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EDITORIAL

CHINA GETTING THERE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

CHINA has had famines before. People have starved there before. But never, that history records, have people hungered and a famine raged in its provinces under the circumstances now holding sway over them, which have finally led to the vast native uprisings libelously designated “riots” in the foreign despatches.

In the communal form of government, which China, in common with all other nations, passed through, hunger no doubt periodically stalked the land and carried off its thousands. But then it was that the crops had failed. Nature’s “bounty” so freely prated about by the ununderstanding, had resolved itself into what it really is, nature’s obedience of natural laws. The rains had deluged the ground, or the sun had parched it, or the blight had fallen upon it—grain was not to be had. Then all suffered alike. The common store was parcelled out in common as long as it lasted, and each had his equal share. When it was gone for one, it was gone for all. There was no such thing as some members of the tribe feasting while others pined and fainted. Much less was there any such thing as some members reveling on the proceeds of their brothers’ suffering.

In the year of Christianity 1910, how different! Capitalism with its golden wand has “changed all that.” Now there rages a famine in Hupeh province. Rice, the staple food of the people, is low. Distress is rampant. In Hunan province, right “next door,” rice is plenty. The starving poor of Hupeh are sent to Hunan for relief. There the Governor of Hunan postpones the opening of the relief stations from March 11, the advertised date, to May 9—nearly two months—and does so upon the persuasion of the merchants who are manipulating the rice market.

Under communism life was first, property second. Under capitalism property is first, life second. Well might Morgan say of property that “the human mind stands

bewildered in the presence of its own creation.” Only by wrestling with that bewilderment can the human mind acquire the strength and knowledge necessary to reassert its supremacy over its creature. China, which is now undergoing, with famine accompaniment, the performances of a Patten in this country, is getting there.

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