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EDITORIAL

FATHER GASSONIANA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

AT least a score of clippings of the *Boston Post* of February 6, containing a report of an address against Socialism delivered by the Jesuit Father Thomas I. Gasson, have reached this office in the course of the last two weeks. Most of the clippings came accompanied with some humorous remark, or other; with two of them the remarks were not humorous; in these instances the senders were terribly in earnest. One nervously hoped that “the un-Godly teachings of Socialism are nailed”; the other, as nervously hoped that we would “learn something, and stop flying in the face of God.” Both, with tell-tale inconsistency, challenge refutation. We shall accommodate these fluttering souls.

The points scored by Father Gasson fall under two heads—concrete faults found with Socialism, and assertions of a general nature, or of the nature of general and fundamental principles. These will all be taken up seriatim in successive weeks. Obviously, the points of a general nature must be allowed precedence: upon the soundness or unsoundness of these depends, to a considerable extent, the solidity or hollowness, of most, if not all, the concrete points raised against Socialism.

I.

Conceding at the opening of his address that Socialism is interested in the welfare of humanity, Father Gasson proceeds to say:

“I belong to one of the religious orders of the church, and *we receive nothing for our services*. Therefore I am in hearty sympathy with that aim of Socialism.”

The sentence contains a serious misconception of facts.

So far from Father Gasson receiving nothing for his services, the gentleman—that is, taking him as a sample of the orders that he speaks of,—is the recipient of what, to large masses of the population of the civilized world, would amount to a bounteous material gift. Even if Father Gasson’s picture did not

accompany the report of his oration, the knowledge of the church orders possessed by every man of observation and education conveys the information that the members of these orders are no ragged starvelings. The picture of the orator published by the Boston *Post* removes all possible doubt on that head.

Father Gasson receives for his services three square meals, at least; he receives for his services the necessary clothing, heavy in winter, light in summer; he receives for his services a good bed, hard or soft, according as health may dictate; he receives for his services shelter over head. In short, Father Gasson receives for his services the necessaries wherewith to live. That alone would be, as all scientific investigation establishes, an amount of material acquisitions above those enjoyed by the average workingman.

Furthermore, the amount of these material things, received by Father Gasson for his services, embrace another remuneration. Man does not “lay by” but against a rainy day—a day of illness, or of out-of-work. This is the spring of hoarding, of economy, of miserliness. Seeing that the average workingman does not receive for his fitful as much as Father Gasson does for his steady employment; seeing that, accordingly, the Specter of Want dogs the heels of the average worker; it follows that Father Gasson receives for his services a volume of material goods that drives the dread Specter from his side and leaves his mind at ease.

So serious is the misconception of facts involved in Father Gasson’s statement, to the effect that he receives nothing for his services, that it disqualifies him from logical and precise thinking upon the field of economics. The misconception of fact renders the Father inaccessible to the philosophy of the lesson taught in all languages, all of which, backed by popular experience, have some adage or other to the effect that “man speaks as his bread is buttered”; hence, the misconception of facts disables Father Gasson—we believe the gentleman sincere—from that healthy exercise of the well poised mind, INTROSPECTION, with the aid of which Father Gasson would understand himself, and would catch the note of the voice that issues from the stale bread and rancid butter that speaks through him.

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

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