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EDITORIAL

THE MEASURE OF EXPLOITATION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WE recently gave an analytical exposition of the degree in which the working class of America was plundered by the capitalist class; we showed how substantially correct was the Socialist claim that the working class was deprived of four-fifths of its product; and we made short work of the capitalist pretense that such a claim was a “monstrous exaggeration.” The March number of the *Iron Molders’ Journal* has a letter from Toronto that contains a valuable item on the subject. It is this:

“Mr. Carrick, first vice-president of the Gurney Foundry Co., on his oath says that a molder was worth over and above his wages {of} \$75 per day to the firm, and one apprentice who was six weeks at his trade was worth \$25 per day, yet this apprentice received the large sum of $66\frac{2}{3}$ cents per day as compensation.”

It is a pity that the writer of the letter did not also give the “compensation” that the molder received. The analysis could then be made with absolute accuracy. In order, however, to be wholly within bounds we shall suppose that the molder received the fabulous wage of \$5 a day. Even so, what is the ratio of the plunder levied on the workingmen in the Gurney Foundry Co.?

The apprentice is worth $\$25.66\frac{2}{3}$ per day; for that he receives $66\frac{2}{3}$ cents. In other words, he produces $\$25.66\frac{2}{3}$ worth of new values, and receives of that amount $66\frac{2}{3}$ cents. The absolute plunder is \$25; and the ratio of the plunder upon him is 38–39—or 34–195 more than $\frac{4}{5}$ of his product!

The molder is worth \$80 per day; for that he receives \$5. In other words, he produces \$80 worth of new values, and receives of that amount \$5. The absolute plunder is \$75; and the ratio of the plunder upon him is 16–17—or $\frac{12}{85}$ more than $\frac{4}{5}$ of his product!

And that without adding the plunder that he is subject to in the matter of living expenses.

In some, the more backward industries, the ratio of the plunder is lower; in others, the more advanced industries, the ratio of the plunder is higher. To this ratio must be added, generally, the cost of living, which includes a calculation of the shoddy and adulterated goods that the workingman has to content himself with, because reduced quality spells higher cost. These reductions, however, do not come into play except upon those articles of his product that enter in the workingman's list of consumption. Obviously, the increased price of gold garters and champagne do not affect him. Thus the actual exploitation of the workingmen is not uniform for all. But striking a rough average, by the light of the revelation made on the Gurney Foundry Co., the workers' exploitation in America is rather above than below four-fifths of his product.

And how else could it be? Whence, otherwise, would the Asiatic luxury flow in which the plundering class of the capitalist revels?

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