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EDITORIAL

“U.S.A.”

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WHILE moralists and ethical culturists hold up their hands in holy horror, there is much to be learned from the authoritative government report that shoe dealers in Australia stamp their inferior product “Made in U.S.A.” in order to delude people into buying under the impression that goods are constructed in America.

As capitalism goes, this is not bad. If people won't buy a thing for what it is, sell it for something it isn't, is the accepted business motto. The people of Indianapolis, for instance, were displaying a regrettable apathy toward red dye. So what does a man of ingenuity and initiative do? He mixes a ten-cent package of dye with several gallons of water, throws in a little flavor and fizz, and the stuff sells admirably as “strawberry soda water.” It does its work beautifully, too, as a certain white wool stocking, now turned deep pink by the above described cooling summer drink and hanging in the Indiana State Board of Health as an exhibit, will eloquently testify.

Similar was the plight of cotton seed oil in Mexico. Sales were fairly good, but nothing like what they ought to be. So the U.S. Department of Labor obligingly lists under the head of “business opportunities” the following:

“No. 5935—A business firm in Mexico writes to the Bureau of Manufactures that it would like to enter into communication with American manufacturers of machines for mixing beef tallow and cotton seed oil to make compound lard.” (U.S. Daily Consular Reports, Dec. 14, 1910)

Presumably the machines were secured, and while we have no definite information to the effect, there can be little doubt that the recent triumphant climax of the Mexican insurrection and the deposition of Diaz were due solely to the

invigorating and healthful effects of Somebody’s compound cotton seed lard.

Compared to tricks such as these, the scheme of the Australian shoe capitalists is innocence with a halo on. Does not “Made in U.S.A.” mean, plain as day, “Made in the United States of Australia?” And if the ignorant and incompetent purchaser chooses deliberately to misinterpret U.S.A. into “United States of America,” what can a poor shoe dealer do?

But merely to jest is not enough. Behind these capitalist stunts three principles stick up, which should be recognized and grappled with.

One is, that ethics is a lost word in business circles. He who tries to be ethical in the world of commerce goes to the wall. One bad apple can infect a whole barrel of good ones, but one good apple never yet cured a whole barrel of bad ones.

Second, capitalism is the same the world over. Not climate, not race, not creed, but the very conditions of the world-wide struggle for success make for dishonesty.

Third, America, the leader in tricks that are vain, is now beginning to be bombarded with a rain of the boomerangs hurled by herself. “The knavery that you teach me I shall practice,” say after Shylock the other nations of the world, “and it will go hard but I shall better the instruction.”

Against such a world-wide demoralization there is but one force that rears its head—Socialism, the entire reconstruction of society on lines of Use, and not of Profit.

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