

EDITORIAL

MAJOR DAWLEY'S BOOK.

By DANIEL DE LEON

HERE is a book that is going to make the experience of eliciting excessive praise and excessive condemnation. It is *The Child That Toileth Not* by Major Thomas Robinson Dawley, Jr.¹ On one side the apologists for the capitalist class, will bestow boundless praise upon a book that makes the apotheosis of the crime of child-labor; at the opposite side, the tribe of sentimental reformers, the unballasted crew who know naught of the necessity of evolutionary links,—they will condemn the book in unmeasured terms.

Fact is the Major's book, which deals mainly with the South, is a valuable book; and the task of extracting from the book its real, its great value devolves upon the Socialist.

It is an ear-mark of what may be called the Anarch mind to denounce existing conditions sweepingly. That mental poise disqualifies the denouncer from constructive thought and work. He ignores material facts and requirements. Aspiring at the highest, even the impossible highest, he becomes impotent to bring about even possible improvement. To put it in other words, the Anarch mind fails to ascertain the law of motion,—of social progress. It is the exact opposite with the Socialist, the Marxian Socialist. The Marxian Socialist ascertains the law of social motion. In doing this he ascertains the facts that are involved. In doing both he enables himself to perform that highest of functions that devolves upon man—to aid evolution.

How about Major Dawley's book, on child-labor read by the light of the above principles?

The socio-economic law teaches that the human race is driven and propelled to that point of material possibilities where an abundance is possible without arduous toil. As incidents and parallel laws to this, the main silent law, are these other, and

¹ [*The Child that Toileth Not: The Story of a Government Investigation*, by Thomas Robinson Dawley, Jr., Gracia Publishing Co., New York, 1912.—R.B.]

equally silent laws:—

First, the compelling of men into co-operative labor, as a necessary step to ultimate civilization;

Second, the smiting of the masses down to one common level of proletarian vassalage, as a condition precedent for that class-conscious, intelligent, mass effort that will organize society in way and manner to match the goal of a civilized life, a life of labor without toil, of leisure without idleness, of freedom without license.

Such being the silent laws that underlie social progress, everything that falls in line with the laws is a promoter of progress. Thus capitalism is unveiled a social force for progress. Thus capitalism, by reaching out into the hills of the South does come as a redeemer of peoples who live in the degeneracy of isolation. Thus, even tho' the redemption bring with it the iniquity of child labor, the game is worth the candle—provided the iniquity be transient. Sweepingly to condemn the candle is to reject the game. On the other hand, to make of the candle a blessing unqualified; as the capitalist Pindars do by praising child-labor upon the strength of Major Dawley's book, is to forget the game for the candle.

It matters not how wrongly the poise of the Major's book may be. His mind being capitalist-shaped, the poise of his book could be none other than it is. Nevertheless, it is the duty of Socialist Science to do justice to capitalism. Socialist Science, by perceiving the present redemptory mission of capitalism in the South, cleanses Southern Capital of much of the smut that, in its class ignorance, Capitalism besmirches itself with. Reserving its conclusions to itself, Socialist Science applauds Major Dawley's book as a valuable furnisher of facts; and Socialist Science rejects the conclusion that child labor is a good thing in itself. On the contrary. Drawing its conclusions from the Major's book, Socialist Science declares that, with the lessons learned outside of the South, it is no longer necessary for the workers of the South to travel through the Valley of the Shadow of capitalist-inflicted torture to children. Knowing whither the silent law of social evolution leads, the Social Revolution must be urged on to "take a short cut"; to take the evolutionary process by the hand; to smooth the way from isolation to co-operation.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded May 2014

slpns@slp.org