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EDITORIAL

THE ETHICAL CULTURE DEDICATION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WITH appropriate ceremonies extending over two days, the imposing Ethical Culture edifice on Central Park West has been dedicated to its purposes. What those purposes are is best summed up in Dr. Felix Adler's own words: "To realize in our own life the greatness, the solemnity, the sacredness of the moral law—to contribute ourselves to the awakening of the best in mankind."

To persons so largely occupied with ethical movements and ethical history as are Dr. Adler and his associates, the sociologic law underlying all ethical advance should be no sealed book. Warfare and rapine, subjection to an oppressive and absentee autocracy, the holding of one's fellow man in bonds of chattel slavery, have no doubt been always inherently vicious and abhorrent. Not, however, until the wandering nomad tribes of Israel came into possession of the rich and fertile lands of Canaan, and learned the arts of agriculture; not until the American colonies had reached a sufficient numerical and industrial development to feel confident in their ability to "go it alone"; not until the Northern employing class had been enabled, by the cheapness of Northern white "free" labor, to rid itself of its superstition as to the necessity of slave labor, did sanguinary plunder, oppression by England, and Negro bondage become monstrous in the eyes of the respective generations practising them. Not, in other words, until material conditions have paved the way by rendering possible the abandonment of an iniquitous social procedure, can society at large, or any great percentage of it, recognize the evil that stares it in the face, and set intelligently about the task of putting it down.

The law once ascertained, it must hold good for all cases. Desirable indeed were it that the moral evils of the present day—political corruption, business chicanery, "white slavery" and gambling, to mention only a few of them—were relegated to the

company of cannibalism and the auto-da-fe. But before that can be, the, material foundation therefor, the assured comfort and well-being of all, without resort to ways that are devious and tricks that are queer, must first be laid. To attempt to make men honest without first giving them the chance to be honest, is sociology on its head.

The only movement which can provide man with the material basis for robust uprightness, and thus hold sociology solidly on its feet, is Socialism. Against the propaganda of Socialism within its halls the Ethical Culture Society has set its face, with the declaration that it “is not and will not be the channel of any particular social or political propoganda.” An attitude, no matter how carefully assumed, of “non-partisanship” towards progress is an actual attitude of hostility against progress. The Ethical Culturists, who aspire to “awaken the best in mankind” without giving that best something to feed on, is like the poultryman who would attempt to raise chickens by first smashing the eggs.

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