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EDITORIAL

## PURE AND SIMPLEDOM, CAPITALISM'S PET AND SHEET-ANCHOR.

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**T**HE piling up of evidence is not always a superfluous proceeding. Even mere repetition is often needed to drive a point home. When the hammer of repetition is winged with a fresh fact, the point is driven home all the better. So it is with regard to the fact that Capitalism has a tender spot in its heart for the Gompers or "Pure and Simple" style of Unionism; that Capitalism positively dotes on this style of "Organized Labor"; and that the incidents that would seem to run counter to this theory,—the periodical occasions when Capitalism takes, as it were, the "Pure and Simple" Union on its knees, right side up, and lambastes it—no more overthrow the theory than a mother's periodical disciplining of her children in a similar way overthrows the theory of maternal affection. All this has been demonstrated with scores of proofs. One more proof will not be superfluous. The proof in question adds zest to the point.

The following commentary appeared in print last week on the recent disastrous miners' strike in France:

"The collapse of the strike at Montceau-les-Mines, already announced by cable, furnishes the conventional last chapter of a very familiar story. It adds a little to the sum of human experience, but it is not at all likely that the lesson which it teaches will be heeded by the members of labor unions outside the individual sufferers. The Montceau men held out until they had exhausted every penny of their accumulations, and of such funds as were contributed by others, and then, when on the verge of absolute starvation, were compelled to surrender unconditionally, without gaining a single point in addition to those conceded to them in the first instance. All their sufferings have been in vain, and they are much worse off now than they were in the beginning. Of course, they are crying out that they have been shamefully deceived, deserted, and betrayed by everybody, by their own leaders, by the French Government, and by the National Federation of Miners, which was to have declared a general sympathetic strike in their behalf on the 1st of May, and did nothing of the kind; but that will not

prevent other miners from falling into exactly the same trap by-and-by. Meanwhile, the mining company, relieved from all fear of consequences, has taken the opportunity of discharging finally several hundred men, who were either incompetent or undesirable.”

What is the source of this commentary? It speaks of the disaster as a “very familiar story”; it observes that “it is not at all likely that the lesson will be heeded” by the Unions; it points out facts that go to show positive heroism on the part of the strikers; it describes their wild anger; and it closes that part of the recital with the forecast that not all such sad experiences “will prevent other miners FROM FALLING INTO EXACTLY THE SAME TRAP BY-AND-BY.” Such an enumeration, one after another, of the leading and baneful features of “Pure and Simple” education and tactics might justify the belief that the commentary proceeded from some intelligent Labor source, a rather disheartened, pessimistic source, yet still a source friendly to the workingman. It must be either that, or just the reverse. Either it must be a friend’s utterance, that seeks to call the workers’ attention to the folly of persevering in the attempt to lick the capitalist on the economic field of battle, and seeks to point the political field as the field where Labor has the power to overthrow its oppressor; it is either that, or the commentary is an exhalation of joy from some capitalist breast, closing with the reassuring remark that not all such blunders and sufferings “WILL PREVENT OTHER WORKINGMEN FROM FALLING INTO EXACTLY THE SAME TRAP BY-AND-BY,”—the trap of the “Pure and Simple” Union, led by the Labor Lieutenants of the Capitalist Class, so as to safeguard the interests of the exploiters.

The answer to, What is the source of the above quoted commentary? is best given by reproducing an other commentary, from the identical source, that appeared in print only a few weeks earlier, on May 9. The subject then under discussion was the Cooper Union meeting at which Mr. Samuel Gompers and other such “Pure and Simple” Union leaders, backed by a few capitalist “intellectuals,” sought to fasten the blinkers of “Pure and Simple” ignorance upon an audience of workingmen, and were roundly laughed at by these. That commentary was the following:

“It is not surprising or discouraging that there should have been a disorderly element at the mass meeting in Cooper Union last evening, under the auspices of the Committee of Conciliation of the Civic Federation, which hissed those representatives of labor who expressed conservative views, and which called for a policy of force, instead of one of arbitration. The really significant and important feature of the gathering is

that leaders of so much influence with workingmen as President Gompers of the American Federation of Labor and John Mitchell, President of the United Mine Workers{,} were ready to take their stand openly and strongly in favor of moderate measures.”

The elements that would prevent workingmen from regularly “falling into exactly the same trap of ‘Pure and Simpledom’,” and waste their heroism, are herein called “disorderly”; while the element that would perpetuate the blunder on the part of workingmen of regularly “falling into exactly the same trap” are styled people of “conservative views,” and are pronounced “leaders of influence.”

Is any additional light shed on the answer by the fact that the two commentaries above quoted proceed from the “rifle diet to the workingmen” New York *Evening Post*?

Hardly!

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