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EDITORIAL

THAT WIDOW TO REST.

By DANIEL DE LEON

FOR the last ten years, or so, very little has been heard of a certain Poor Widow. The old girl used to be worked overtime. Neither rain could fall too hard to cause her exploiters to spare her, nor could the sun burn too torrid to induce them to keep her indoors. Whatever the season, or hour of the day or night, whenever wanted to do duty, she trotted forth. And she was wanted almost constantly.

Book-made professors of political economy illustrated their points with her; quill-pushers on the Social Question laid her, so to speak, upon the dissecting table of their syndicated magazine articles; pulpiteers adored her; as to reformers they simply went crazy over her as an anti-Socialism clincher, and clincheress, so as not to be tripped by our precisions.

Did Socialists demand higher wages for street car drivers and conductors?—our professors of political science, prefacing their remarks with the sober warning concerning Science having nothing to do with Sentiment, but being ruled by Mind, would prove mathematically that the Poor Widow, whose only support was certain stock in car lines, would infallibly starve were the demand for higher wages granted.

Did Socialists reason that the wealth upon which employerdom lived and rioted was “withheld wages,” withheld from the working class?—editorial podsnaps would argue space-fillingly and running over with abnegation, that they took up the cudgels for the Poor Widow, whose declining days would be whelmed with want, if, carrying the “cruel Socialist theory” to its logical conclusion, the modest revenue of her factory were “confiscated.”

Did Socialists ask: “What would become of the capitalist class if Labor decided to remain idle?”—did Socialists put the question in proof that labor produces all wealth, while idleness produces maggots only?—forthwith the Poor Widow was

stood up under the resounding board of pulpits, a pious shower of pious tears would be dropped at her feet, and the deluge dammed with the text: “Man shall not live by bread alone.”

Finally, did Socialists sum up capitalist society with the motto: “Wealth is the fruit of Labor and the reward of Idleness”?—“What!” exclaimed the reformer with an indignation that was a cross between professorial Science and Pulpiteer Piety, “What! would you snatch her crumb of bread from the Poor Widow?”

Thus, one time, did things run. The Poor Widow held the center of the stage. It begins to look as if the old girl has a prospect of rest, even if the rest come rudely. A competitor for her place has risen. He is the Burglar. Clifford Howard is the mover of the motion for the substitute. He does so in an article in *Lippincott's Magazine*, in which the value of the Burglar to capitalist society is unerringly pointed out—much more unerringly than the value of the Poor Widow is by her employers. It is pointed out that, but for the Burglar, 70,000 persons would be thrown out of work, and more than \$45,000,000 a year withdrawn from trade. It is pointed out that, thanks to the Burglar, more than 25,000 good and patriotic American citizens are earning their livelihood as private watchmen, at a combined salary of \$17,000,000 a year. It is pointed out that more than \$1,000,000 worth of capital is invested in the manufacture of burglar alarms of different devices, and fully 2,000 law-abiding family men are dependent for their daily bread upon this branch of industry. It is pointed out that there are forty manufacturers of burglar-proof safes with a combined capital of \$6,000,000, paying out each year for wages and material nearly \$4,000,000, and giving support to no less than 4,000 mechanics, laborers, clerks, bookkeepers, salesmen. Etc.; etc.; etc.

Some say that Mr. Howard's article is satirical. Perhaps so. What of it? Many a truth has been advanced as a joke. Montaigne did so; so did Bacon; why not Clifford Howard? At any rate if only out of charity for the overworked Poor Widow, who, we, in all seriousness hold has earned a vacation, we second the motion that the Burglar be substituted for the Poor Widow, as an anti-Socialism clincher.

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