs. Ruskin remarked that the capitalist will believe any nonsense—and that the nonsense will ever be found to be one in his own interest. ’Tis so with the pagan. He devotedly believes in the deity that he makes himself believe accommodates itself to his needs. To the man who needs dividends, sucked from Labor’s marrow to live on, a deity that would condemn such a source of living is an “impossibilist,” and it would be quickly rejected as a limb of heresy. With such a man the faith is unfaltering in a deity that thinks as he does.

The Rev. Elmore Harris may have been a hypocrite—quite possibly—but not necessarily—the worthy may have been a pagan, up to date—not a pagan whose deity rejoices in his directly cutting the throats of others, but an up-to-date pagan, one whose deity warrants the indirect cutting of throats with the knife of capitalism.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded May 2013

slpns@slp.org