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EDITORIAL

GLEANINGS FROM CONGRESS— CHILD LABOR.

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THE gruesome question of child-labor presented itself early in Congress and kept bobbing up almost to the end of the session through a Senate bill to regulate child-labor in the District of Columbia. The keynote of the sentiment in Congress was given by Senator Knute Nelson of Minnesota. He said: "One reason why I do not favor the bill now before the Senate is because families are often partially dependent upon the efforts of the young children for support. A widowed mother with a large family requires that her boys would sell papers on the street, or in some other manner to earn money. With a child-labor law the widow and the fatherless children might be starving while strong and hearty boys of thirteen or fourteen would be compelled to stand by and render no aid." It requires no very strong ear to hear the cannibal's licking of his chops at the prospect of a tender boy-stew, as Senator Nelson spoke, and as his words fell approvingly upon the ears of his fellow corporation lawyers and stockholders in our "House of Lords."

When one thinks of the Thaws; when one contemplates the rafts of idiotic looking cigarette-fiend youths of the rich; when one considers the young hunters after pleasure to whom neither the honor of woman, nor the innocence of childhood, nor the integrity of man, is any more than a toy to be made subservient to fun, so long as there is money to buy it; when the procession of these worthless beings files by before the mind's eye—all of them the product of pampered, idle childhood,—the conclusion is inevitable that an idle child is the bane of the adult and a curse upon society. It is not, however, this consideration that moves the capitalist brain to contrive, and that silences the promptings of the human heart in him to tolerate, child-labor in the factories and in other money-making fields, to the detriment, as it inevitably is, of the child's physical, mental, and moral growth. Other reasons

prompt the felony.

Child-labor is the most effective method for reducing the earnings of adult male labor. The capitalist is in for profits. Profits wax in the measure that the cost of production declines, along with the increasing productivity of labor. In the course of the headlong pursuit for profits, rendered inevitable by capitalism, the capitalist's hawk's eye falls upon the child and his hawk's claws fasten themselves into the child's tender flesh. The meat tastes good. The original course of pouncing upon the child is then gradually relaxed as too "strenuous," and thereupon a systematic process is resorted to of suctioning the child into the capitalist's claws and beak by methods that affect philanthropy and seem to run over with tender love. The wages of the breadwinner are steadily lowered below the standard, his health is impaired, his limbs are fractured, perhaps (and how often!) he is killed at work. Any thing more loving than to extend charity to the widowed mother or the crippled father by affording their child an "opportunity to support them"? Thus the child is forced, drawn and pushed, into the factory by an invisible hand, the same cruel hand that is all the more cruel because visible only as that of a charitable wages-giver. Thus the spectacle is explained of the Senators Nelson advocating, and the Miss Gertrude Beekses of the "Welfare (?) Department of the National Civic Federation" justifying the practice of child-labor with a logic that would shame a sophomore. The widowed mother is there. Widowed by the slow starvation of her husband, if not by an accident in mine, factory, or railroad yard that suddenly crushed him to pulp and blew him up into splinters. The widowed poor mother is there, left poor because of the starvation wages that alone capitalism, canting capitalism, afforded him while it chanted through its rose hymns of "Glory on high." The obvious logical conclusion is, Stop the system by which mothers are left poor and widowed. But no, the very distress of these widowed mothers, that is, the very result of the criminal conduct of the Senator-Nelson class and of the class that hires the Miss Gertrude Beekses, is used as the excuse for child-labor. The very felony on the race is pharisaically made a pretext to undermine the future adult's health while still a child, and render him or her a prospective crippled parent, dependent, in turn, upon the immolation of their child for a crust. Thus child-labor is a link in the endless chain of capitalist cannibalism.

Well has capitalism been styled refined cannibalism. The cannibal who was told by a missionary that it was cruel to eat up human beings, babies in particular, answered: “It may be cruel, but it is very nice, babies in particular.” The cannibal makes no bones, he is frank and manful about it; the capitalist minces the matter, he is sneaky and cowardly; he perpetrates cannibalism in refined style; he calls it “benevolence,” and weeps crocodile tears over the poor widowed mother of his own manufacture.

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