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EDITORIAL

JUST GIVE'M ROPE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE State of Alabama, that is, the Democratic-Capitalist interests of the State of Alabama, glories in the possession of a Representative in Congress by the name of Oscar W. Underwood. As most Southern office-holders, Mr. Underwood is a florid orator; as all capitalist politicians, the gentleman dotes upon the workingman with a dotefulness that knows no bounds. These two qualities combined—oratory and devotion to the Working Class—produced, through the windpipe and mouth of the said Underwood, a remarkable oration at a recent sitting of Congress.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, and having under consideration the resolution for the distribution of the President's message, Mr. Underwood tackled the subject of immigration. Mr. Underwood tore and fumed against the "pauper labor of Europe" in general. The flood of immigration, during the previous four or five generations, he declared in well-rounded periods, had built up the country. But former immigration and present immigration he pronounced to be as different as black is from white. Former immigrations, thus ran his argument, raised the American standard, present immigration tore it down—by the Almighty, the thing had to stop! Of course, the orator must not be expected to spoil his rhetorical flights by the acquisition of the knowledge that would interfere with the freedom of his imagination. Mr. Underwood did not suppress, we feel certain, he simply is ignorant of the fact that the "flood of immigration" into this country soon after the American capitalist class freed itself from the feudal trammels of the British Crown, did not raise, but actually lowered the "American standard."

What was the "American standard" at the time of the Independence? It was the standard of individual well-being. With natural opportunities unbounded and the

tools of production simple, individual well-being was assured. However poor the American youth started, if he was at all industrious he eventually reached a competence, set up his plain yet independent home, and reared a family around him. The apprentice and serving maid of yesterday became the independent householder of to-morrow. That was the “standard”. It was the standard of incipient capitalism. But capitalism, once started, develops along the lines that are in it. The prospect, actual not imaginary, of the apprentice and subaltern becoming himself a master, interferes with the development of the capitalist. The workingman must be shut out from all actual prospect of deliverance, however useful it be to hold out to him the lure of imaginary deliverance. In short, for its development, capitalism needs the proletariat. America did not originally supply the demand. The supply was imported. It consisted in the floods of European proletarians—a mass of humanity that started so handicapped in a new country that but few of them could help themselves to the natural opportunities, and most of whom remained helpless. Capitalism then bounded forward, and the “American standard”, so called, tumbled down. In dragging down the standard not only the handicapped European proletariat remained down, down also tumbled the former American in rafts. Only those who were favored by special luck or cursed with stronger beaks and talons held their own and soared upward into the full-fledged capitalist. That much for the “American standard”. Of course, Mr. Underwood is too much of an orator to know anything about such historic development. And thus he soared from flight of rhetoric to flight of rhetoric praising—in the name of the workingman, be it remembered,—the former immigrations, and cursing—in the interest of American labor, be it remembered—the present immigration. But, in the midst of his towering flight the Underwood owl was by another owl moused at, and brought down.

Another Representative, Joseph A. Goulden of New York, whose special capitalist interests happen to call for more and more immigrants, and who, knowing well the soul of his fellow capitalist politicians, took no stock in Mr. Underwood’s protestations that he was fired only by love and affection for the workingman, fired a succession of neat bolts at the soaring Underwoodian bird. The bolts were a series of questions; these wormed out of our pro-Labor orator the admission that “the great agitation among the farmers of the South is TO CUT DOWN THE AMOUNT

OF ACREAGE” and thereby “TO KEEP UP THE PRICE OF COTTON”, and this consummation Mr. Underwood declared could not be reached if American-standard lowering immigration were to be allowed to come in; such immigration, he contended, “WOULD ONLY INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF THE CROP”! In other words an increase of wealth is a calamity! it would lower the price of the crops of the farmer! it was for the farmer that Underwood rhetorized—the devil take the workingman, for all that he and his set care.

Just give the “friends of Labor” rope. They will invariably hang themselves—and one another.

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