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EDITORIAL

JUST LIKE BREWERIES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THICK as grapes on a bunch are the important conclusions that can be gathered from the facts that the State Railroad Commission of Pennsylvania has just wrung from the witnesses before it, in the course of its investigation of coal rates.

The first fact elicited was that the anthracite coal-carrying railroads own the retail coal yards. Attempts galore have been made to prevent the railroads from owning coal mines. The concentration of transportation and of coal mines has been thrillingly exposed by the middle class as a sort of "treason to the Flag." The militant Socialist asked, How will you prevent it? And he followed up the question with economic reasonings that demonstrated that, given the private ownership of the requisites for life as a starter, the gradual concentration of requisites was unavoidable. "Stuff and nonsense!" ejaculated Reform. It now transpires that the railroads not only kept their hold on the coal mines, but even extended their "jurisdiction" to the retail yards, in some instances owning even the tressels {trestles?}.

Another fact elicited is that the railroad-mine magnates find their account in causing some of their coal-retail vassals to "sass" them, to strut in the strut of "independence," even of rebellion, as a sure means to throw dust into the eyes of the innocents. Whenever there has risen a peculiarly boisterous "Independent," a paladin who was "Not Run by the Trust," the militant Socialist ever rang the note of warning, Look out; ten to one he is a decoy duck! "Socialists are a suspicious lot, they see spooks," answered the people of "Common Sense." It now transpires that the thing is just as the "suspicious Socialist" stated. Reluctant witness George W. Edmonds, vice-president of the Coal Exchange and Congressman-elect to boot, had to admit that he did not own his yard(s); but leased them from the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. And who may this Edmonds be? A conspicuous "Independent."

For years, when innocent newspaper men, or still more innocent gatherers of statistics for capitalist distribution, were anxious to get an expression, or facts and figures on the coal situation from a “representative Independent,” Edmonds was the man found, even if not sought.

Another bunch of facts—the short leases that the retailers are allowed by the railroad—uncovers the state of vassal dependence that wholesale magnates keep the retail fry under.—When some absurd proposition “in the interest of the workman” is advanced by certain dealers, as, for instance, when retail beer saloons set up the cry to abolish the tax on beer “in the interest of the workers,” the militant Socialist cried out, Lo, the decoy ducks; they are the mannikins of the Breweries, who are the real payers of the tax; and the mannikins are used to cause the workers to perform the catspaw role for the capitalist! “Absurd!” answered the gudgeons. It now transpires that most of these retail coal dealers, like most of the beer saloon keepers, dare not call their souls their own. Should they do or say anything to which the railroad authorities might object, or leave undone or unsaid anything that the railroad authorities might order, the leases would be promptly annulled.

Cure such a state of things? The laughter that the thought provokes is that which the revolutionary bolt down upon the head of a social system that bears on its front the stamp: “Destroy me!”

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