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EDITORIAL

MARY BAKER EDDY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE biographies of Mrs. Mary Baker G. Eddy, just deceased, are profuse with matter that is uninteresting, and interesting on a subject that they treat but sparingly.

None but lovers of the miraculous, and who approach any subject, that at all promises to satisfy that bent, with a predisposition for the mysterious, will find much cause for wonderment, or will impute to any occult powers in an individual, either the circumstance that thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, are drawn by her away from treatment by “diplomaed doctors,” or that they contribute millions of dollars to set up a school of medical treatment that dispenses with the output of medical colleges. The thing is natural. It is a revolt that has been gathering strength and volume for these many generations, not to say centuries—the revolt against a profession that Moliere has satirized; that Charles Lamb has unmasked; that Goethe earned the undying hatred of for depriving it of its pretenses; that Montaigne, before all of these, has analyzed as a “parasite on a people’s health”;—and that the earth, more recently cremation also, has resignedly acted as an accomplice of by covering its blunders, or burning them to ashes beyond identification. All the space that is being devoted to Mrs. Eddy upon this head is uninteresting. It is the waste portion in her biographies. And the waste is profuse.

But amidst the wasteful profusion there are a few lines of value. They are the cursory lines devoted to the composition of the family from which Mrs. Eddy came. These few lines tell of a sister and her husband who owned and operated a woolen factory; of a brother who was a lawyer and politician; of another sister whose husband was a political jobholder; of a brother who was a bricklayer; of another brother who was a mill operator in his own uncle-and-aunt’s woolen factory; and of Mrs. Eddy’s own first husband, also a bricklayer;—in other words, these lives tell of

a family, in our own generation, in which both the great economic classes of the land are represented. This is a valuable piece of sociologic information for the militant Socialist.

Dogmatic Socialists, especially in Europe, do not tire of expressing their astonishment at the backwardness of the Socialist Movement in America. They reason that America is the most and furthestmost capitalist nation on earth. How comes it that of Socialism there is least in this country? The reasoning betrays faultiness on vast areas of logic, both abstract and applied.

Socialism, to be sure, needs capitalism as condition precedent. No capitalism, no Socialism. But capitalism is not the only condition precedent for a strong Socialist Movement. Other factors—some deterrent, others promotive—enter into the formation of a movement. Among these factors are the social conditions peculiar to each nation. Among such social conditions is, not merely the existence of the classes, but also the existence of a chasm deep and wide enough between the two to uncover the conflict that actually exists between them—and thus make the conflict fruitful of progress, which means a strong Socialist Movement.

The family of Mrs. Eddy allows a peep into the composition of a large, if not the largest portion of the native families of the land. That peep reveals the fact that, however rapidly the chasm between capitalist master and wage slave is being cut, the chasm is not yet of sufficient age to be realized by all concerned. It goes without saying that it must have been next to impossible to bring home their wage slave status to the brothers of Mrs. Eddy, and to make them realize that they were more closely related to the immigrant bricklayers and mill operatives than they were to their own brother and sister employers of labor.

In a country, whatever its development otherwise, in which the native proletariat and capitalist are yet closely connected by family bonds,—in such a country there is a social condition that goes far to counteract the economic development Socialismward. Such a country is America. The recognition of the fact removes the surprise at the “backwardness of Socialism” in the land, and explains the phenomenon; at the same time, the recognition of the fact should be enough to dissipate the Jingo fatuity that considers Socialism an impossibility on American soil. The cause of its delay is transitory: the reason for its advent is permanent

The social facts thrown up by Mrs. Eddy's biographies help to shed light both upon the path behind and the path ahead of Socialism in America. And these facts, though stated in the most incidental manner, are the only real interesting information, or information of lasting value that the profuse biographies of the deceased lady contain.

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