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EDITORIAL

FATHER GASSONIANA.

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XVIII.

NOT all the baits, dangled by the agencies of capitalism, can lure the Socialist away from the field of Socialism into fields other than Socialist. Nothing would suit these agencies better than to have the Socialist—like a bull, which, closely pressing the toreador in the rink, is drawn away from his prey by the waving of a red rag before his eyes—quit the capitalist trail on which he is camped, and pursue some will-o'-the-wisp or other.

There are two of these will-o'-the-wisps that rank highest in the estimation of the capitalist agencies as fittest to lead Socialist discussion off into the air, or down into the swamp. The two lures are “Religion” and “Marriage.”

As to religion, previous articles of this series have demonstrated Father Gasson's organization to be not religion at all, but politics, rawboned and rampant, ambushed behind the word of “religion.” Seeing religion is a private affair and that the Socialist demands from others, for his private preferences, the same respect that he accords to their private preferences in the matter, the subject needed and needs no further treatment. As to marriage the matter is less simple.

“Marriage,” in this discussion, partakes of the feature of “Religion” in so far as it forms not, and can not form, any part of the Socialist program. Differently, however, from “Religion,” “Marriage” is an ethnic institution; and as such it is subject to scientific treatment—no less and no more than biology, astronomy, geology, or any other scientific subject. The Socialist, being a scientist, is unaffected by the bogey that alleged religionists à la Father Gasson, set up to combat Science, and the hocus-pocus that those same elements seek to substitute for scientific discussion.

It is a significant fact that the institution of “Marriage,” as at present understood and seen,—that is, a sexual relation requiring certain formalities, civic, and religious, so called,—no sooner springs into existence than it casts its shadow of “Prostitution.”

Chemistry teaches that the sediments left in the retort are important to the knowledge of the substances that are freed. In the sediment of “Prostitution” found in the retort of society is an illuminer of “Marriage.” Upon this subject the estimate of Lecky is classic:

“There has arisen in society a figure which is certainly the most mournful, and in some respects the most awful, upon which the eye of the moralist can dwell. That unhappy being whose name is a shame to speak; who counterfeits with a cold heart the transports of affection, and submits herself as the passive instrument of lust; who is scorned and insulted as the vilest of her sex, and doomed, for the most part, to disease and abject wretchedness and an early death, appears in every age as the perpetual symbol of the degradation and the sinfulness of man. Herself the supreme type of vice, she is ultimately the most efficient guardian of virtue. But for her, the unchallenged purity of countless homes would be polluted, and not a few who, in the pride of their untempted chastity, think of her with an indignant shudder, would have known the agony of remorse and of despair. On that one degraded and ignoble form are concentrated the passions that might have filled the world with shame. She remains, while creeds and civilizations rise and fall, the eternal priestess of humanity, blasted for the sins of the people.”

The loftiness and even poetic tone of the principal feature of the passage do not detract from its scientific soundness.

“Marriage,” taking the term broadly, is a regulator of sexual intercourse. As such Marriage has its early beginnings in the gens formation of society—a formation that received its earliest impulse from experience regarding the harmfulness of promiscuity. The gens formation prevented the evil through the provision that forbade intercopulation in the same gens. In that stage in man’s history “Prostitution,” as the institution has become and is known to-day, did not exist. The fact of “Prostitution’s” arising with the more modern institution of “Marriage” is evidence unerring that “Marriage,” as now understood, was a perversion of the course of Nature and of Society. What the reason, or cause, of the perversion was, sociology explains.

“Marriage,” as now understood, is one of the manifestations of “class” divisions, and consequent Class Rule. The sentiment of love—an acquired sentiment in the course of the race’s development, and source of noblest, altruistic impulses—that sentiment on the one hand, and class-tyranny and class-subjection on the other, are incompatible. The institution of Divorce—a counter formality—is a clumsy remedy

for the evils of a clumsy institution. Like Laws of Bankruptcy, Laws of Divorce tell the tale of society's economic ill-being. The one and the other, being the reflexes of economic changes, can not choose but share the fate of these, changing with these for the better, or the worse, according as economic conditions should improve or deteriorate. For the same reason that deteriorated economic conditions gave birth to Laws of Bankruptcy, and these laws are bound to become obsolete under improved economic conditions—for the same reason Laws of Divorce will cease with the economic conditions that shall render them unnecessary,—and along with them must vanish “Marriage,” the formal institution that now it is, taking away along with it, its execrable shadow of “Prostitution.”

The natural necessity of sexual intercourse is a material fact which resists the attempts of all Father-Gassonic incantations to wrench it from its nature and setting. How futile all such attempts have proved is attested by the scandals that periodically break out in monasteries—outraged Nature breaking through the bonds of man-made pressure in the diseases known to medical jurisprudence as “nymphomania” and “satyriasis.” A further and more recent attestation is furnished by the Rome correspondent of the London *Daily Chronicle*, who recently telegraphed to that paper: “The Vatican has ordered the Bavarian Episcopate to proceed with the greatest severity against the movement among Catholics in that country for the suppression or alleviation of the rigors of sacerdotal celibacy. According to official information furnished to the Pope, an association founded with this object already counts 13,000 members, many of whom are themselves ecclesiastics.” (*Converted Catholic*, for April 11, 1911; page 124.)

On the other hand not all the “Free Lovers” excesses, that blind resistance to the prostitution-producing class-rule perversion of sexual intercourse, known in the Political Social order as “Marriage,” can breed, can throw discredit upon the purity, loftiness and wisdom of the family when emancipated from the shackles of economic ill-being.

As set forth in his preface by the translator of Bebel's *Woman Under Socialism*:

“The monogamous family—bruised and wounded in the cruel rough-and-tumble of modern society, where, with few favored exceptions of highest type, male creation is held down, physically, mentally and morally, to the brutalizing level of the brute, forced to grub and grub for bare existence, or, which amounts to the same, to scheme and scheme in order to avoid being forced so to grub and grub—will have its wounds staunched, its bruises healed, and, ennobled by the slowly acquired forces of conjugal,

paternal and filial affection, bloom under Socialism into a lever of mighty power for the moral and physical elevation of the race.”

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