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EDITORIAL

A PEEP AT THE CHAIN-GANG.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Eastern Paper Bag Company and the United States Circuit Court of Appeals seem to have conspired for the praise-worthy purpose of furnishing cause to heap up some more ridicule upon the thoroughly ridiculous Malthus theory.

The Eastern Paper Bag Company gained possession of the Liddell patent, a patent for folding the bottoms of paper bags more effectively and quickly, and thereby considerably increasing the supply. The Company, immediately upon purchasing the patent, locked it up in its vault, and never used it, did not even have a model made of it. Seven years after the Company had buried the patent, another paper bag manufacturing concern, the Continental Paper Bag Company, hit upon a device that was substantially the same, if not identical with the patent that the Eastern company had secreted. The Eastern company thereupon brought an action in the United States Court against the Continental company for the "Infringement of its patent rights." The case went against the defendants in the lower Court, and now the Court above affirmed the decision of the Court below. The Eastern Bag Company, having acquired possession of the patent, is held to have prior and absolute right to the invention; even if the company made no use whatever of it; even if by abstaining from using the patent, the company blasted the genius who made the invention, and barred from the fruit of their intellectual powers all future geniuses who might hit upon the same thought.

Malthus, in his endeavor to furnish scientific justification for the capitalist iniquity that lowered the productive powers of the race in order to make profits, proclaimed over a century ago the principle that production could not keep pace with population; according to him it was Nature's will that the masses should starve; according to him when the masses starved it was a proof that they had no

business on earth.

Every day almost fresh proof is furnished of the stupidity if not iniquity of the Malthusian theory. The late Ice Trust scandal revealed the fact that, while Nature bountifully furnished numerous and broad sheets of ice, the Ice Trust reduced the ice area to about one-third what it was, and thus left untold infants of the poor to die while itself scooped in 9 per cent. dividends on the move. And now we have the Eastern Paper Bag Company case which merely uncovers a very small portion of inventions that would promote supply, but are kept under lock and key, and the United States Circuit Court of Appeals places the official and judicial seal of approval upon this “practice of Nature,” as Malthus would call it.

Capitalism seals up the teeming womb of Nature, and muzzles the fertile brain of man.

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