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EDITORIAL

TRUCE AND TREATIES.

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IT was under an inspirational moment that Prof. W.M. Daniels of Princeton has just said that the opinion of the extremists, who reject arbitration in the disputes between Capital and Labor is tantamount to saying that “a truce in war ought never to be allowed, but that all the contestants on one side or the other ought to be killed to a man.” Prof. Daniel’s simile is brilliant, and the principle that underlies it is correct; it has to be, otherwise the simile itself could not be brilliant. Indeed, the principle is strictly Socialist, and by it is guided the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, the Trades Union wing of the Socialist Labor Party, in its disputes with the employers’ class.

What is a truce? what a treaty? A treaty may and may not be preceded by war. A treaty may spring from the clash of arms; it also may, and most generally does, proceed from amicable relations. The essential feature of the term “treaty” is not determined by REtrospect but by PROspect, and by PROspect only,—and that prospect is not war but peace, blissful peace. The poise of a treaty is the belief that peace reigns, or ought to reign between the contracting parties. The status of the “treaty” is peace. Exactly the opposite stands the case with the “truce.” Truces proceed from, are concluded during, and contemplate the continuance of hostilities. There is no other truce known, and none imaginable. The status of the truce is war. Inspirational was the use of the term “truce” by Prof. Daniels in the transactions between Capital and Labor.

Labor (the working class) and Capital (the idle, or capitalist class) are irreconcilable foes. Between them rages an irrepressible conflict, the “irrepressible conflict” that this generation has to face and end. Under capitalism Labor is a merchandise, subject, of course, to the unwritten but imperious law that regulates the price of merchandise. For reasons identical with those that, on the whole, lower

the price of pork, the price (wages) of the merchandise Labor must steadily decline. Seeing, however, that the merchandise Labor is a human being—a sort of pork-chop with a stomach, soul and heart in it, and, what is, perhaps, of greater moment in the matter, equipped with the ballot of the sovereign citizen, and armed with two arms and a directing head to enforce the fiat of the suffrage with—seeing that, this peculiar merchandise presents problems of its own—sociologic problems, psychologic, if you prefer. It resents the merchandise treatment to which, all sweet words to the contrary notwithstanding, it is subjected to. It rears, kicks, cavorts. These rearings, kickings and cavortings are a nuisance to the capitalist class, whose existence, as a class, depends upon the smooth merchandise working of Labor. Thus, between the two, there is war—war to the finish. The finish being, either that the human part of Labor is so completely squeezed and stamped out that it will become the perambulating pork-chop which we see in the coolie of to-day, or that it will overthrow the system and the class that condemns it to the status of merchandise, and rear the Socialist Republic.

The status of war between Capital and Labor is not yet generally recognized, despite its obvious evidence. Ignorance on the subject has given birth to the stupid cant phrase of the “Brotherhood of Labor and Capital,” and, as a result thereof, to puerile, pious and sometimes fraudulent devices, that now of “arbitration” among the rest,—all of which proceed from the misconception of the fact that war exists, and is bound to continue so long as the present capitalist system of society shall last, and, consequently that only truces are possible—periodically needful arrangements, that proceed from, are entered into during, and inevitably contemplate the continuance of hostilities.

Prof. Daniels’ simile reflects the fact of the irrepressible war status between Capital and Labor. It is of little importance, at this moment it matters nothing, that Prof. Daniels surely did not mean all that his terminology implies. What is of importance is that, on the one hand, his critic terminology justly punctures the honest or dishonest false reasoning of the capitalist elements, who affect to reject all negotiations with Labor, while, nevertheless, being combatants in the long protracted warfare of the Social Question, a warfare whose very length necessitates periodical truces; and, on the other hand, the Professor’s critic terminology

unconsciously reveals how the power of Socialist truth will break through even the thick crust of the carefully cultivated capitalist professional ignorance into the utterance of similes, and thereby implication of theories, that these gentlemen would sooner bite off their own heads than be caught admitting.

In the disputes between Capital and Labor only TRUCES are possible. They are frequently rendered necessary by exigencies of the fray. Whether known as such or foolishly taken for TREATIES of “friendship, peace and amity,” these agreements only mark temporary lulls in a struggle which—the genius of Civilization is taking care of that—will last, interrupted by such lulls only, until the robber system of Capitalism is wiped out and the banner of Socialism shall wave triumphant over the Capitol at Washington, beckoning with its flappings, inspiring other Nations to do likewise.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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