

EDITORIAL

A BUNGLING SOCIAL SURGEON.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“**D**IVORCE should be abolished. Polygamy is a lesser evil, as it is a grouping of wives and is hindered by expenses, while divorce is merely driving wives tandem, and the question of expense does not figure”—so runs a passage from a speech reported to have been delivered this week by Archbishop Moeller at Cincinnati. If Mgr. Moeller was reported correctly, the gentleman must be tickled to death by the document just published by the Secretary of State of Massachusetts. Mgr. Moeller’s goal, the abolition of divorce by capitalist process{,} is therein foreshadowed as near at hand.

The Massachusetts document furnishes the proportion of divorces to marriages for five years since 1890, down to 1904. Placing the figures graphically we obtain this table:

Year: Proportion of divorces to marriages
1890: 1 divorce to every 31.9 marriages
1895: 1 divorce to every 24.2 marriages
1902: 1 divorce to every 17.4 marriages
1903: 1 divorce to every 15.6 marriages
1904: 1 divorce to every 15.3 marriages

As far as this showing goes, it would seem that the number of divorces is on the increase. In 1890 there was 1 divorce to every 31.9 marriages; in 1904 there was 1 divorce to only every 15.3 marriages, or 1 divorce to half the number of marriages. The increase, however, is in seeming only. Taking the figures of the table together with another set of figures furnished by the same document, a different face is put upon the case. The actual number of divorces granted in Massachusetts in 1903 was 1,721; in 1904 the number had decreased to 1,698—or 23 fewer. Not much of a

decrease, 'tis true, yet quite enough, in conjunction with the fact that the number of marriages in proportion to every 1 divorce had also declined from 1903 to 1904, to show the trend, to point the moral and adorn the tale.

The two sets of figures denote that in Massachusetts, for one, the well-spring of divorces—marriage—is drying up. There can be no “divorce” without there having been previously “marriage.” The fewer the marriages, the fewer the divorces possible; no marriage, no divorce. It is as plain as, No legs, no toes for corns to grow on. Capitalism, which Mgr. Moeller upholds, cuts off by inches the leg, the toes of which might bear corns—it slowly suppresses marriage, without which divorce is impossible. How cause is leading to effect the Massachusetts document proves. Great must be the joy of Mgr. Moeller.

It is to be hoped, and the expectation is justified, that an enlightened Working Class will come to the rescue of society against the bungling surgeons of which Mgr. Moeller is a type. A bungler is the surgeon who would abolish corns by the amputation of legs. The intelligent promoter of physical comfort prescribes good foot-wear. Likewise, and for similar reason, a bungling social surgeon is he who would end the ulcer of divorce by what is the equivalent of amputation—the continuance of the capitalist system that renders marriage rarer and rarer.

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