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EDITORIAL

JAMES J. HILL'S WARNING.

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“**C**RIMINAL extravagance,” says James J. Hill, “is lifting the cost of living.”

On what part of the sentence does Mr. Hill lay his emphasis? Does he lay it on the first part—on “criminal extravagance”—or does he lay the emphasis upon the second part—“is lifting the cost of living”?

It should seem that James J. is too hard-headed a man to take stock in nonsense, and either invent, or repeat nonsense. The “cost of living is going” up in Argentina. where there is no sign of “extravagance,” as well as in the United States, where the “extravagance” is notorious; it is towering in Japan and Sweden, where frugality are *sic* in the nature of national virtues, as well as in Paris-centered France and Germany where “extravagance” is undeniable. Surely James J. knows that, when the same phenomenon appears under different conditions, the phenomenon can not be imputed to the conditions: it must have a cause common to all the conditions. What circumstance is it that is asserting itself in Argentina and the United States, in Japan and Sweden as well as in France and Germany, in fact the world over? The only economic cause known to affect the whole commercial world is the decline in the value of gold, hence the reduced purchasing power of money, consequently the rise of prices.

Being too sensible a man to hold silly language, the conclusion is that Mr. Hill laid his emphasis on the first part of the sentence—“criminal extravagance”—, and that the second part of the sentence was thrown in merely to dull the, perhaps, too sharp edge of the first sentence’s first part. Indeed, that edge is sharp.

Sticking to the United States one can easily understand why the extravagance gets on Mr. Hill’s nerves to the point of his branding it “criminal.”

The fruitfulness of Labor in America is unparalleled by any other country.

There is no country where the working class yields such an abundant fleece. As a logical consequence there is no country where Labor is under such a yoke as here. The more plentiful the wealth it yields, all the tighter is the yoke fastened. What, under such circumstances, would be the part of wisdom on the part of the capitalist class? Why, surely, to do nothing that amounts to rubbing their plunder under the nose of the plundered: to enjoy the plunder on the quiet: to avoid aught that is apt to set the thinking machinery of the plundered agoing and cause them to contrast their own deepening misery with the swelling Asiatic luxury of the plunderers. That would be the part of wisdom. The plunderers, on the contrary, are doing just the opposite—more foreign princes are being bought for our heiresses; more castles are starting in Europe and for American millionaires; more royal levees are being held by Americans abroad and at home, the millionaire automobiles are reproducing in our midst that feature of the French nobility, just before the French Revolution, which consisted in riding over people, children with preference, with impunity. This sort of thing fans embers of discontent into flame. Hence Mr. Hill brands it “criminal”—criminal because it promotes the explosion of the powder magazine upon which Mr. Hill’s class is dancing.

There is a reason for James J.’s wrath. His warning proves him level-headed, altho’ it is visionary to expect the warning to be heeded. Easy gotten, easy spent. The bourgeois Carmagnole is bound to go on unchecked.

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