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EDITORIAL

GLEANINGS FROM CONGRESS— “INDEPENDENT DEALERS.”

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IF there is one thing, more than any other, that the inspired paladins of capitalism plume themselves upon it is that their social system promotes, breeds and guarantees independence. If there is any one thing, more than any other, that has been established by the debates in Congress on the rate bill it is the sorry plight of the “independent dealer.” Whether the speech-maker favored, or opposed “interfering with the prerogatives of the railroad companies,” the “independent dealer” cut the same figure. If the speech-maker was a “promoter of revolution,” as the favorers of the rate bill were more than once broadly hinted at by their adversaries, the picture of the “independent dealer” that fell from his lips was often hardly distinguishable from that of a Jahoo; if the speech-maker was an upholder of the “prerogatives of the railroad companies,” the “independent dealer” came out like {a} pariah, or a helot, that is, a being of a caste, against whose caste-condition to rave was as absurd as such ravings ever sound to upper castes. Some concession had to be made, and was made off and on, to the hypocrisy of the times. But these concessions, in the shape of “taffy” to the “independent dealer,” were few and “broke no bones.”

“Independence” is the cry, honestly set up, with which all recorded social revolutions have started, and probably also were carried out. Not unlikely the unrecorded ones also partake of this feature. The noble sentiment imparts swing to the Revolution; it touches a chord that vibrates responsive. Facts, however,—facts, of the tangible sort known generally, though loosely, as “material”—speedily assert their supremacy. The noblest sentiment must adapt itself to their iron will. The most fragrant of flowers depends upon proper soil. There were no song-birds in the carbonaceous era. Where the soil is not yet ripe, flora and fauna have to bide their

time, and, in the meantime, assume what shape existing material conditions allow. Unquestionably, "Independence" was the sentiment that inspired the breasts of the Revolutionary Fathers. Their acceptance of chattel slavery does not affect the principle. Allowance must be made for hereditary habits of thought. With all the nobility of their aspirations, the Revolutionary Fathers, nevertheless, were bourgeois. It was not their fault; it was their misfortune—as it is not our virtue, but our good luck, that our lives fall in with such material conditions that raise us out of the ethics of cannibalism. The Revolutionary Fathers were bourgeois—oncoming capitalists. Such was the stamp placed upon them by the Era which they were merely instrumental in ushering in. To the exigencies of that Era they yielded, or succumbed. The "Independence" that capitalism starts with, at its early stage of the petty bourgeois, leads direct to monopoly. Monopoly is the Z of the alphabet that starts with the A of Competition. The race was run. At the end of the race the "Independent dealer" is found straggling behind, far away from the goal, relatively, often absolutely, at the stage when the race started—at the stage when the racers were all petty bourgeois. No wonder the "Independent dealer" now looks like a Jahoo, or a helot. He lost the race, and has not even the satisfaction, enjoyed by the proletariat, that its wretched state marks it the carrier of the next Revolution onward.

When a Revolution has reached the stage that a cardinal principle of its start has become a by-word on the lips of its own triumphant representatives, then that Revolution has rounded up its course. Like the butterfly that dies the moment its eggs are laid, that Revolution is "ready for history." The contempt into which the "Independent dealer" has dropped in the estimation of the Plutocracy, due to the wretchedness of a plight that even his spokesmen themselves cannot conceal, marks the rotten-ripeness of Plutocracy to be shaken off the tree of social evolution by the Proletariat of the land.

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