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EDITORIAL

## HALF-TRUTHS, AND WORSE.

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**J**OHAN D. ROCKEFELLER, the reputed head of the Standard Oil Corporation, and admittedly “the world’s richest man” is given an almost two-page interview in the *New York Times* of October the 20th wherein the magnate expresses, at his Pocantico home, his candid opinions on economic matters. The salient opinions expressed deserve “looking into.”

Mr. Rockefeller sneers at the epidemic of hostility towards the “idea of corporations.” He says: “It must in good time be perceived by all that the centralized corporation is a necessity of progress.” This is a half-truth. Socialism recognizes in the most concentrated Trust imaginable nothing but a contrivance of production. There is no essential difference between the Trust and improved machinery. The trend of civilization is to render wealth ample and easily producible. The Trust accelerates this result. It is not with regard to that fact that there is any difference of opinion. The difference of opinion between the swelling numbers of Socialists and the Rockefeller class is with regard to the answer to the following question: “What is the purpose of the trend of civilization in rendering wealth ample and easily accessible?” The Rockefeller class answer: “The purpose is to deposit such increased wealth in the hands of a few, who shall then, at their will, and obedient to such interpretation of honor, patriotism, humanity and religion as they may select, officiate as the people’s guardian, responsible only to their own conscience.” The Socialist answers: “The purpose is to free humanity from want and the equally debasing fear of want; to relieve them from the burden of excessive toil for mere physical sustenance; and to enable the people thereby to enjoy that leisure that will develop their intellect, and thereby make their condition on earth dependent upon themselves, not upon the benevolence of any social guardian.” The answer of the Rockefeller class implies that, because the centralization of productive powers is

good, therefore the private ownership of the same is also ideal, and must be perpetuated. The Socialist answer implies that the powers latent in modern centralized means of production are distinct and separable from the system under which they are owned; that the former is beneficent and shall be preserved; while the latter is damnable and must be changed into public ownership. This is the answer the “good, sober sense of the people,” which Mr. Rockefeller invokes, will cause to prevail over the vicious, wealth-drunken sense of the Rockefeller class, a class that has become too habitually vicious and wealth-drunken to perceive that their alleged wisdom only consists of half-truths—The worst falsehood.

Worse, even, than half-truths are the following two opinions of Mr. Rockefeller. The gentleman said: “Let no man of spirit listen for a moment to the invertebrate, supine wail that the opportunities are all past”; the next instant he said: “We have come to a new economic era. In the future business is going to be carried on more and more by aggregations of capital. It cannot be otherwise. THE DAY OF INDIVIDUAL COMPETITION IS PAST AND GONE.” The two statements do not square. If “opportunities are not past,” then the day of “individual competition” cannot be “past and gone.” If “the days of individual competition” are really “past and gone,” as the Socialist maintains, then, to recognize the fact, and to assert it, that opportunities ARE past, is not an “invertebrate, supine wail,” while to deny the fact places the denier, as Mr. Rockefeller has placed himself, with his foot in his mouth, hopelessly contradicting himself—a type of the double-dyed capitalist hypocrite.

But Mr. Rockefeller does not always tumble into the falsehoods implied in half-truths, or that accompany contradiction. Occasionally he tells the truth. Here is one: “If the business of the Standard Oil Company were to be taken over by the Government and run by politicians, I would be the first man to sell my stock at any price.” This is a robust, double-barreled truth. First, it is a truth that the running of business by politicians would be a disastrous affair. Hence it is that the Socialists propose to wipe out the political State, send the whole pack of politicians kiting—bag and baggage, and establish in their stead the Industrial State, run by the representatives of the Nation’s Industries. Secondly, it is no mean truth that the “politician” deserves all the contempt implied in Mr. Rockefeller’s words. Now,

then, neither the Standard Oil nor any other capitalist establishment could stand forty-eight hours without the support of these same vile things—the politicians. Hence luminous is the truth that leaps from the Standard Oil magnate’s contempt for the “politician.” Can that which is propped up by so vile a thing as the “politician” be any better than the prop itself?

It is not all superstition that attaches to the superstitious creation of “The Devil.” His “Satanic Majesty” is said to mean evil and yet work good. The principle is correct. Meaning to do by its readers one of the greatest evils one man can do to another—benumb his intellect—the *New York Times*, has, by the Rockefeller interview, afforded an extraordinary opportunity to expose the social system, which it stands for, along with the mental and moral caliber of his “Hero.”

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