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EDITORIAL

THE “STRENUOUS LIFE” LEAPED FORTH.

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THE upper crust of Italian society in Rome has just suffered a great shock. It is thoroughly scandalized. Nothing less horrid has happened than the sight of one of its own choice limbs, the Princess di San Faustino, picked out and dragged before the courts by the plebeian hands of her serving maid upon a charge {of} “beating.”

Whatever the vices of so-called aristocracy, vulgarity, such as is implied by a lady's indulgence in violence, is not among them. Much of the traits or accompaniments of so-called aristocracy, is the just aspiration of the Labor Movement in behalf of the Working Class. One of these desirable traits is self-restraint, that poise that comes from a life freed from the arduous animal struggle for existence. Civilization having reached the point that ample wealth is producible for all, the Labor Movement aims to raise the whole of humanity to that point now enjoyed by so-called aristocracy only, which consists in the “gentlemanly” or “lady-like” conduct, possible only upon a ground-work of easy circumstances. The “strenuous life” is hostile to such conduct. No wonder that a manifestation of “strenuous life” amid their midst has shocked Roman society. Is that society degenerating from its one admirable feature? No; therein lies the lesson and the humor of the occurrence.

The nursery tale tells of the cat that, having been converted by a witch into a Princess, was dazzling with her charms the noble ladies and gentlemen among whom she appeared at a ball. Unexpectedly the spell was broken. A mouse happened to cross the floor. The cat instinct immediately asserted itself; and {the} witch's spell was broken; the Princess, suddenly reconverted into a cat, sprang across the floor at the mouse. This is substantially what has happened in Rome.

“Princess di San Faustino” is but the witch's trappings with which an American

female bourgeois, named Jane Campbell, was artificially transformed into a lady. The witch in this case is the capitalist system of production, which, set in operation by her immediate ancestry, enabled her to purchase and deck herself with the external finery of “wife of the Prince Carlo Bourbon del Monte Santa Maria di San Faustino,” direct descendent of Henry IV. of France. The “strenuous life” of vulgar acquisitiveness practised upon the working class of America so as to enable Jane Campbell to become an heiress could not as a matter of course be wiped out by the mere title of “Princess di San Faustino”—no more than the hereditary cat-traits could be wiped out of the cat in the story by the external show of human refinement. As in the instance of the cat in the story, true characteristics asserted themselves despite filigrees. The cat-princess fell back with the true cat at the sight of a mouse; the bourgeois-princess relapsed into the vulgarity of her “strenuous life” extraction at sight of her maid—a representative of the class her breed had hunted.

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