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EDITORIAL

THE MOTHER-RIGHT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

TOM WATSON's weekly, *The Jeffersonian*, of November 18, addressed its fellow Populists warningly against Socialism, and informing them that in the magazine of the same name Mr. Watson is "disemboweling that filthy, pernicious book, *Bebel's Woman Under Socialism*," says to them:

"Do you know what the mother-right system was? IT WAS SEXUAL PROMISCUITY, IN WHICH EVERY WOMAN WAS ENJOYED CARNALLY BY ANY AND EVERYBODY. The tribe could not tell who was the father of the children, and hence the mother was the only recognized parent.

"The four lower races lived on that swinish level, at first, BUT THE CAUCASIAN RACE NEVER DID. THERE NEVER WAS AN AGE IN WHICH WHITE WOMEN HAD THE MORALS OF NEGRO WENCHES,—NEVER!

The substance of the two paragraphs sufficiently denotes a mind unhinged, in revolt against facts; the underscoring of the passages, reproduced above exactly as in the original, only renders the performance all the more completely corybantic.

The concept of the mother-right could and did arise in the human race only after some degree of system had asserted itself. When human society had advanced enough, that is, when it had gathered a sufficient store of experience upon which at all to base a system, however rudimental, promiscuity, the primal condition in which "every woman was enjoyed carnally by any and everybody," lay far behind society. Mother-right is one of the surest, perhaps the very surest, evidence of social organization; moreover, the social organization of which mother-right was an institution was constructed expressly to prevent promiscuity, the evil effect of which was the first impulse for organization. When human society had advanced to the mother-right stage, human society had reached the gentile system of organization. Under the gentile system of organization cohabitation between the men and women of the same gens was forbidden.

The original gens, was the era of earliest communism. The Iron Tool had not yet made its appearance. As yet there was not the slightest foreshadowing of the ripping of society into classes. As a consequence, the dignity of motherhood clad woman with social precedence. A social consequence thereof was that when a man and woman cohabitated, seeing they had to be of different gentes, she did not leave her gens for his, but he left his gens for hers; the children of the union belonged to the mother's gens; the name of the mother's gens was theirs; and the property acquired remained, generally, with her gens. That was the essence and the system of mother-right.

From this first gentile formation society melted into the second. The transition took place during the later period of barbarism, so-called in ethnology. The Iron Tool had sprung up. Classes were forming. Property was gathering. Under these circumstances male creation, by reason of the greater vigor of bone and muscle it was endowed with and that society then needed, rose to supremacy. In the transition, the inhibition against marriage in the same gens of course remaining, when a man and woman cohabited, he did not, as formerly, leave his gens for her: she thenceforth left her gens for his; the children of the union belonged to the father's gens; the name of the father's gens became theirs; and the property acquired remained, at first, with his gens, and later went to his agnates, until, finally, with the breaking up of gentile society, the property was inherited exclusively by his own children.

Accordingly—

1. Mother-right, so far from being a “swinish” affair, as Mr. Watson in his frenzy declares, so far from being a badge of degradation to woman, was a badge of dignity. It was a diadem, proudly worn on the foreheads of the sweethearts of our remote ancestry, and zealously guarded by the mothers of our early forebears.

2. The loss of the mother-right, so far from elevating womanhood, marks her downfall, and fastened upon her a badge of servitude that lasts to this day, and that no hymeneal lace-veils of Watsonic society can successfully conceal.

3. However shocking the thought to our modern sense, the remote ancestry of us all (white women along with “Negro wenches”) began their march towards civilization with promiscuity and incest. Even if Mr. Watson in his delirium were to

reject the word of ethnologic science on this head, surely such a compound of piousness and Caucasianism as he will keep his delirium sufficiently under control not to reject scripture, the Adamic version of which leaves no escape from the promiscuity and incest conclusion.

4. And finally—by the force of the identical and irresistible social evolution, that, at one of its stages, tore the diadem of mother-right from the brow of woman, the diadem will be restored to her at the stage that civilized society is now getting ready to enter upon—the stage of that improved communism, when the classes will again be no more, and economic independence, becoming the birthright of humanity, matrimony will no longer justify the pun with which the American poet John Godfrey Saxe justly stigmatized the modern institution when he called it a matter-of-money.

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