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EDITORIAL

THEIR LEVEL.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Spokane, Wash., *Industrial Worker* of the 8th of this month, has this as a leading editorial paragraph:

“Those interested in the history of the class struggle should read the series of books by Eugene Sue and translated by Daniel De Leon which are sold by the New York Labor News Co. In these books, it is plainly shown that the direct action of the workers, and not reliance on petitions or ‘votes,’ was the thing that gave the workers what advances they did get in days gone by. The feudal barons ruled by physical force in the middle ages. The industrial barons rule by physical force to-day.”

This is a welcome paragraph. It is welcome, not so much because it bears out the contention of *The People* that the Spokane concern is an advocate of pure and simple physical force. However strenuously the Industrial Workerites denied the charge, it cropped out of everything they said and did. Every rational man knows that unqualified sneering at political action does and, in America, can only spell pure and simple bombism. The paragraph quoted above is welcome for reasons that are of far broader moment, in that the paragraph serves to illustrate an important fact that the experience of the International Movement has established.

Eugene Sue produced a certain work of inestimable value to the Labor, or Socialist Movement—the *History of a Proletarian Family Across the Ages*, consisting of a series of nineteen historic novels. As stated by the translator in the preface to one of the stories, the work, although in the garb of fiction, is the best universal history extant, in that, better than any work, avowedly on history, it traces the special features of the several systems of class-rule as they have succeeded each other from epoch to epoch, the manoeuvres of the successive ruling classes to preserve supremacy; the mistakes incurred by the successive ruled classes; the varying fortunes in the conflict; the varying means and weapons used in the great

drama, which, opening with the conquest of Gaul by the Romans, closes nearly two thousand years later with the story of the second French Revolution. The Eugene Sue series, valuable everywhere, as may be judged from the above sketch, is of special value to the Movement in America, a country so young that it lacks historic perspective—a deficiency that the work supplies. Sue's work contains in compact form the lessons taught by these nearly two thousand years of human experience.

Not the least of these lessons, taught with all the majestic background of historic evolution, is the quadruple lesson, first, that Force is the midwife of Progress; second, that Force is crippled when unorganized; third, that the political ballot performs a priceless mission in the work of organizing Force, in that it is an appeal to the intellect, thereby a mental discipliner; and fourth, that the political ballot, or political action, is the slowly fashioned weapon which Progress wrought and with which it supplements its original and clumsy weapon of Force pure and simple. The lesson, so convincingly taught by Sue with the panorama of history, is the lesson later insisted upon by Marx with matchless satire that withered at once what he called the "idiocy" of pure and simple politics, and the Bakounine worse than idiocy of pure and simple bombism; it is the lesson, by whose teachings, still later, the I.W.W. was founded when it called upon the workers to unite "upon the political as well as upon the industrial field," and by the light of which the Socialist Labor Party has unswervingly picked its way among the social brambles, and, jointly with the I.W.W., drew up and presented to the International Congress at Stuttgart the memorable resolution on the vital functions of the economic and the political organization.

Obviously, the Sue series of stories—read, of course, from first to last—offer only the chilliest of hospitality to the twin aberrations of the mind, Pure and Simple Politicianism and Pure and Simple Bombism. The former is left up in the air, without a leg to stand on; the latter is exposed as a stunted development; jointly, the two are exhibited as lame ducks;—but, of course, as stated before, the whole series must be read by him who would draw sane conclusions from its teachings.

Now, it so happens, that the latest story of the series so far reached by the New York Labor News reaches down to only the XIVth Century, a date when the ballot, or political action, did not yet exist, and were struggling to break through the crust

of feudal barbarity. Accordingly, the Spokane Industrial Workerites have published their own mental photography as men who hold that, seeing “votes” were not resorted to when “votes” did not yet exist, therefore “votes” must not be resorted to when they do exist; the Spokane Industrial Workerites have furthermore published their own mental photography by quoting as a proof of their one-legged hobby a work with which they are only fractionally acquainted.—Such is the mental level of the pure and simple bombist everywhere: his is a case of stunted mentality: he lives in an age that the human race has far behind it.

However well posted a man may be on the literature and history of the Movement, he can not always be blamed for losing patience with individuals, who, though of man’s estate, are still antedeluvian kids mentally. He can not always be blamed for forgetting that the case of such men is a case of arrested mentality. Of course, among such men will ever be found others who use them as dupes, slummites with slum records. But these would have no opportunity to play the parasites were the arrested mentalities not there to fasten upon.

The remaining stories of the Sue series will speedily be out. It is to be hoped the recommendation of the *Industrial Worker* will be followed by its devotees, and that they will read Sue’s work. The series in full is magnificent enough to justify the hope that it may have the effect upon their minds that certain surgical operations are said to have upon certain brains.

In the meantime, quite welcome is the paragraph under consideration. It is a fresh psychological proof of a fact that the Movement has long established—the pure and simple physical forcist notion is a notion that comes from and belongs to the Stone Age of man’s mental make-up.

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