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EDITORIAL

GENERAL BOOTH.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE noted personality—Gen. William Booth, commander in chief of the Salvation Army—who has just passed behind the veil, is one of those who had a message to deliver; who delivered it during his life; and who clinched the message with his death.

Sentimentalism, that ship all sails and no ballast, often tumbles in the path of the Socialist militant, and, with its careenings, hinders his progress. The hindering arises from the lameness that the unballasted ship imparts to the mind, hence, also to the striking arm, of many of those whom the Socialist Movement attracts, and who would otherwise be valuable militants themselves. One of the manifestations of Sentimentalism is undue tenderness for the Slums.

Is not capitalist society the cause and breeder of crime? Is not crime the consequence of temptation? Is not temptation the child of evil surroundings? Is not, therefore, the Slums the vast ocean of humanity into which the victims of modern society are plunged? Yes, and again, yes. From this undeniable sociologic sequence Sentimentalism leaps to the conclusion that the Slums is a, if not the, hotbed of Revolution—a, if not the, source from which the pending Social Revolution surely must recruit its main forces. This is a fundamental blunder.

If the being dumped into the Slums were the end-all and be-all of the victims' fate, some color might be given to the blunder. But the victim of society undergoes in the Slums a gradual transformation, which, affecting all the other victims, renders the Slums a peculiarly hostile element to the Social Revolution. Socialist classics, ample tho' they are on the subject, have not yet exhausted it. The career of Gen. Booth in one respect makes a valuable contribution.

The Social Revolution preaches and teaches no demagoguery—that is true. True enough the Social Revolution, seeing it recognizes the need of organization,

recognizes the need of discipline, order and leadership. Nevertheless, the order, the discipline, the leadership, the necessity of which the Social Revolution recognizes, are democratic: they come from below: they are removable from below. Hereditary chieftainship is repellant to every instinct of the Social Revolution. A self-perpetuating chieftain—self-perpetuating through appointment by himself—has no place in the Revolution that is pending, and upon whose victory depends the emancipation of the human race. An officer not chosen from below, and, however chosen, empowered to appoint his own successor—lo the earmark of despotism. The Caesars of old exemplified the fact on the mountain tops; Gen. Booth exemplified the identical fact among the submerged—once elected, with him lay the power to appoint his successor,—and he did.

Not a single instinct that can guide the Social Revolution to triumph can be drawn from the Slums. The career of Gen. William Booth, commander in chief of the Salvation Army, with power to appoint his successor, carries the message to the militant Socialist that, not democracy, but despotism is bred in the underworld.

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