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EDITORIAL

ERASTUS WIMAN.

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THE death of Erastus Wiman brings to mind the tragedy of the man's fate—a sacrifice of mental powers or organization—an illustration of the wastefulness of the existing social system.

Erastus Wiman made Staten Island his home in 1865, then thirty-one years of age. His active mind, gifted with the power of synthesis, conceived gigantic and far from chimerical plans for the promotion of the island. Wiman's plans hinged on making Staten Island the New York terminus of the Baltimore and Ohio system. With this end in view, and co-operated with by the directory of the B. & O. Railroad system, a series of improvements were undertaken. The great bridge across the Arthur Kill was built; the Staten Island road was developed and continued from one end of the island to another, and a series of enterprises—all meant as the setting for the great central purpose—were set on foot. Suddenly, the whole plan was struck by palsy. What had happened? Had Wiman taken to drink or gambling, or some other purse- and mind-destroying occupation. No. The directory of the B. & O. passed into other hands, that had other schemes of their own, and with that the plug was taken from under Wiman's great plans. He had "made money" and invested it in his plans. With their collapse came his own. He died on the instant a broken man.

While "below the line" the silent hosts of Labor are wasted like refuse by Capitalism, above the line talent untold goes to equal waste. In a rational society the genius of Wiman would have had ample opportunity for expansion, and would have enjoyed the gratification of success. But Wiman paid the penalty of the class he identified himself with. The sword he wielded smote him.

And why does it not smite all the others? For the same reason that all the tickets in a lottery do not draw a prize. At the faro table of capitalism—the gambling game par excellence—some draw prizes, just enough to lure and deceive

the many.

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