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EDITORIAL

TUBERCULOSIS.

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A PAPER replete with startling figures, carefully and judiciously presented, is Samuel Hopkins Adams' "Tuberculosis: The Real Race Suicide", in *McClure's Magazine* for January. This paper reveals the extent, economic drain, cause, and efforts made to combat this awful scourge, together with a description of the opposition to the latter—the whole making a terrible indictment of the present unsanitary and inhuman social system.

The author estimates that of "the 75,000,000 living Americans, 8,000,000 at least must inevitably die from this cause; some authorities put the estimate as high as 10,000,000." In his opinion, Tuberculosis "is the greatest of all drains on a nation's resources, since it disables from one-quarter to one-third of the population at the productive age (between 15 and 45)." On another page he says: "The yearly economic loss to the nation through tuberculosis is \$330,000,000." Environment and the habits of life are given as the causes of the dread disease. "Tuberculosis," says the author, "is a house infection." Again: "In every city the principal centers of tuberculosis, as well as the high death rates, are found in the slums." Dark and badly-aired SLEEPING rooms (of which there are OVER 350,000 in New York City), sweat shops and "many factories" that "still turn out a large percentage of the victims", are the greatest breeding places for "the infinitesimal mushroom growth, known as Koch's bacillus", that causes tuberculosis.

The remedies advocated by the author are sanatoria for the treatment of the disease; registration, disinfection and sanitary, i.e., tenement, reform. In connection with the latter, the author quotes Dr. Knopf's International prize essay, as follows: "Without better housing of the poor, the tuberculosis problem will never be solved." In connection with the former, the author shows a woeful dearth of accommodations for the victims of whom he writes. "New York City has beds for about one thousand

consumptives: there are 40,000 consumptives in the metropolis. Of these 15,000 are too poor to pay for sanitarium or hospital treatment. They are going to die 'not because they are incurable, but because there is no place to cure them', as Dr. S.A. Knopf, of New York, an authority of world-wide reputation, puts it." This, too, despite the great economic loss resulting from the scourge, and the comparatively small cost at which it can be combatted!

Continuing, the author describes the ignorant and professional objections to registration and disinfection—a curious combination of social and economic factors born of our present erroneous system. But it is in his treatment of the opposition to sanitary, i.e., tenement, reform, led, in this city by the United Real Estate Owners' Association, that the author is most effective. "This body," says he, "fights tenement reform and is a potent factor in legislation at Albany, its large membership enabling it to raise considerable sums of money, as well to control a large number of votes." Though the author declares that this body is composed of "persons who own a small equity, and often live in their own tenements," he makes it clear that its plan of campaign against tenement reform is based upon legal precedents established in the courts of the State a decade ago, by the holiest of all real estate concerns, the Trinity Church Corporation! This rich, powerful and religious (sic) corporation is described in a manner that leaves no doubt as to its baneful influence in the more modern defense of "the sacred rights of property" as opposed to the sacred rights of life.

The author, while pursuing "persons who own a small equity," does not neglect the large corporations who profit from foul tenements and stand in the way of reform. He mentions the University of Chicago and describes some of its properties. An anecdote is also told of a Boston "Back Bay" reform association which owned a row of tuberculosis-breeding tenements that the health authorities were compelled to proceed against. His subtle satire in exposing the inherent hypocrisy of the capitalist class, which dominates these corporations, would evoke laughter were not the subject so tragic.

All in all, the article is a fearful arraignment of the unsanitary conditions in cities that are perpetuated by the present system of private ownership. It possesses only one drawback: humane and admirable as are the remedies advocated they are

totally inadequate to the cure required. They do not strike at the fundamental cause of the slum conditions which contribute to the spread of tuberculosis, viz., the capitalist system of production and distribution. The capitalist system of production and distribution tends to concentrate industry and commerce in large factories, mills, warehouses and elevators. The men and women employed under this system must huddle about the places of their employment. This gives rise to the migration from country to city, and the congestion of the latter. It is not a mere co-incident that the growth in the value of factory and export products is accompanied by an increase in urban population and slums. Millions, forced from the farm and compelled to resort to the factory and mart for a livelihood, crowd one another, not only in the competition for employment, but in places of residence. It was fondly believed that, under the present system, the means of transportation would relieve these conditions; but they only tend to aggravate them, each new railroad or trolley system bringing hundreds of thousands nearer to the very centers of population. The result is an ever growing number of inhabitants in the cities to a square mile, and the employment and housing of human beings in buildings that yield enormous dividends and death rates, in other words, the unhealthy, over crowded sections known as the slums. Palliatives, such as tenement reforms have little counter-effect against such far-reaching and powerful factors. The eminent tenement reformer, Mr. Lawrence Vallier, is authority for the statement that while this city formerly had but one Mulberry Band, it now has a dozen!

Only when the tendency to concentration has ended in the inauguration of Socialism can we hope for the creation of city conditions in which the spread of tuberculosis will be greatly prevented. Under Socialism, with the ownership of capital vested in society democratically organized, and social use taking the place of capitalist profit, industry and commerce can and will be conducted in a manner most conducive to the sanitary and perfect housing of the men and women operating them.

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

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