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EDITORIAL

THE “SICK MAN OF THE WEST.”

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WASHINGTON Seligmann lies in Roosevelt Hospital, a prisoner under the charge of attempted suicide. In rooms contiguous and connected with those occupied by the ex-actress, Anita Sutherland, he lived at the Rossmore Hotel, and there tried last Wednesday to cut his throat with a razor. Financial reverses in Wall street, and, of course, also ill health, are the causes assigned by him for his deed.

Suicide is, unfortunately, no uncommon occurrence in our days. Economic distress, or that even worse visitation, the spectre of the fear of economic distress, accompanied by its inevitable accompaniment of ill health, with increasingly recurring frequency wields the suicidal blade. The present instance, however, does not merely furnish cumulative evidence; it does not even merely emphasize an ominous social phenomenon; it does a good deal more. The circumstances that surround the case—the would-be suicide’s membership in the wealthy financiers’ family of the Seligmanns, and his consequent close relationship with one of the official professors of capitalism, Prof. E.R.A. Seligmann of Columbia University, together with his intimacy and costly relations with Anita Sutherland—make of it a flash-light occurrence that “illuminates the whole field.”

Capitalist society is a social system in unstable equilibrium. The economic laws, under which distress and despair are carried into the homes of the workingmen, bring but Pyrrhic victories to the individual members of the capitalist class. Together with the material spoils taken from the working class, the capitalist class absorbs psychic qualities that place it also under the harrow. Habits of luxury are acquired that raise artificial happiness to the rank of an essential condition of life. Thus, while below actual distress brings on despair, above, an amount of wealth

that would gladden thousands of plundered workingmen's homes is considered trifling and inadequate, and shrivels like ashes in the hands of its possessor, leading him, through identical mental strain, to identical acts of despair. Nor is that all. Below, where the plundered workingman is worried to death, the smoke of the conflagration is smothered. Not so above, where the plundering capitalist undergoes corresponding worries; and how intense these worries must be may be just now gathered at a glance from the stock quotations. Above, the smoke of the conflagration is not smothered, it expands and carries into the air the gases generated by combustion, and these, coming in contact with the atmosphere, ignite and send up through the soot tongues of peculiar flame and luridness,—the Anita Sutherland, or "morality and order" tongue of flame in this instance, for instance. How irrepressible the explosion, may by this time be realized even by the would-be suicide's cousin, Prof. E.R.A. Seligmann, who only recently tried self-complacently to hold up the capitalist end of society at a public gathering in this city.

The crumbling, hopelessly crumbling, and only artificially and temporarily propped up Turkish Empire has been well designated the "Sick Man of the East." The West also has its "Sick Man,"—CAPITALIST SOCIETY.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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