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Zo d'Axa
The Honest Worker
1898

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The Honest Worker

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It's the amazing fattening of the mass of the exploited that creates the increasing and logical ambition of the exploiters.

The kings of the mines, of the coalfields, and of gold would be wrong to worry. Their serfs' resignation consecrates their authority. They no longer needs to claim that their power is be based on divine right, that decorative joke: their sovereignty is legitimated by popular consent. A workers' plebiscite, consisting of patriotic adherence, declamatory platitudes or silent acquiescence assures the boss's hold and the bourgeoisie's reign

In this work we can recognize the artisan.

Be it in the mine or the factory, the Honest Worker, that sheep, has given the herd the mange.

The ideal of the supervisor has perverted the instincts of the people. A sports coat on Sunday, talking politics, voting...these are the hopes that take the place of everything. Odious daily labor awakens neither hatred nor rancor. The great party of the workers hates the lazybones who badly earns the money granted him by the boss.

Their heart belongs to their job.

They're proud of their calloused hands.

However deformed the fingers, the yoke has done worse to the brain: the bumps of resignation, of cowardice, of respect have grown under the leather with the rubbing of the harness. Vain old workers wave their certificates: forty years in the same place! We hear them telling about this as they beg for bread in the courtyards.

“Have pity, ladies and gentlemen, on a sick old man, a brave worker, a good Frenchman, a former non-commissioned officer who fought in the war...Have pity, ladies and gentlemen.

It is cold: the windows remain closed. The old man doesn't understand.

Teach the people! What else is needed? His poverty has taught him nothing. As long as there are rich and poor the latter will hitch themselves up so as to fill the service demanded. The worker's neck is used to the harness. When still young and strong they are the only domestic beasts to not run wild in their shafts.

The proletarian's special honor consists in accepting all those lies in whose name he is condemned to forced labor: duty, fatherland, etc. He accepts, hoping that by doing this he will raise himself into the bourgeois class. The victim makes himself an accomplice. The unfortunate talks of the flag, beats his chest, takes off his cap and spits in the air:

“I'm an honest worker.”

And it falls right back onto his face.