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EDITORIAL

TRY ANOTHER TACK.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THAT the working class is poor because it drinks too much, smokes too much, or wears too many silks, are all old yarns, now worn so threadbare that they no longer even serve to conceal the ignorance of those who put them forth. The new variation upon this theme, more recently brought into favor by the soaring price of edibles, is that the workers are poor, both in health and purse, because they eat too much.

To the support of this idea have come, unwittingly, but with all the prestige that the name Garden City and the word “coterie” carry with them, three young belles of the aforementioned place and position in life. Reading that starvation was a cure all, they stopped eating for three days. What’s good for a patrician must be at least equally good for a plebeian; ergo, if the working class would be healthy, wealthy and wise, it should stop eating.

Sad to say, for the success of the anti-eating spellbinder whom the coming campaign may not improbably produce, the facts seem all to lie on the opposite side of the case. If starvation were a cure-all, the working class should be the healthiest class on earth. In spite of which, it seems to have been perversely growing poorer and meagerer on the very regimen so loudly advocated as a cure for both poverty and meagerness. In all advanced. capitalist countries—our own unparalleled United States among them—physical standards are declining. Despite the decrease in the number of children per family from 8 and 10 to 2 or 3, a decrease which they would have us believe makes for better offspring, the race is falling off both in size and vigor. Height, girth, chest measure, weight, endurance, all are on the down grade. Even the theory that bodily decline is compensated for by increased mental robustness is belied by the records. Insanity and nervous disorders are increasing so fast that Lombroso prophesied a 500 per cent. augmentation thereof in the next two generations.

When one seeks for causes, two stand out clearly. One is overwork and the anxiety due to the growing uncertainty of prospect. But overshadowing even this, and more vital, is widespread national underfeeding. As fast as the price of food soared upward, with the same staggering rapidity did the opportunity to secure that price sag downward. While expenses topped the clouds, jobs and wages dropped out of sight. In 1842 Dickens, writing from Boston to a friend in London, declared: "There is not a man in this town or in this State, who has not a blazing fire and meat every day for dinner; nor would a flaming sword in the air attract more attention than a beggar in the street." What would he see now?

Those who would blame the worker's poverty or ill health on his too heavily laden board would better try another tack.

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