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EDITORIAL

AMERICA'S UNIVERSITIES.

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WHENEVER there is in Europe a throb for progress the despatches will be seen to contain items on the share taken by students. In various degrees of intensity, the student ever furnishes a good portion of the enthusiasm at such public demonstrations. Not infrequently he furnishes more than mere enthusiasm, he spills his blood. Strikingly has this been the case with the Russian students. Last Monday's demonstration at the St. Petersburg University is the latest incident in point. Even the humdrum press despatches become epic when they describe the meeting at the Neva Hall of the University, where "the auditorium was packed to suffocation with earnest looking young men and women, and the doorways and window embrasures were banked with students, who held others on their shoulders." Knowledge enlightens; how can it choose but start the thrill of enthusiasm, and vibrate to the touch of noble aspiration? Or what element can there be more responsive to the touch than the youth of a land, the element that as yet has not been "sobered" by the carking cares of the struggle for existence? So well-known a fact is this that all governmental powers of Darkness, clerical and lay, have ever sought to keep Pegasus well bridled, if not shackled. In sight of this general phenomenon, what means the special phenomenon, seemingly to the contrary, presented by the American student?

In the America of to-day the student class presents, as a whole, the exact opposite to his European fellow. The social throbbings that make for a higher order of things leave him cool, indifferent, if not apathetic. Yale students were lately seen to drop their pens, and take up the bridles of the teams that were dropped by workingmen on strike for fitter living; and only this week they have offered their services to the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company in the event of a strike by the firemen. No face in audiences held by the Labor Movement bears the cynic's mark more challengingly than the student's. While here and there exceptions are found, the exceptions are the

exact reverse of what constitutes the exception in Europe. Last Monday, on the occasion of the St. Petersburg University demonstration for freedom, a re-actionary students' meeting was called to offset the other; but it failed; only few students attended; they were the exception, and the meeting was abandoned. In America the exception would be and is the other way. Chauncey M. Depew, the representative in the United States Senate of the Vanderbilt earldom, known otherwise as the Vanderbilt railroad interests, uttered a substantial truth when he said that Socialism had not succeeded in invading the American college. Depew prided himself upon the fact. There was cause neither for pride nor shame.

Whoever feels either pride or shame at the posture of the American college succumbs to two errors, which resolve themselves into one. He imagines that revolution spells the same thing everywhere; and he fancies that the article is a pure mind-fancy. In other words, he fails to perceive the difference in the material conditions that surround Europe; he fails to see that the two territories are at different stages of development; in short, and as a consequence of this, he is looking for the real American college in the wrong direction.

What is commonly called the American "college" or "University" is the stamping-ground of the youth of the identical class whose youth makes up the Universities of Europe. Whatever may yet happen in Russia, as the result of the depth, impossible as yet to fathom, reached by the Socialist propaganda in the land, one thing stands clear as a pike, and that is that all the demands, so far audible, made by the revolutionists, are the demands of a radical bourgeoisie that is shaking off the shackles of feudal rule. Whatever may yet happen, as the result of a Socialist propaganda, whose practical fruit it is now too early to estimate, there is as yet nothing to indicate that the Russian proletariat will be ready at this crisis to do more than to furnish the human sinews for the raising of a bourgeois structure—a social step that has hitherto been found necessary in order to reach the final goal of the abolition of Class Rule, that is, the establishment of Socialism. Small wonder, accordingly, that the fire that to-day burns in the University of St. Petersburg is not found to burn in the American colleges, so called. Here the fire is a burnt-out coal. The bulk of the youth in our colleges consequently stand to the approaching Socialist Revolution of America in the identical relation that the reactionary students in Russia stand to-day to their revolutionary classmates.

He who would look for the revolutionary youth of America must look for it in America's revolutionary class—the workingman; he who would look for the real colleges and Universities of the land must look to the Academies in which the workingman is trained—the class-conscious Trades Union and the Socialist Labor Party. To look for either among the bourgeois class and its institutions of “learning” and then, either proudly or shame-facedly, say one does not find them, is but to turn into an unconscious Sam Weller, looking for his father at the trial of Bardell vs. Pickwick, not in the audience whence the voice had proceeded, but up among the rafters of the court-house where he could not possibly be.

The real American Universities and Colleges of to-day are not the scattered buildings said to be of learning, and that go by these names. Infinitely of vaster proportions and reared upon national basis are the Universities and Colleges that are to-day kindling the flame needed to light the torch for the next further step in civilization; and the classes that these Colleges and Universities address are to the ones lectured at the old style Colleges and Universities like the sands of the Ocean to the gravel of a puddle. Nor is the fact a secret. The strenuous efforts, put forth by the capitalist class to control these latter day Universities and Colleges by means of their labor-lieutenants, are but the twentieth century repetition of similar efforts, put forth by the rulers during the Dark Ages and continued until now in Russia, to clip the wings of an Enlightenment that their instinct tells them spells the “Revolution.”

There is no cause for shame that our capitalist Colleges and Universities are exempt from such spectacles as were witnessed at St. Petersburg. All the enthusiasm, all the earnestness of men and women, all the crowding on one another's shoulders is seen to-day and will be seen increasingly in the actual Academies of the people.

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