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EDITORIAL

THE NORTH POLE PARTY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

LIKE a bright jewel mid ash-barrel refuse, like a flower midst thistles, is the report found in the newspapers of this week, on the latest expedition just started from this city to discover the North Pole. Midst items of vileness—arrests of embezzlers; political manoeuvres; lying advertisements; Kishineff indignation mass meetings, held by leading Jew and Gentile Kishineffists; great detective exploits; etc., etc.;—all of them reflecting the material source and basis of man’s actions, and furnishing one way or another vast material for the demonstration of the Socialist principle of the materialist conception of history, this latest North Pole expedition jewel throws out its sparkling rays, this sweet-scented flower spreads its aroma to gladden the human heart, and also to invigorate, to rectify possible aberrations of the mind.

There always is danger of a correct principle being argued out of plumb by its very advocates. The denial of a truth necessarily calls forth a degree of vigor in its behalf that soon runs into excess. The bourgeois, or capitalist—that beast on all fours, that barn cattle that “follows the sun shine ’round the hay-stack while it feeds”—having in its innate hypocrisy and stupidity laid claim to superb spiritual impulses, and denied all material basis for its acts, it became inevitable that Socialism should lay stress upon material or economic matters, and that eventually other causes, that act and re-act upon fundamentals, should have been neglected to a point of seeming to be ignored. Off and on, however, events happen that tend to rectify such deviations from the correct course. This latest Polar Expedition, with its purely idealistic and self-sacrificing purpose, is one of such events. Another is a little book, *Feuerbach, the Roots of the Socialist Philosophy*, for which the Movement in America is indebted to Austin Lewis. The work is a translation of one of Engels’ brilliant monographs. But, judged by the light of the present lay of the land, it is hard to determine whether the translated portion is the

more valuable part of the little book, or whether the translator's introduction has not the greater value, just now. At any rate, the two together are precious, as may be judged from the following extract from Engels in the introduction:

“The economic condition is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—the political forms of the class contests, and their results, the constitutions—the legal forms and also the reflexes of these actual contests in the brains of the participants, the political, legal, philosophical theories, the religious views—all these exert an influence on the development of the historical struggles, and in many instances determine their form.”

Material conditions are the basis of man's actions. To ignore and claim to ignore them leads to error, or is the product of hypocrisy. But on that foundation, and reacting upon it, is a vast superstructure capable of aspirations and achievements such as North Pole Expeditions,—pure homages to KNOWLEDGE.

[The work referred to above is published by Charles H. Kerr & Company, 56 Fifth avenue, Chicago; price 50 cents. It can also be obtained at the Labor News Co., 2–6 New Reade street, this city.]

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