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EDITORIAL

FATHER GASSONIANA.

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XI.

THERE remain, before taking up his concrete charges, three general propositions advanced by Father Thomas I. Gasson in his Boston anti-Socialist address. The three remaining general propositions differ from those hitherto considered in that they do not appear expressly stated, nevertheless they are felt to underlie the whole tenor of the Father's effort. They might as well have been stated expressly. They are, first, the theory that Struggle is requisite to develop character; second, that the Roman Catholic polity is entitled to unquestioning submission having been tried by experience; and third, that it is as a moral force that the Roman Catholic Church takes the field against Socialism.

We shall to-day take up the first of these three implied propositions.

It is nothing new to hear Struggle advocated as a means toward progress. In economics, the Manchester, or "laissez faire," school sets up the principle as a guiding star, and, in sociology, Herbert Spencer cracks up the principle as the source of all that is good, and the opposite as the source of all evil. Thus launched, the principle receives endorsement from a variety of other sources. The Pseudo-Darwinian maintains it as the foundation of biology; the capitalist asseverates it is the breath in his nostrils; every politician on the stump delights in singing its praises; last, not least, incumbents of pulpits, as appears from Father Gasson's address, "bless it with a text," expressed or implied. The principle, evidently, is one of universal—acceptance?—Let's see.

The Manchester School of Struggle, unguardedly, and forced thereto by the dominant demands of commerce, holds war as "next to pestilence."

Herbert Spencer, the "Scientific Apostle of Competition," fills up volumes upon the need of proper ethical schooling for children,—to cultivate the spirit of Struggle? No!—in order to eradicate from the children's minds and breasts the savage instinct of the savage for strife.

The pedantic Pseudo-Darwinian, full of what he loves to term "the austere

character of Nature,” when turned stock raiser, instead of affording his flocks and herds the amplest opportunities for struggle, guards them, not merely against danger from without but against conflicts from within their palings, “lest the breed suffer.”

The capitalist—in the same breath that he proudly sets himself up as an exhibit of what “roughing it” does for a man, while the opposite breeds the helpless namby-pamby,—sees to it, with the aid of the best legal advice, not that his wealth be left to the children of his worst enemy in order that they may become “helpless namby-pambies,” but that his wealth be secured to those he holds dearest.

The politician’s lips, from which but a minute before flowed a perfervid rhetoric in favor of the beatitudes that attend upon struggle, instead of intoning hosannas at tidings of a close vote, that is, at tidings that promise a prolongation of the struggle, pour out a steaming lava stream of curses at his — — bad luck.

Finally, most repulsively contradictory of all is the pulpiteer praise-singer of Struggle. To sing the praises of Struggle, in the same breath that one recites the imploration of Jesus to his father who is in heaven not to lead us into temptation, is a performance unmatched by the performances of Manchesterians, Spencerians, Pseudo-Darwinians, coarsest of capitalists, and ranting politicians rolled in one. Any of these may, but then only occasionally and in a moment of excitement, like Henry George when he as much as declared God to be a Single Taxer, claim to be the mouthpiece of the Deity. The pulpiteer makes the claim habitually. It is his profession. When, accordingly, a Father Gasson promotes, even by implication, the tenets of Manchesterians, Spencerians, etc., what he actually does is to demand that the Lord’s Prayer be amended.

Not of universal acceptance, but of universal declamation on the part of the upholders of the capitalist system is the theory that Struggle is a character developer. With them it is a theory known by its breach not by its observance. The theory is preached by one and all as a narcotic to benumb the Working Class. Themselves, they treat the theory in the manner that Protectionist and Free Trade capitalists treat Free Trade and Protection—they all want Protection for the goods they sell, and Free Trade for the goods they buy.

Struggle, with its manifold manifestations of competition, strife, temptation, is not a character-builder; it is a character dwarfer.

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

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