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EDITORIAL

A MILESTONE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

NO doubt the Louisville, Ky., *Courier-Journal* is very proud of the following skit as a joke:

“Parcel post is a great thing.”

“Yep,” assented the grocer, “you can stick a stamp on a can of corn and send it right out to a farmer.”

There is that in the skit that is head and shoulders above a joke, and that rises to the full dignity of a lesson in Social Science,—a profound lesson, at that.

A wide and deep gulf divides the human race at its status of Savagery from its next higher, the general status of Barbarism. The transition is marked by the invention of the Art of Pottery.

The Utopian Socialist, together with his kindred, having no conception of the material foundation in Social Evolution, imagines that a sense of “Goodness” is all that is necessary to remove existing ills. When these folks run up against the Marxian Socialist and, despite themselves, are made to feel “some force” in material prerequisites for “Goodness,” or the Socialist Order, they are frequently heard to say: “Never in the history of the earth were the material possibilities for Socialism absent: there ever was an abundance for all: but man is perverse: make man good, cast out of him the devils that tenant his heart, and you will have Socialism on earth—all men sharing in the abundance that Nature provides.” Some of these Utopians back up their views with a great parade of “historic facts.” They quote, for instance, from the reports of early Government explorations in the West: how on one occasion the Government exploration party was halted for days in succession until an interminable herd of buffalo had trampled by; how frequently the sun was actually eclipsed by flocks of wild pigeons; how the rivers were literally gorged with

schools of luscious fish. “Here,” the Utopian exclaims, “is the abundance that Socialism demands for universal welfare: here was food in plenty, for the catching.”

Social Science punctures the reasoning as Non-Sense. And the pin that does the puncturing is the revolution accomplished in the affairs of man by the invention of the Art of Pottery.

The Savage kills a beef for the sake of a few pounds of the meat: the rest is left to rot. His sling or boomerang, or whatever his primitive weapon may be, will bring down to him more fruit, or fowl, than he needs for the moment; the rest is left to waste. The reason of the waste is that the Savage is unprovided with the requisite vessels in which to preserve for the morrow the food that he brings down to-day. Without such vessels, not only is the bulk of his actual food product lost to him, but the potential food—buffalo on the hoof, birds in the air, fish in the waters—remains, to him, substantially as if it were not.

The invention of the Art of Pottery revolutionizes the aspect of things. Whereas the absence of vessels in which to preserve for the morrow the food produced to-day, and the potential food that is on the hoof, in the air or under the waters, virtually cancels the abundance, and leaves the Savage to alternate, as the improvident man does to-day, between a Feast and a Starve, the birth of the requisite vessels cancels the cancellation: it restores the potential food to useful existence. The new era that vessels for storing up food opens to the Savage gives him greater assurance of tomorrow’s existence.

Tremendous, in its beneficent consequences, as was the subsequent invention of the process of Smelting Iron Ore, the birth that this invention of the Iron Tool, the invention of the Art of Pottery marks an era without which all subsequent inventions would have been indefinitely delayed. The Art of Pottery marks one of the great five milestones in the March of Progress.

The yepping grocer who, by “sticking a stamp on a can of corn” can send the corn “right out to a farmer”—that yepping grocer in the Louisville *Courier-Journal* but renders available to the corn-producer corn that he could not otherwise utilize, were it not for the invention of the Art of Pottery, improved by that of Canning, and supplemented by the modern contrivance of the Parcel Post;—that yepping grocer

without knowing it sings a song of praise to the race's ancestors who raised the Milestone of Pottery.

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