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EDITORIAL

HERE IS A GLASS TO THE DEAD ALREADY!

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LODGE 477, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, had a banquet at Galesburg, Ill., on the 7th of last June. The affair takes up eight pages of this month's Magazine of the Brotherhood. Amid the flowing of wine, speeches were made. The Grand Master spoke; the Grand Secretary-Treasurer spoke; and, to complete the picture, an Illinois capitalist politician, the Hon. W.T. Irwin, spoke. The painting fills a broad canvas. Let us contemplate its details in order fully to appreciate the whole.

Grand Master John J. Hannahan spoke upon the mutuality of the "interests of our employers and our own", and proceeded to illustrate the point with ecstatic fervor by bringing out the circumstantial fact that \$8,764,015 had been paid by the Union "to disabled members of the organization, and to widows and orphans".

Grand Secretary W.S. Carter must have considered that the Grand Master's presentation might have been made stronger. He amplified and underscored the latter's scoring. He rapturously added that "the larger portion of that nearly \$9,000,000 HAS BEEN PAID WITHIN THE LAST FEW YEARS". Moreover, on pages 286 and 287 of that self-same issue of the Magazine emphasize the point by presenting the tabulated list of the death and liability claims paid during the month of June and the first two weeks of July. The list bears out the figures furnished by the Interstate Commerce Commission on the appalling slaughter of the railroad workers. Of the 162 cases tabulated on the list there is hardly one that is not directly traceable to the pestilential conditions in the trade, as at present operated by the capitalist class. The tables read like the report of a bloody battlefield, or a pest-infected region. Within six weeks, the capitalist pest claimed no less than 162 victims in deaths and mutilated humanity!

One more detail, and the painting is complete. The Hon. W.T. Irwin, holding high the wine-cup in his tremulous right hand, and traveling his eyes over the assembled candidates for death and mutilation gathered at the festive board of those locomotive firemen, declared in a transport of exultation:

“The men at this table to-night in ten, twenty or thirty years will undoubtedly be superintendents, vice-presidents and presidents of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad”!!!!

About fifty years ago, when the famine-wrought pest swept over India, and carried its devastations into the tents of the British soldiers, the delirium of recklessness seized the latter. Festive boards, arranged by the British officers, at which the fear of imminent death was drowned in flowing bowls, became general, and a weird bacchanalian song—a song, the first line of whose refrain heads the article—sprang up; nor were the army chaplains lagging who, cup in hand, fell in line with the prevailing frenzy, adding to it the theologic vista of approaching Paradise. What else than wholesale death and mutilation of the rank and file of the locomotive firemen is represented by “that nearly \$9,000,000 paid within the last few years”? What else than the (under the pest of capitalism) impending death and mutilation of the rank and file are these “Grand Officers” exalting in toasts? What other than the American counterparts of those British military lackeys in India of the cannibal capitalist class in Britain are the Grand Masters Hannahan and Grand Secretary-Treasurers Carter? What other than the American clerical counterparts of those British chaplains in India are the Hon. W.T. Irwins, who seek to fuddle to speedy death or mutilation condemned locomotive firemen with the Paraisaical intoxicant that “in ten, twenty or thirty years they will undoubtedly be superintendents, vice-presidents and presidents” of railroad companies? What else are such speeches from our Grand Officers and politicians but the American adaptation of that old song once sung in India and the refrain of which ran:

“Here is a glass to the dead already,
“And one to the next who dies.”

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

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