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EDITORIAL

WALL STREET PHILOSOPHY.

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ANSWERING some wild ranters—one of whom luridly hints at “the day of restitution”, and another of whom lays claim to private information concerning “7,000,000 men, all fighters with hard hands and strong arms, ready to fight for the conquest of wealth and the overthrow of existing society”—the *Wall Street Journal* organizes itself into a tableau of deep erudition. It justly smiles at these utterances, not, however, because they are wild and “yellow”, but because “it takes refuge in the historic fact that great social revolutions are brought about as the result of starvation”. It reasons that the people being prosperous there is no danger of their striking “to overturn the existing order of things”; and it clinches its point with the maxim: “Revolutions do not thrive on full stomachs”. Here we have in lump a neat travesty of the philosophy of history, coupled with the requisite ignorance concerning contemporaneous things as they are.

The “historic fact” is that no great social revolution was “brought about as the result of starvation”. It was not starvation that brought about the first great social revolution, that revolution that overthrew the Mother Right, shattered the gentile order, and set up the territorial system with private ownership. It was not starvation that organized the Roundheads of England, or that organized the Revolutionary Fathers of America, or that organized the rising bourgeois of France in 1792 to the successive overthrow of feudalism in these countries. These were all “great social revolutions”. In all of them it was a great gathering power (never the concomitant of starvation) that brought about the revolution. Starvation does occasionally play a role in these upheavals; but it neither was an inevitable accompaniment of revolution, nor a cause; where it appeared, it figured merely as a weapon in the hands of the actual revolutionists. The poverty-stricken condition of the masses of the French people when the curtain rose over the French Revolution, together with the noise that the bourgeois revolutionists partly allowed and partly drove the pauperized masses to make in that great upheaval, has misled superficial observers into the double error of looking at the French proletariat of the eighteenth

century as the revolutionists, and to fall into the further error of generalizing from that error upon revolutions in general. No more than the dynamite bomb that explodes is the engineer, were the proletarian explosions in France the revolutionists. The revolutionists were the bourgeois, the on-coming capitalists; starvation was not the badge of their class; starvelings were used by them. In the instance of the French Revolution the starveling was used conspicuously; he was less conspicuous in the English Revolution; he figured not at all either in the old historic revolution that threw down the Mother Right, or in the modern one that overthrew feudalism in America. In all these great historic revolutions, the fact is precisely the reverse of the principle set up by the *Wall Street Journal*. It was on full stomachs that the revolutions thrived.

Proceeding from these facts and reasoning the conclusion might be drawn that the capitalist world, the United States included, is NOT headed towards a revolution. The fact of increasing misery is too obvious to require any lengthy refutation of the *Wall Street Journal's* opinion regarding universal prosperity. The *Wall Street Journal* probably believes in that myth. The paper's mental status is much like that of Marie Antoinette, who, when told the people were crying for bread, naively asked: "Why do they not eat cake?" There is no arguing with minds in such a pathologic state. With the student of the times who is of healthy mind the discussion may be continued. To him it is of profit.

The great historic revolutions that have gone before were not the product of starvation. They were the product of increased and increasing economic well-being. Now, then, Socialism holds that the next revolution in the order of succession and victory, is that for the overthrow of capitalism and the rise of the Socialist Republic, and that the revolutionists in this upheaval ARE, MUST BE AND CAN BE NONE OTHER THAN THE WORKING CLASS. Is the theory correct, in sight of the fact that previous revolutionists were men of a class that was rising, whereas the Working Class is declining in economic well-being? It is absolutely correct, so correct that he who does not keep it ever in mind does so at the peril of being suctioned into the delusion that Hearstism is Socialism—a delusion parallel to that to which the old Roman proletariat succumbed when it mistook a Caesar for the spokesman of its wants.

History repeats itself, but not as a parrot. The essence of previous revolutions was not the increasing economic well-being of the class below, but the increased might of a rising economic structure of society: capitalism was approving itself the

“better man”: feudalism the poorer. The increasing economic well-being of the revolutionists was an incident. The incident was of determining force; it was inseparable from, therefore indispensable to the then revolutionists. It is not, therefore, always indispensable. It is not indispensable with the Working Class, or Proletarian revolution of this generation. Other things, in these changed times, take the place of economic well-being in olden days. These things are concrete enlightenment upon the pending issue. The bourgeois revolutionist acted substantially blind: his increasing well-being stood the stead of knowledge. The class conscious proletarian acts with eyes open: his declining well-being helps to keep his eyes open. What economic well-being did for previous revolutionists, at an age when the law of social evolution was not yet ascertained, economic and sociologic enlightenment does for the present revolutionist, the proletarian, in these days of deeper and wider knowledge, when the laws of social evolution have become known. Increasing economic well-being PUSHED the bourgeois revolutionist: increasing enlightenment LEADS the proletarian revolutionist onward. Hence the strenuous efforts of all the agencies of capitalism to keep this knowledge from the proletariat. The inevitable bankruptcy of capitalist society, the mold of Socialism that capitalist society itself has founded, the power of overwhelming numbers with the proletariat—all that alone would not suffice to organize the Working Class into a revolutionary body, fit to triumph. But what with these three elements, coupled with the class enlightenment that the age affords, and irrepressible, unflagging Socialist propaganda insures, the Working Class Revolution, that is, the triumph of Socialism is assured.

Both historic facts and the existing conditions will convert the haven into which the *Wall Street Journal* has fatuously “taken refuge” into a maelstrom, that will make the ship of the *Wall Street Journal* turn turtle—eventually IF NOT SOONER.

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