

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 4, NO. 334.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MAY 29, 1904.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

FIFTH EPISTLE AT THE LAMBERTIANS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WE promised in our last epistle on the subject of Father L.A. Lambert's attack on Socialism, published in the April 16th issue of the *Freeman's Journal and Catholic Register*, to immediately proceed to storm his next fortification. We have concluded to postpone that pleasure for the next epistle. It is a delight, often indulged in by troops that have just stormed and overthrown a fort, to tarry a moment over the ruins of the works they have taken, and before marching to the capture of the next works, look at and examine the debris of the previous one. Such tarrying is no idle loitering. The information thus gathered may be, in this case it is decidedly, of use in the subsequent operations.

The keystone in the fortification demolished last week was the attempt of Father Lambert to justify the plunder of the capitalist class by giving to the process under which the plunder is practiced upon the individual workingman the name of a "contract" by which he "cedes his rights to the employer for a consideration called wages."

Say that Father Lambert owns some wild land out in Colorado. He has a suspicion that the land contains rich veins; but is not sure, not being a mineralogist himself, and being, moreover, held in New York with his nose to the grindstone so tight at work for a living smirking to customers in his grocery store, that he has not much, if any time, to post himself on mineralogy. Presently he is approached by John Doe, a gentleman of external affability and meekness, and who asserts that he is well posted on land in Colorado. Indeed he is. He knows that Father Lambert's land actually holds rich veins, but he says to Father Lambert in an accent that is childlike and bland that the particular tract is totally devoid of rich or any other veins; that it is all gravel and sand and furze; that he, Doe, would like to have it simply for the purpose of setting up a shanty and retiring thither and devoting

himself to the contemplation of the wickedness of this world in the seclusion of austere retirement. Father Lambert will think it over. The next day Father Lambert is approached accidentally on purpose by a secret agent of John Doe; the conversation somehow switches off into mines, and the secret agent happens to know all about a certain tract of land in Colorado which is utterly worthless, five cents an acre would be a good price, and the owner should feel happy if he got that much, there being so many hundreds of thousands of just such “worthless” acres in the “worthless” acres market. The description of the locality of the land shows it be Father Lambert’s, and the good Father begins to feel cheap. But he is to feel cheaper yet. Other secret agents of John Doe, men of several professions, journalists, professors, some stray parsons, lecturers, etc., etc., all come around and their tales tally—Father Lambert’s Colorado lands are worthless. His estimation of what he is worth shrinks and shrinks. He is offered by another agent five cents an acre, in a round sum \$5 for his hundred acres. He does not care to sell. But presently, what with the rise of rent, of food and the indirect rise in the price of clothing by reason of the shoddy now woven in, etc., etc.,—all brought about by the agents of John Doe—a \$5 bill assumes alluring proportions to Father Lambert, and the first time an agent of John Doe comes around with an offer to buy, a bargain is struck. A contract is drawn up, the “worthless land” passes to John Doe, the \$5 bill passes to Father Lambert. About a month later the eyes of Father Lambert accidentally fall upon a newspaper item. There he learns that the “worthless land” which he sold as worthless was a solid vein of gold, and that it had been operated and exploited by John Doe for some time, of course without the Father’s knowing and before he had sold it. What will Father Lambert do? He must be a very different sort of antimaterialist from any that we have ever run across, read or heard of, if he does not rake up the most material of dollars to secure the best legal intellectuality, and start a suit for his land. And he will win.

Win? What about the contract? Did he not “by contract, cede his rights to the wealth contained in that land to the purchaser for a consideration called purchase money”? Of course he did not. He was cheated by a cheat, and will recover the property he was defrauded of.

The workingman, held with his nose so close to the grindstone of work for a

living that he has hardly any time for mental improvement;—assured by one set of John Does’s agents that he is a sinner and there is no help in him;—the scales being fastened to his mind’s eye by another set on the subject of the rich vein of wealth that is started the moment he cooperates with others; learnedly argued with by a third set that he is worth only the wages of his “worthless labor” in the “worthless labor market,” and that such wages are an immutable law of nature;—statistically told by a fourth set that there are many hundreds of thousands of just such “worthless labor” in the market; patriotically informed that it is out of patriotism for him that the price he is offered is at all offered to him; the only object being to “give work to labor”;—and, finally, driven by the pinching want created by the John Doe of his case, the capitalist class, to sell, he does at the low price artificially created in his mind by the misinformation with which he is stuffed by the agents of his John Doe.

Did he “contract”? NO! Thunders Socialism from the camp of the awakening working class. No! He was cheated and plundered! and by the light of this knowledge whatever organization or institution cultivated, fomented, condemned, preached or justified the swindle will, must go down!

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

Uploaded June 2007

slpns@igc.org