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EDITORIAL

“CHRISTMAS MORTGAGES.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE advertising columns of the metropolitan papers, in fact of the papers of all our great cities, are presenting two Christmas pictures that are essentially sermons on sociology. The two sermons are worth all the others that will be retailed over the counters of the pulpiteers.

Both pictures are advertisements for Christmas Gifts. But how deep the cleft that separates the two!

One picture, the picture presented by one set, tells of aeolians that cost from \$300 up to \$5,000 orchestrelles; of “beautiful diamond and ruby studded garters” for “\$20,000 and upward,” of automobiles “to suit all tastes”; of furs and carpets, and elegant antique furniture “to furnish cosy dens,” etc., etc. These articles are advertised as “neat Christmas presents” for “friends, wives, husbands, brothers, sisters and sweethearts.”

The other picture, the picture presented by the other set, advertises FOR moneys wherewith to purchase “Christmas Turkeys” and “dinners for the needy,” above all, in this set, figure advertisements of money-lenders to enable “fathers, mothers,” etc., to purchase Christmas gifts. The latter sort of advertisements are peculiarly numerous. They try to catch the eye with such words as “Holiday Funds,” “Christmas Funds,” etc. They open a way for another set of people, the poor, to mortgage themselves and thus hasten their ruin in keeping step with “holiday requirements.”

The two pictures patentize the existence of two classes; they puncture and illumine simultaneously the “Prosperity” cry, showing that prosperity exists with one set and does not exist for another; above all they illustrate the “religiousness” of capitalism. Days of panics are days of great hauls for the upper capitalists: in such days the smaller fry is expropriated wholesale, and, where it is not actually

expropriated, the foundation is laid for future expropriation by means of mortgages. The religious spirit of capitalism seeks to supplement the effectiveness of panic-days with holidays. Holidays are now to be used as a goad for the poor to mortgage themselves. The kindly instinct of wishing to remember the dear ones is warmed up by these advertisements to the end that the money-lender may get his claws upon the little property of the poor. Their salaries, their wages, their furniture—any and everything of that sort will be accepted as security. And thus the working class that this year has been earning too little to have now a few dollars to invest in presents, will next year, after having borne the added burden of the “Christmas Mortgage,” be in even worse condition!

Exploited in the mill, and plucked in the retail store, the workingman is now cajoled into putting his head into the “Christmas Mortgage” noose. Religion and the Stock Exchange are allies under the ribald dome of the Empire of Capital.

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