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EDITORIAL

## THE USES OF CAPITALISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE capitalist world stands with open-mouthed astonishment at the tidings from Russia. Such is their astonishment that it actually dulls and deadens their terror. Russia, that country whose own leading men, Witte among them, pronounced utterly unfit for aught but despotic government, that Russia is displaying a degree of aspiration and of organization that seems marvelous. The wonderment of the capitalist world is essentially of a piece with the wonderment of the Indian at the sound and effect of firearms. So does the capitalist world look at present Russian affairs as uncanny. If the Indian had known anything about mechanics and chemistry he would have wondered less; if the capitalist world were not trained in the ignorance of the laws that underlie its own system it would not now be taken by surprise.

It is Capitalism that recruits the battalions for Revolution, and gives these their first drilling lessons. Centuries untold might have rolled over the heads of the Russian mujik on his fields, and he would have remained what the Wittes thought he still was. But Capitalism stepped in. Rafts of mujiks were thrown into the cities, and thence into the factories. Capitalist exploitation quickened the latent sense of solidarity and by its very cruelty rived the clouds of despair and awoke aspirations that never otherwise could have warmed the heart. The field being plowed it greedily absorbed the Socialist seed. In short, the mujik was transformed in the factory. From being hardly distinguishable from the cattle that he had driven or pastured on the fields, he evolved into a carrier of the gospel of Labor's redemption. Such transformations never are limited to the transformed objects. The bond of kinship was not broken by city life and suffering. Through it proletarian thought reached and leavened the mujik on the field. The impulse imparted in the city factories gradually thrilled the whole land. The result is what is now seen. Nothing

uncanny about it—nor wondrous, except wondrous beautiful.

The inevitable chain of social cause and effect compelled Russian Feudalism to shelter Capitalism; in its turn Capitalism prepared the ground for Revolution. Well may the sage's words be paraphrased:

Sweet are the uses of Capitalism,  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

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