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EDITORIAL

## MEDIOCRITY.

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**T**HE good and also the bad in the bourgeois method of thinking was wonderfully illustrated in Mayor Gaynor's recent address, delivered before the New Rochelle People's Forum. It is the distinct merit of distinguished minds that their errors are as fruitful of instruction as their soundness. Mayor Gaynor's New Rochelle address furnishes an opportunity to learn even from that which was bad therein. A certain passage, conveying an erroneous idea, in the Mayor's address, is aidful in illustrating what Socialism means; why Socialism means that; and, as a consequence, the cleansing of society of the smut of the "Mediocrity."

Having defined prosperity as the "just distribution of the total product," the Mayor hastened to explain:

"I do not mean share and share alike, but that each shall get his share according to his productive ability."

In meaning what he means the Mayor succumbs to the bourgeois method of reasoning which imagines things are done according to man's wishes. Socialism reasons otherwise:—mankind's actions are determined by its material possibilities.

The father who has five children, one of them a cripple, knows that the cripple needs more than the healthy ones. What is he to do? His spontaneous desire is to meet the greater needs of the cripple. Whether he does so, or abstains, depends upon his material capability. If the father has enough for all and to spare, then the cripple will be properly seen to, receiving more than the others. If the father lacks the material capability, then the cripple will suffer for want, even tho' the healthy children be somewhat pinched. Where the material possibilities enable the father to see to all "according to their needs," he will so conduct himself; where the material

possibilities disable the father from seeing to all “according to their needs,” a different standard of conduct will prevail, and each will be seen to “according to his deeds.” To make a long story short—whether the method of distribution shall be “share and share alike,” or whether the method shall be “to each according to his productive ability,” is not a cardinal or compelling principle, at all. What the method of social distribution is, becomes itself a conclusion from certain premises, which premises are the cardinal and compelling elements in the problem. The cardinal and compelling elements in the problem are the material possibilities. Is production so insufficient that all the citizens can not have an abundance, then inevitably a standard of conduct is raised according to which each receives according to his deeds, or, as the Mayor puts it, “according to his productive ability”; is production, however, so ample that all the citizens can enjoy an abundance, then the standard that will be raised will be in keeping with the material facts; it will be to each according to his needs, or, as the Mayor puts it, “share and share alike.”

The error in the Mayor’s statement—rejecting “share and share alike” and demanding for each a share “according to his productive ability”—lies in the supposition that the principle he sets up is cardinal, instead of the principle being a reflex of the facts, the actually cardinal element in the case. And the fatal danger in the Mayor’s error lies in that the error blocks the way to the ascertaining of the actual “lay in the material lay of the land.”

Socialism, not being thrall'd with the error, goes down to the bottom facts. Discovering the material fact to be that society is to-day capable of producing an abundance for all, Socialism raises the standard of “To all according to their needs,” or “Share and Share alike.”

The effects of the Socialist standard planted upon the material possibilities of our Age, are far reaching. To present the broad side, instead of the thin edge of the wedge, first—the Socialist standard WIPES OUT MEDIOCRITIES.

The illustration—a father with robust children and one cripple—used at the opening of this argument was used not merely as an extreme illustration in order to illustrate a point. It was deliberately used as an illustration that typifies the bourgeois mental conception of the value to society of work of different categories.

According to bourgeois conceptions some work is “noble” and is highly re-

warded; some other work, however necessary, is “ignoble,” and, however necessary, is paid for with a pittance. Is the bourgeois inherently a fiend that he would profit by disagreeable work that is necessary, and yet pay for such work with starvation wages? Not at all. The bourgeois conception in the matter is but the reflex of socially material possibilities, such as he conceives these to be. Conceiving the material possibilities of the race to be insufficient, the bourgeois’ standard reflects the concept by a posture that amounts to looking up to certain work as the work of socially robust beings, and looking down upon certain other work as the work of social cripples. One of the consequences of this erroneous conception is that bourgeois society is over-run with mediocrities, and is at every corner convulsed with the intrigues of these.

What is a Mediocrity?

A Mediocrity is not an absolute thing. It is purely relative. A Newton, illustrious in physical science, would be scandalous as an Arras carpet weaver; an Arras carpet weaver, illustrious at his loom would be scandalous at a Newton’s desk. A dentist, whose work of cleansing the cavities in teeth and filling them up is of prime importance to hygiene, would be a bungler at the excavator’s trade; an excavator, whose work for the laying of pipes is essential to the health and happiness of the community, would be like a cat in a strange garret at the dentist’s chair. And so forth, and so on. Now then, the pay received by the weavers, the excavators, and all others, all along that line of useful service, is so pitiable, so far below that received by the Newtons, the dentists, and all the others all along that other line, that the former insensibly try to elbow the latter out of their jobs. In the effort, society is kept in hot water. To the extent that the out-elbowing process succeeds, the Mediocrity comes to the surface,—to the sorrow of society. The Mediocrity is the man, capable of rendering useful service to society in one line of work, performing services in another line for which he is unfit. The begetter of mediocrities is either the society in which “share and share alike” is materially impossible; or the society, which, altho’ it has already attained, the material possibility for “share and share alike,” has not yet adjusted itself to the improved material conditions.

What, then, does Socialism mean? Socialism does not mean that every man is fit for every post. Such a concept could arise in Bedlam only. Socialism being the

fruit and abreast of all the knowledge of the Age, knows certain facts in the case and proceeds from them:—

It knows that different men have different temperaments, different tastes and different capabilities;

It knows that these differences of temperament, of taste and of capabilities add to the manifold beauty of society, and that the different capabilities are requisite to the general result;

It knows that, if 2 are requisite to 50 in order to obtain the ultimate result of 100, the 2 is of no less importance than the 50;

It knows, as a consequence, that all human effort, the co-operation of which is requisite to obtain the material conditions for civilized life—a life of labor without toil, and of leisure without idleness—is equally noble, is equally worthy;

It knows, that such a social conception depends for its realization upon material possibilities, and that the material possibilities thereto are now on hand.

Socialism accordingly, means—a place for every man; every man in his place; “share and share alike.” In the Socialist or Industrial Republic the inciter to Mediocrity, being absent, there can be no Mediocrity—and each excels at his own worthy post, and fills it with the full dignity of the citizen co-operator.

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