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EDITORIAL

ORCHARD'S "RELIGION."

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE is such a thing as a man, long steeped in crime, turning over a new leaf, making public confession, and thereby cleansing his breast. There is such a thing. When such a thing happens, every inch of that man's being attests the fact of the conversion. He is penitent, he is meek, he is contrite. Whatever conception he may have of the Creator at whose bar he is supposed soon to appear, he feels awed. Is that the attitude of Orchard on the witness stand? He has said that his "religion" is giving him strength and is guiding him. What "religion" must that be that for nearly a week enables a man to joke; that enabled him, without a quiver of the lip, to recount monstrous deeds which he claims to have perpetrated; that enabled him with the "interest of a scientist" and the "keenness of an artist" to draw diagrams before the jury; that prompted him to quick-witted repartees; that steeled his nerves to narrate minutely plots of poisoning the way a man would tell of how he poisoned a dog? Orchard, the prosecution, and, last but not least, the capitalist reporters who are wiring these details throughout the country, were overdoing the thing. The alleged "weeping spell" in court only accentuates the point. Orchard is a bad actor. His posture, that alone, is evidence in abundance that he is a regulation hireling of the Mine Owners' Association. He may and he may not have committed any or all of the crimes he has confessed. Other hirelings of the Association have before him confessed they did the deeds for the purpose of implicating the miners. As a hireling of the Association, Orchard is now doing his part. It matters not what crimes he confess—he feels his life is safe; it matters not what heinous deeds he admits he is guilty of—he does not thereby put himself out of the only heaven where his "religion" lies, the company of the capitalist brigands, who control Governments and Courts, who commit the act of kidnapping with impunity, who keep assassins and incendiaries on their pension

lists; it matters not how he blackens his own character—his “religion” gives him strength, and that “religion” is the cash that he is confident will keep him in food, shelter, clothing the rest of his life.

The perfect criminal does not exist. Crime implies a mental derangement somewhere. Criminology tells us how it relies upon this saving fact to track the criminal. However clever the criminal may seem to be, he has some shortcoming through which he gives himself away. Orchard, the seemingly well equipped criminal—equipped in mental and physical and literary powers—a picked man by his masters, yet lacks one requirement. He is not an actor. Were he an actor, able to play the role of the contrite and conscience-stung criminal there might be a possibility of one being misled as to the man's religion. As it is, the veriest booby can see through the game. The man's “religion” is his master's “religion”—the \$.

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