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EDITORIAL

A TINKLING CYMBAL.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE lass with the tambourine and the cotton-wool Santa Claus are again “in our midst” ringing their bells on the street corner to attract the pennies of the passerby. Simultaneously with this appeal through the ear, the Salvation Army has sent out one to the eye, a four-page folder, pathetically lithographed in brown and green, and bearing the legend:

“Whether Summer or Winter may actually bring more pain to the poor, it is certain they can sooner starve in the winter. Think of the sharpened appetites against larders lacking an extra crust! Think of the shivering frames against the wardrobes devoid of an extra rag! For such the Winter is a time of terror.”

Against the virtues of true charity and helpfulness no Socialist would set himself. Under the head of such true charity would fall the act of a surgeon in assuaging the immediate agony of a patient while at the same time working to remove the cause of the suffering. Under that head would even fall the act of the surgeon who devoted himself wholly to alleviation, provided in the nature of the case no complete remedy existed. The conduct, however, of the practitioner who, despite the fact that a full and thorough cure was known, spent all his time on palliatives—palliatives, at that, which aggravated and rendered more incurable the primary complaint—would be a horse of a different color. So far from being charitable, it would be the very opposite.

What is the status of the Salvation Army? Poverty exists. No one denies it. The cause of that poverty is also well known: the workman’s lack of ownership in the social tool of production. So far from combatting the cause, the Army bends its every energy—in so far as its energies are honestly bent—towards obviating the effects, salving over the symptoms, of the grave and insidious disease which now ravages

society. Not only that, but by just so far as it conceals the symptoms and mollifies the effects, it creates a wall behind the shelter of which the disease is left free to extend its attacks, creating ever new distresses calling for mollification and concealment

True charity is a jewel. But the “charity” of the Salvation Army is, in the language of the Book it so loves to quote, a “tinkling cymbal and a sounding brass.”¹

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¹ [1 Corinthians 13:1]