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EDITORIAL

THE MIDDLE WEST LIE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

RESISTLESS is Nature in her fury. Great as are the achievements of man in his efforts to harness Nature to his will, the task of bridling her in the hour of her rage is a task beyond his powers. Behind this Truth a Lie is seeking shelter in the Middle West, with Ohio for its center—and the Lie is, furthermore, seeking to drown the indictment against it in the groans that are going up from the flood-field of devastation.

Granted that the cyclone that has deluged the larger portion of the land during the last eight days with the basin of the Ohio and its northern confluent as its principal theater, was the worst yet experienced, was that sufficient to cause the appalling disaster? In other words, was the disaster wholly unavoidable?

What are the facts?

The canal waterways system of Ohio is not only old, it is not only superannuated, it is not only a wrongful survival of antique conceptions, the structures themselves were worthless, and had long been reported against as “a menace to life and property.” In many places the canals were weak and disabled. Since 1904, the embankments were broken, the reservoirs weak, the dams and locks tottered, many of the walls were overhanging more than a foot, the feeder dams leaked. It needed not a cyclone of unprecedented violence for “the dams along the Miami and Erie canal to cave like soft mud.”

No Lie can long survive. Well has it been said of the Lie that it is a cheque drawn upon Nature’s bank, bound some day to be returned with the endorsement, “No Effects.” The Lie of the canal waterways in the Middle West has been returned by the bank upon which it was drawn—and thunders are the notes in which Nature’s bank roars, and vivid in fire, blood and ruin are the lines with which Nature’s

bank traces its indignant protest, “No Effects!”

And, as in the Middle West, now, so presently, through the breadth and width of the land, where a similar catastrophe is preparing—similar in point of the final breakdown of a Lie, fatuously believed indefinitely propable.

In its way, as antiquated as the canal waterways system of the Middle West, is the existing Social System of the land.

In their way, as “weak,” and “disabled,” and “tottering,” and “leaky,” and “dangerously overhanging” as the banks, locks and dams of the canal waterways system of the Middle West, are the social and political institutions of the Social System of to-day.

As with the structures of the canal waterways system of the Middle West, the note of warning has repeatedly gone forth against “the menace to life and property” that the existing Social System is to the people of the land; and, as with the canal waterways system of the Middle West, cynics have been laughing at the “calamity howlers,” visionaries have been wool-gathering, the corrupt have been profiting at the expense of the “fanatics,” and quacks have been “propping up” with reforms the crumbling structure of the existing Social System.

In broad outlines, the mind’s eye can see a Middle West extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Gulf to the Great Lakes, receiving, amidst weepings and grindings of teeth, the cheque with the endorsement “No Effects,” returned to the Nation by the bank of Socio-Economic Law—unless the “fanatics” cease chewing the rag with the cynics, the visionaries, the corrupt and the quacks.

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