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EDITORIAL

## SETTLEMENT WORK.

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**A**ND now come Ferdinand Pinney Earle, Artist, and Miss Gertrude Buell Dunn, "Settlement Worker" of Chicago, New York and other cities, and contribute their share of light upon "Settlement Work."

Old ladies of both sexes, whose hearts bleed for "the poor and down trodden," can not for the life of them understand the unsympathetic posture of Socialism towards the kindly-meant moves that crop up from all sides "to alleviate distress." One day it is a "Pure Air Fund"; another it is a "Mothers' Outing Association"; a third it is a "Working Girls' Vacation Club"; some other day it is a "Workingmen's Home Beautifying Bee," or a "Settlement"; and so on. "Don't these do some good?" ask the benevolent old ladies, male and female; "why not give them a helping hand?"

To undertake, with such folks, a systematic answer, grounded on principle, is time lost. All that one can do with them is to prick some of the most obvious bubbles, by citing the instances galore in which the aforementioned "Funds," "Associations," "Clubs," "Bees," "Settlements" with the rest of the "Charitable" schemes, are turned by the officials in charge of them to their own private benefit:—they feed on chicken and good broth, the presumptive beneficiaries are left to dry crusts. When these bubbles are pricked the benevolent femininities drop a tear, or heave a sigh at "the world's wickedness," but do not grow any wiser themselves.

With people of stronger mental fiber a more profitable course may be taken than the puncturing of bubbles. To these the argument may be addressed that, to-day, all charitable projects partake of the character of their parentage—Capitalism. All seek, not the amelioration of the condition of the toilers; what they seek in fact, however unconsciously, is the removal of some of the inconveniences suffered by the

idle ruling class as a consequence of the exploitation that it exercises upon the toilers. The “birthmark” that the so-called charities carry is brought out with rare distinctness by the charitable scheme that the Settlement Worker Miss Dunn has just hatched out with the many-married man Earle the Artist and promiscuous father of children, whom he finds it too unartistic to take care of. Miss Dunn, who is now traveling abroad with the Earle aforesaid, projects the establishment of “orphan” asylums. This is the mature fruit of the lady’s Settlement Work experience.

Capitalism builds prisons—and fills them itself; capitalism builds asylums for the inebriate—and fills them, itself; capitalism build lunatic asylums—and itself sees to it that they are kept chockfull; capitalism builds hospitals for tuberculous patients and itself neglects not to keep the wards tenanted; in short, capitalism raises charitable buildings for all the evils which its own practices nurse, foment, incite and breed.

And, as if to make clear that that is the milk in the cocoanut of all these capitalist charitablenesses, now the capitalist Miss Dunn projects so-called “orphan” asylums to meet the increasing demands of—what? Of capitalism’s own gay performances.

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

Uploaded by Donna Bills, October 2010

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