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EDITORIAL

FLICKERING THE MEDICINE-RAGS.

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THERE used to be, and still is, a system of medicine in vogue among certain savage tribes which consists in flickering many bright and various-colored rags about the head of the patient. Sometimes the latter gets well; more often he doesn't. In the former case, the rag-flickering is thought to have worked; in the latter, they weren't flickered hard enough.

Ever since last October 22, when the Knickerbocker Trust Co. went to smash and precipitated upon the land the panic which had long been lowering on the horizon, the medicine-men of the profits system have been flickering their medicine-rags about the head of the patient. In the measure that the rings of the disturbance spread out from the center in New York, engulfing one concern, one funds-juggling capitalist, one discharged workman after another all over the country, the rag-flickering became all the more desperate. From desperation it degenerated into puerility, until now the sick industrial system is being coaxed back to strength by flutterings and contortions that would make a horse laugh.

For a taste, the clerk of Queens County, Brooklyn, is "a firm believer that the hard times are over." Why? Because he has "recorded 103 chattel mortgages on pianos bought on instalments." Mortgages as a rule indicate prosperity about as much as a hearse at the door indicates health for the man it has come for; and the workman, on his average wage of \$436 yearly, is not given to buying pianos, mortgaged or unmortgaged. But the rag must be flickered.

Again, the diamond dealers are "quite certain there will be a resumption of the good era after the presidential election." Their reason? Have not the diamond imports for May exceeded by \$100,000 those of any month for five months previous? It matters not that the only diamonds the worker can invest in are the black diamonds that go into the hearth; the rag must be flickered.

However, the patient seems to be emitting groans which speak but poorly for the efficacy of the medicine-rag treatment. One is to the effect that 25,000 cotton operatives had their wages cut 18 per cent. a week or so ago. Another sounds something like “five big cargo ships taken off the White Star Line for lack of freight,” together with the consequent turning off of hundreds of longshore workers and clerical employes in the freight department. A third groan comes through the throat of JAMES J. HILL, who declares there will be no car shortage this year, as there will be no bumper crops to fill the cars now idle. A fourth groan, from the vicinity of Pittsburg, seems to say that the coal and coke production has been curtailed over one-fifth. Other and lesser groans are lost in the intensity of these great ones, but the groan chorus continues, sans intermission.

All of which shows that the patient, private ownership of the means of production, is on his death-bed of an attack which will finish him. He is doomed to expire amid an ever-swelling moan of agony, accentuated, not drowned, by the dizzy flickerings of gaudy and specious rags by the charlatan medicine-men who are striving to hold him together “just a little while longer.”

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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