

Two Pages from Roman History

Daniel De Leon

TWO PAGES FROM ROMAN HISTORY.

Page I.

PLEBS LEADERS AND LABOR LEADERS.

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(Stenographically reported by BENJAMIN F. KEINARD.)

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COMRADES OF SECTION NEW YORK:

It is now close on sixteen years since a “cat’s-paw” of the storm of the Labor Movement drew me within its whirl. It is now close on twelve years that I have been intimately connected with the Movement, my whole time, my whole thought devoted to it. A certain impression that I gained at a very early date of my connection with the Movement has grown upon me with ripened experience. As a rule it happens that when one joins a movement of this magnitude with all the natural greenness that I did in 1886, he, after a few years of activity, finds it necessary to wipe out a good many of the notions he came with, and a good many of the impressions he gathered at the start. And so it was in my case. Nevertheless, out of the wreck of all the false opinions and notions, and of the illusions that I had brought along with me,

and out of the wreck of all the false impressions that I gathered early, and that experience showed me should be abandoned, one impression did not prove false. On the contrary. That one grew upon me by the day. And the more I learned of the Movement in America, the more I saw of it—and, as you may judge, my opportunities have been exceptional during these twelve years—; the more I observed what happened in other countries in which the Socialist or the Labor Movement is active, all the stronger did that first impression grow upon me, and all the completer shape did it take. That impression was this: That the Socialist Republic, another way for saying, the “Emancipation of the Working Class,” would never come about, could never come about—unless, unless a good deal more time and thought were devoted to certain lines of observation, of study and of activity, which I found were neglected, at least not fully appreciated.

The essence of Socialist theory, of Socialist philosophy, is simple. The combined economic law of Exchange Value, and sociologic law with regard to man’s being a tool-using animal, can be put in a nut-shell. And the deductions from them are obvious. The former demonstrates that the man who produces with tools that render his labor more expensive than the labor socially necessary, cannot possibly hold his own against the man, who, producing with improved machinery, devotes less labor upon the production of certain goods. The latter demonstrates that the tool is the weapon of man’s supremacy over Nature: master of the tool, man harnesses Nature to his service, and maintains his freedom from his fellows; without it, he is the slave of him who is equipped therewith. Coupling these two laws, the philosophy of Socialism radiates in all the luminousness instinct in simple Truth, and, in its rays, the Socialist Republic rises in all its splendor, not as a mere Haven of Refuge, but as truly a Promised Land to the human race, freed at last from the nightmare of Class-Rule.

Now, this theory or philosophy, can be enlarged upon: broader and deeper researches may impart greater breadth and depth thereto: it may be enriched by excursions into the manifold subjects that branch off from, or are tributary to it: men of eloquence may add thrill to the presentation. That’s all true; and it is well that that be done; such a theme calls for and needs the amplest efforts of the mind. But this other is also true, That not all the efforts expended upon that line; nay, not if we were to pile up essays upon essays on

those subjects mountain-high, and indulge in the most marvelous refinements of science, will the Socialist Republic be brought one inch nearer its realization—aye, on the contrary, all such noble efforts might even turn to its undoing; I say it deliberately, TURN TO ITS UNDOING;—unless, hand in hand with all that, something else is attended to also. And that something else I missed, and missed from the start; and missed all along. And as the ship of our Party got into deeper and deeper waters, and severer and severer gales beat against it, I had occasion to feel more and more how much time had been lost in furnishing the masses with instruction upon just that thing that I have in mind; and that is, a knowledge of what I may call the STRATEGY and the TACTICS of the Movement.

The words strategy and tactics have acquired in the public estimation a false meaning. They are generally identified with trickery, deception, duplicity. Now, strategy and tactics may degenerate into all that; but deception, trickery, duplicity are not at all things inseparable from strategy or tactics. Take an army that, under the blazing noon-day sun, marches directly, in a straight line upon the enemy's fortifications, and storms them: there can be no duplicity there, there can be no trickery there, there cannot be there any question of cheating: everything is done in a straight line over and above board: and yet that army moves obedient to strategic laws, and its every motion is in rhythm with tactical principles. If it neglected either at any time, it would be destroyed.

Strategy and tactics imply simply a military knowledge, of the topography of the field of action, and of the means at command. Strategy implies a military knowledge of the strength that lies in that hill, the weakness that lies in yonder hollow, to the end that the one may be seized, the other avoided; or to the end that, if the strategically strong place is in the enemy's hand, no disastrous surprise overtake us, and if we happen to find ourselves on the strategically weak place, we may know enough to throw up intrenchments. Similarly, tactics implies a military knowledge of the strength, the weakness, the qualities, in short, of the forces under fire, to the end that we may proceed accordingly.

Now, the Socialist Movement may be likened to an army, and it travels over a field that may be closely compared with that over which an army advances. The Socialist Movement should, accordingly, be posted upon the

military topography of the field it is operating on, and of the tactics dictated by the nature of the forces it is operating with. The purpose of these two lectures is to supply, to a certain extent, the existing deficiency on these subjects. Of these two lectures—"Two Pages from Roman History"—the second, "The Warning of the Gracchi," that is to be delivered two weeks from to-night, will cover a tactical weakness of the Socialist Movement: thereby help to point out certain pit-falls that are to be avoided. To-night's subject, "Plebs Leaders and Labor Leaders," is intended to point out a certain strategically strong post held by the enemy, the Capitalist Interests: thereby draw due attention to the danger that lurks from that quarter.

With these introductory words I shall enter upon my subject.

LABOR LEADER AND PLEBS LEADER.

Any one who glances over the Labor Movement in the English-speaking world, cannot fail to be struck somehow—favorable, unfavorably, or half-and-half—by a certain apparition not known in any other Labor Movement, except in that of the English-speaking countries, namely, England, the United States particularly, Canada and Australia. That apparition is the Labor Leader, together with the trades organization back of him. The question that I pose here to-night, the question that is of interest to the Socialist Movement of the English-speaking countries to answer, if it is to banish the illusions that otherwise lead to Paris Commune disasters, or cause great Movements to be switched awry, that question is this: What does that Labor Leader signify? What strength is there in him; and, if there is any, what is the nature thereof; and to whose interest does it accrue? In other words, what is the strategic significance of the Labor Leader on the field of the modern Social Question? Is it a hill-top whose strategic posture accrues to the benefit of the Labor Movement, or is it one whose strategic posture accrues to the benefit of the Capitalist System?

We should profit by the experience back of the age we live in. History has not commenced with us. Other nations have preceded us. Other nations, now among the dead, also had to deal with their Social Questions. In order to understand what is going on to-day, it is well to look at what has gone on in ages gone by, in states long since passed away. Karl Marx, in that remarkable brochure of his, "The Eighteenth Brumaire," says that when man

wants to interpret what is going on in his own day, he tries to find a parallel in the past, and that such action is like the action of a person trying to learn a new language: he always keeps on translating that language into his own, the new language being the new event, his own being the events that lie behind him, and which, having rounded their course, can be fully understood. In order to interpret the new language that is being spoken by modern events, let's translate it back into the well known language of now well understood past events: we shall understand the new term "Labor Leader" when we recall the career of the old term "Plebs Leader" in Roman history.

The page of Roman history to which I turn covers about 120 years, say a hundred years. It covers the period of about 500 B. C. to about 400 B. C. It starts substantially with the chasing away of the kings. The Rome that fills our minds, our eyes and our ears; that Rome, insatiable of plunder, reckless of human life; that portent of rapine;—that Rome has her formative period during the century of her life that I propose to take up with you. When the Kings were chased away, all the social and political elements that later turned into the Fury we know of, were yet in ferment only. During that period of about 100 years they take shape. When that period closes, it is substantially a new social-political compound that steps upon the stage, the Rome, that, driven like a Fury from her own seething cauldron, becomes a scourge to the world, and ends by consuming herself. Let's look at these political and social elements. First at the political.

POLITICAL MECHANISM.

It will not be necessary to go into a minute account of the constitutional law of the Roman state. It will here suffice to designate the principal wheels of the political mechanism, and to point out their leading functions and features. In doing this I shall use modern terms, familiar to all. That will answer all practical purposes to-night.

The wheels of the Roman political mechanism that concern us to-night were:

- The Consuls;
- The Senate;
- The Centuries; and
- The Colleges of Priests.

You may wonder how the Colleges of Priests came to have a place in the machinery of government. We will come to that.

Broadly using modern parlance, the Consuls represented the Executive, the Senate and Centuries the Legislative, the Colleges of Priests the Judicial Power.

The Consuls were two; they were elected jointly and annually by popular vote, in the Forum.

The Senate consisted theoretically of 300 members; they held office for life; vacancies were filled by the Consuls. The body partook of the character of a House of Lords, in that its legislative functions consisted mainly in passing upon measures ordered in the popular branch. The Senate sanctioned these, or refused its sanction.

The Centuries were military divisions of the people. Together, the Centuries constituted the whole people in "Committee of the Whole," gathered at the Forum. They elected the elective officers, and enacted the laws,—subject to the sanction of the Senate. The singular method of voting by the Centuries is of importance in the subject in hand; I shall come back upon that later on.

Finally, the Colleges of Priests. I said they represented the Judiciary. They did in this way: If a law or an election, distasteful to the Ruling Class, was forced through; if, for any one of the thousand and one causes, apt to arise wherever actual oligarchic power is draped in the drapery of democratic forms, the Ruling Class of Rome found it prudent to yield in Forum and Senate Hall;—in such cases the Colleges of Priests would conveniently discover some flaw in the auspices, some defect in the sacrifices. That annulled the election or the law, as "condemned by the Gods."—This fact suggests another parallel, a parallel between what happens to-day in Organized Churchdom (applause), and what happened in Rome. The allurements are strong to branch off into that. But I shall resist it, and move on.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

Such was the political machinery of the Roman State. Now to the social aspect. What was the composition of the people who operated these four wheels of government, and who were affected by them? What I was

compelled to say, in order to explain the political function of the Colleges of Priests, indicated that the Roman people was not a homogeneous mass; that in Rome there was a Ruling Class and a Ruled Class. Indeed these classes were well marked.

Socialists need not to be told that so long as the machinery of production is not in the hands of the people collectively, there must be a ruling class and a ruled class; there must be a working class and an idle class; there must be a class that toils and does not enjoy life, and there must be a class that toils not and does the enjoying; and that the enjoying and not toiling coincides with the ruling, while the toiling and not enjoying coincides with the ruled part. Socialists need not to be told that. It is of prime interest, in connection with the subject in hand, to have a distinct appreciation of the line of class-cleavage in the Roman Commonwealth.

The Roman peoples were divided into two Orders. One Order was called the Patricians, the other Order was the Plebeians.

PATRICIANS.

The patricians can be easily defined. They were the clan nobility of Rome; they were the descendents of the old houses, of which there were few in comparison to the rest of the population. Although some of the patrician houses had declined in property, the patricians were, as a whole, large property holders, both in land and money; being a nobility, the patricians were the political rulers.

PLEBEIANS.

The word plebeians is harder to define, and here is where the interest of the subject begins to centre. Huxley somewhere lays to the door of Milton the unscientific conception of creation that is popular to-day. He claims that the beauty of the rhythm of a certain passage in *Paradise Lost*, and the majesty of its language, has popularized an error that civilization has long since discarded. And so may we charge Shakespeare with being responsible for the popular misconception there is with regard to the word "Plebeians." In one of Shakespeare's great tragedies, "*Coriolanus*," there occurs a certain passage, in fact the play almost opens with the passage. In the very first act, a crowd of rioting Roman citizens are introduced, and one of them, addressing the mob, says: (reading)

“We are accounted poor citizens; the patricians good. What authority surfeits on, would relieve us: if they would yield us but the superfluity, while it were wholesome, we might guess they relieved us humanely; but they think we are too dear: the leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an inventory to particularize their abundance; our sufferance is a gain to them. Let us revenge this with our pikes, ere we become rakes: for the gods know I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.”

Owing, I think, very extensively to this remarkable presentation, the popular conception of the plebeian order is that that element was made up of the poor of the workingmen of Rome; and that conception you will find cultivated even in the school-books on history. Here and there something leaks through to indicate that there were rich plebeians, but the point is never made that the term “plebeian” in Rome did not designate people effected like this plebeian that Shakespeare puts in the front of his play of *Coriolanus*. The term plebeian meant in the Roman language, the “multitude.” It was a term used in contradistinction to the few, the patricians. In other words, it was the antithesis of oligarchy, the patricians being the few, the plebeians being the many. It was not an economic distinction.

Indeed, there was no such economic line of cleavage between “patricians” and “plebeians.” There were rich men, in land and money, among the plebeians, probably more of them than among the patricians. The difference between the two sets—patricians and rich plebeians, lay in this: a patrician who lost his property did not, therefore, lose caste: artificial social corks kept him in his patrician rank and the political attributes of his clan-nobility, with the aid of which he might again attain economic power: on the contrary with the rich plebeian, the loss of his property carried with it the loss of the only power he had,—economic power. So absolutely of the same economic class was a considerable portion of the plebeian order with the patricians, that rich plebeians and patricians shared together the spoils that their economic power conferred upon them.

CLASS LINES.

Again using modern parlance, the plebs, the multitude, fell into three economic classes: the “bourgeois” or large property-holding plebeian: the

“middle-class” plebeian; and the “proletarian” plebeian, this last forming the majority of all, a working class, stripped of all property, and forced to hire themselves out for a living. So that, in point of economic, or class distinctions, the Roman commonwealth was divided, not between “patricians” and “plebeians,” but the class line of cleavage ran between patricians and “bourgeois” plebeians, on the one hand, and “proletarian” plebeians, on the other, with a “middle class” plebs in between. Patricians and “bourgeois” plebeians, holding the economic power, or means of exploitation, jointly wielded their power: the “proletarian” plebs were exploited, the “middle class” plebs were up-rooted,—very much in the way the process goes on to-day.

Now, what was the means of exploitation? It was not machinery. Machinery, as we understand the thing, did not then exist. The means of exploitation bore, all the same, close resemblance with the modern means. Already then the law of exchange value was bound to affect things. The same as to-day the man who works with a large factory has a power over the man who works with only a small factory, and can smoke him out, and throw him into the class of the proletariat, so likewise then the man who held large farms could produce so much more plentifully, could produce with so much more economy, that the middle class landholder could not hold his own, and was proletarianized. It goes without saying that the power of economic tyranny that manifested itself in the uprooting of the small holders, or middle class, had a direct manifestation in the direct exploitation of the workingman, and rendered the position, at first of the agricultural and subsequently of the urban proletariat, all the harder to bear. The specific sources of the increasing economic tyranny and exploitation, which manifested themselves in the Roman State were the following:

SOURCES OF ECONOMIC TYRANNY AND EXPLOITATION.

Rome was almost always engaged in war. As a rule she won. The immediate result of the victories of Rome was the enlargement, not of the Roman territory merely, but of the estates of the large landlords. The territory of the conquered nation in Italy was partitioned among the conquerors. Theoretically, the allotments were to be equal among all. In point of fact the large landlords, patrician and bourgeois plebs, grabbed the bulk; the middle class was allowed a sop; the proletarians were left out in the

cold. The larger the estates grew, all the more precarious became the existence of the middle class.

Again, after making the allotments, a portion of the conquered territory was always left undivided. It was reserved for the “public domain,” a “common,” so to say. On that public domain the whole people, theoretically, were allowed to graze their cattle. In point of fact, the large property-holders, patrician and bourgeois plebs, virtually appropriated these public domains for their own herds. Under the guise of a usufruct, for which they paid the government a rental that was nominal, and that often was not paid at all, they kept the public domain in perpetuity,—to the still greater injury of the middle class, and, in some instances, even of proletarians.

Again, in the extensively commercially developed Rome, money was a staple of prime need. The patricians and bourgeois plebs were not landlords only—the “Single-Tax” gets knocked out in Rome at the very start (laughter)—they were also money-lenders, usurious money-lenders. The hard-pushed middle class farmer readily found a patrician or bourgeois plebeian money-lender waiting to “help him out.” The result was his expropriation.

Again, in the instinctive hankering of their class after the property of the small holders, the Roman large property-holders speedily desecrated in taxation a prime means to their end. In this manoeuvre the Roman large property-holders gave points to the Dutch Pensionary De Witt, points that he did not fail to take 2,000 years later. The community of interest between patrician and bourgeois plebs drew them into close alliance. The patricians laid on the taxes: patricians and bourgeois plebs shifted them deftly over to the shoulders of the small holders, and thus directly urged on the wholesale sweeping away of the middle class, and reducing it to proletarians.

There was a fifth source of economic oppression, which does not manifest itself at the very start, but that grew, and grew, and became a crying evil, bearing directly upon the proletariat. It was chattel slavery. Along with the territories that Rome appropriated from the nations that she overcame, she appropriated their people too. Thus an ever-increasing horde of slaves swelled the Roman labor-market, raising there a question suggestive of that of “prison-labor” to-day. The middle class had no means to invest in the slave-market, or occasion to use the slave. Patricians and bourgeois plebs

were the investors. Slaves in such abundance were cheaper than free labor. They were bought cheap, treated worse than cattle, worked for all they were worth, and, when exhausted, cast off to die like the dogs. The page of slavery in Rome is the darkest in the whole history of chattel slavery. The hordes of slaves threw the proletariat on the streets and highways.

Finding it hard to compete with the large landlords owing to the smallness of its own farms and its exclusion from the public domain, compelled to yield to the large property-holders large shares of its own product through the usurious rates of interest extorted from it, and staggering withal under the burden of taxation, the middle class plebeians grew desperate; in even step, their ranks swelling by the accessions of the smoked-out middle class, and their labor rendered still more valueless by the gradual substitution of slaves, the proletarian plebeians became restive.

Thus stood things at the opening of the period of Roman history under consideration—about 500 B. C. An economic struggle; a struggle for economic redress; a struggle—as this plebeian in Shakespeare’s “Coriolanus” puts it—“in hunger for bread,” and to ward off “being made rakes,” in short, Class Struggle, however incipient, yet well marked, was on in that Roman commonwealth. The line of class-cleavage, it should seem, showed itself distinct enough to be perceived. Was it perceived? No. Why? We shall see. And, seeing, we shall also see the dire results of the oversight.¹

The period under consideration is the period during which the Class Struggle within the Roman commonwealth moves from stage to stage, until it closes its first epoch, about 400 B. C. Of course the Struggle continues beyond that: that struggle cannot cease but with the abolition of Class Rule, which is to say, with the Co-operative State, the Socialist Republic. But during this period the Class Struggle was twisted and beaten and turned, no longer into an instrument of possible deliverance, but into a weapon for future national suicide. This period progresses through seven stages:

PLEBS LEADERS IN THE SENATE.

The rising revolt of the plebeian masses against economic tyranny and exploitation threw, of course, patricians and plebeian bourgeois together. But they were not a unit. Both had the same economic interests at stake; but

¹ [First *Daily People* installment ends here.](#)

they did not both stand on a par. On the one side, the patrician was clad with exclusive, aristocratic, political privileges; the bourgeois plebeian was consumed with an ambition to share such privileges. On the other side, the bourgeois plebeian by the very reason of his hereditary rank as a plebeian, enjoyed the confidence of the plebeian middle class and proletariat, and was thereby vested with the requisite qualifications to “jolly” and cajole his “fellow-plebeians;” the patrician, by his very hereditary rank, was barred from such confidence, and deprived of such useful qualifications. These circumstances gave the two divisions, into which the usurping class of Rome fell, not a common cause only, but also something to barter on. And thus the keynote was struck at an early date for the policy that these two sets were thenceforth to pursue,—jointly against their joint exploiters, and severally towards each other. The Plebs Leader sprang therefrom. Of course, he was a bourgeois plebeian.

The first fruit of the first rumblings of the class-revolt in Rome was the appearance in the Senate of the Plebs Leader. Picked bourgeois plebeians, picked out by patrician Consuls—and picked out with an eye to what qualities you may judge—, were allowed the privilege of a seat in the Senate; but there, among the august and haughty patrician Senators, the Plebs Leader was not expected to emit a sound (laughter). The patrician argued, the patrician voted, the patrician decided. When these were through, then the tellers turned to the Plebs Leaders, but they were not even then allowed to give a sign with their mouths: their mouths had to remain shut (laughter): their opinion was expressed with their feet! If they gave a tap, it meant they approved; if they gave no tap, it meant they disapproved; and it didn't much matter either way. (Laughter, and applause.) Oh, this is only a tame prelude to the noisy orchestra to come. (Laughter and applause.) I said it mattered not much either way,—no more than do the dead sounds, made by the Labor Leader, picked out and placed to-day by the grace of the Capitalist Class in the legislative bodies of America, Canada, England or Australia, New Zealand included, where his vanity may be gratified with the hollow honors of his prototype, the Plebs Leader dumb appendage of the Roman Senate. (Loud applause.)—And this was the “first step” towards the economic redress that the middle class and proletarian plebs were demanding: this was the first “victory” of the exploited and tyrannized plebs.

TRIBUNES OF THE PLEBS.

Sweet words butter no parsnips. It goes without saying that the hobnobbing of the Plebs Leader with patrician aristocrats in the Senate relieved not one of the economic burdens complained of by the plebs. Wars continued, and they brought on, after as before, their train of fresh allotments to the already large estates, wider public domains for the large landlords to appropriate for their own cattle, and an increase of slaves to displace free labor. The deepening penury of the middle class heightened the burden of its debt. Taxation urged on its downfall. And the whole mass pressed upon the proletariat. Demands for relief were made and pressed, but only to deaf ears. They were made louder and pressed harder; a promise of their being attended to was made after the particular war in hand should be over. The war was over, and the promise was forgotten by the Senate. Finally, after another war, before disbanding, and after ineffectual parleys, the plundered plebs mass under arms withdrew to the Sacred Mount, threatening to build a city of their own. The Senate then yielded and entered into serious negotiations. The result was the Tribunate of the Plebs.

The newly created offices had extensive powers. The Tribune of the Plebs could checkmate the Consuls, while himself was inviolable: he could place his seal on the public Treasury and thus put a spoke into the wheels of the whole machinery of government, and so on. In other words the Tribunate of the Plebs was a powerful political office, but an office, mark you, that, seeing it had no salary attached, none but Plebs Leaders could fill. The trick was taking fuller shape. The Plebs Leaders were utilizing popular economic distress to the end of conquering from the patriciate political power for themselves. The plebs masses had asked for relief from debt and for bread; instead, the Plebs Leaders gained added strength to fight their own particular battles with the patricians.—And this was the second “victory” of the exploited and tyrannized plebs. (Laughter.)

THE PUBLILIAN LAW.

The Tribunate of the Plebs proved, of course, as barren of economic benefits to the people as the dumb participation of the Plebs Leaders in the Senate had done,—as barren as the Bureaux of the Statistics of Labor and other such fruits of “Labor Legislation” do to-day. Nor did it take long for the

plebs masses to make the discovery, or for the Plebs Leaders to utilize the fresh ferment. The next ferment bore the Publilian law as its fruit.

You will remember that, in describing the Centuries, I stated they were in the nature of a “lower legislative Chamber.” This is the place to look at the Centuries a little closer. The Centuries were military subdivisions of the whole people. The population was distributed among the Centuries according to wealth, landed wealth. The richest citizens were placed in the 1st Century, the next richest in the 2nd, and so on. As always in such cases, the ranks were thinnest in the highest Century; the 2nd, where the standard of wealth was lower, contained larger numbers; and so on until the 7th Century was reached, that of the proletariat, which was propertiless and most populous. Again, as usually where property qualifications officially determine rank, the number of votes cast by the Centuries was not equal, least of all proportionate to the numbers in each. Altogether, the Centuries polled 193 votes; but the Knights, a sort of Century that headed the list, and the nominally 1st Century polled together 97 votes, leaving only a minority for all the rest. The system of polling the Centuries accentuated the preponderance of the Knights and the 1st Century. These two voted first. If they agreed, the others were dispensed with. Accordingly, only in the exceptional instances, when the Knights and the 1st Century disagreed, did the suffrage of the rest of the centuries come into play. It followed from all this that, well represented though the Plebs Leader element was in the upper and controlling Centuries, it did not there have its hands free, and could be dominated by the patricians: it also followed that, in the exceptional instances when the upper Centuries disagreed and the proletarian plebs came into play, it had to be considered in the manipulations of the Plebs Leaders. The Plebs Leaders sought to rid themselves of both inconveniences. They accomplished their purpose through the Publilian law, which they compelled the Senate to sanction in the midst of a violent popular cry for bread and the reduction of debts.

And what was the Publilian law? It was a law that vested in councils of PLEBEIAN LANDLORDS the right to initiate laws, thus conferring upon these councils co-ordinate powers with those enjoyed by the Centuries. In this way the Plebs Leaders freed themselves at one stroke both from dependence upon the patricians and from compulsion to consider the

proletariat in the initiation of laws: a bold stroke for equality upward, and for tyranny downward.—The third “victory” of the tyrannized and exploited plebs. (Laughter and applause.)

THE DECEMVIRATE.

Within twenty years of the firing of the shot just described, conditions were ripe for another. Indeed, conditions had never changed: there was only a temporary lull of the storm while waiting for the “beneficent” results of the latest “victory” to materialize. These failed to; and the Plebs Leader element, meeting with annoying resistance from the patriciate to the Plebs Leader’s encroachments on its privi-privileges, needed but to give the signal for the storm to be again unchained.² The signal was, accordingly given, and the storm broke loose afresh. In this storm the previous magistrates went down. Consuls, and Tribune of the Plebs and plebeian councils,—all was swept away, and a “Decemvirate,” Rule of Ten Men, was established in their stead. It was as if the Plebs Leaders, tired of trying along the beaten paths of the old methods of procedure, dictated by the old institutions, resolved upon a “shuffling of the cards,” so to speak, or a “new throw of the dice” as a quicker means to reach their private aims. In a manner they succeeded. For the first time in the history of Rome Plebs Leaders appear in the magistracy, clothed with powers equal to those held by their patrician colleagues. Among the ten men elected to the Decemvirate, two were Plebs Leaders. But no sooner was the victory won than its hollowness was discovered. Not only did the patrician majority lord it over their plebeian colleagues, but it also took occasion to emphasize its rank-superiority.

An unwritten law forbade the inter-marriage of patricians with plebeians. The patrician majority on the Decemvirate, no doubt feeling the flood of bourgeois invasion threatening the clan supremacy of the patriciate, decided to throw up dikes. This it did by putting into written law the bar between patrician and plebeian marriage. This act sealed the doom of the Decemvirate. The burning economic questions having been, just as before, left wholly untouched, it took no great effort to re-arouse the plebeian masses into revolt, with the result that down went the Decemvirate.

² “Unchanged” in the newspaper.

VALERIO-HORATION LAW.

This stage, in the period under discussion, is marked by the Valerio-Horation law which restored the previous wheels of the governmental machinery,—the Tribune of the Plebs included,—and enlarged their authority, but still as before left untouched the economic abuses complained of by the very masses that were used to gain these political privileges for the Plebs Leaders.—And thus further “victories” were recorded for the distressed plebs, and were declaimed about from the stump in the forum to the enchanted plebs multitude, much as in our own days, the Labor Leader, who, by means of strikes and other devices, is busy laying up treasures, not in heaven (laughter), but on earth, is seen to expatiate upon his vast achievements in behalf of the starving crowd of workingmen, who listen to him open mouthed. (Loud applause.)

CANULEIAN LAW.

The Valerio-Horation law was strictly an interlude, a preparatory step. The Plebs Leader element was stung to the quick by the statute on marriages, and it was impatient for full equality in political privileges. A bitter fight was soon started with the abolition of marital restrictions and access to the Consulship as the silent objects in view, the matters declaimed about being those that arose from the wrongful allotments, the extortions of the usurers, the vexations that the proletariat was subjected to. The patricians resisted with stubborn tenacity. A compromise was the result; and that was embodied in the Canuleian law.

The patriciate yielded the point on marriages, but it shuffled on the Consulship. The Consuls were abolished. In their stead “Military Tribunes with Consular power” were set up. What that meant the Plebs Leaders were not yet fully aware of. They believed they had gained their point in both respects, and when the Canuleian law was enacted they called off their “dogs of war,” the plebs.—And this was the sixth “victory” of the exploited and tyrannized plebs: with the economic distress of these as a weapon, the Plebs Leader element, that itself produced and profited by such conditions, gained the point of qualifying for Consular powers, and also the privilege of selling their daughters to scions of patrician houses. The plebs mass demanded bread: to the orchestration of this mournful dirge, the Plebs Leader qualified

for fathers-in-law of patrician youths (loud applause); not unlike the Labor Leaders of to-day, who, to the orchestration of a declining wage and deepening misery among the Working Class, qualify for guests fit “to place their legs under the mahogany,” at banquets given by the capitalist exploiters. (Loud applause.)

CASSIUS AND MANLIUS.

Between the Canuleian law and the next and closing stage—the Licinian Law—the longest span of years occurs of any that divides the previous stages of this epoch of Roman history. The contending forces gather during this interval their whole strength for a last and decisive effort. And the lines are exactly those along which the conflict was waged thitherto. Two incidents, during these first 50 years contribute not a little to underscore the significance of events.

Only twice, since the struggle started, were there concrete propositions made looking to the relief of economic distress, and towards removing the causes thereof; in other words, only twice were propositions brought forward in line with issues that were raised by the Plebs Leaders. Both propositions proceeded from patricians. And in both instances the noble movers of the motions were immolated upon the altar of the interests of the Plebs Leader element, this element distancing the patriciate in its ferocity to “save the Republic,”—just as the Labor Leader of our own days distances the Capitalist Class in the deep malignity of his hatred of the Socialist.

The first instance was that of Spurius Cassius. Cassius was no ordinary patrician. With him achievements did not lag behind birth. Often had he led the Roman legions to victory; vast were the domains his powers had added to the territory of the commonwealth; and twice, the spoils of war carried before, he rode, at the head of his army in triumphal march through the streets of Rome to give thanks to the Capitoline Jupiter,—no ordinary share of Roman distinction. Cassius perceived that not one of the laws scored by the Plebs Leaders at all touched the cause of the evil. The evil had to be attacked at its root. Despite his patrician economic interests, he proposed a law to re-allot the land, and make provision to prevent the re-occurrence of the disparity of wealth which, he foresaw, was driving Rome to the brink of ruin. Class interests asserted themselves. In solid mass, the patricians and Plebs

Leaders rose against the daring innovator. Cassius and his proposed law went down, drowned in his own blood.

The second instance was even more tragically dramatic. The Celt invasion of Italy had carried everything before it, and virtually swamped Rome herself. The inhabitants had fled to the burgs to the south and east. The Celts camped in the streets of Rome. Only one spot in the city had remained free from the desecration of the invader. That was the Capitoline Hill. There a patrician, Marcus Manlius, entrenched himself with a few other brave companions; resisted all attempts to scale the hill; and held out until the Celtic marauders, tired out and disheartened by such persistence, fell back,—never again to reappear before the walls of Rome, except as captives of war. Manlius surnamed Capitolinus from that act of successful daring, seeing one day one of the soldiers who had fought with him dragged to prison for debt, stopped the tip-staves, emptied his purse in the interest of the afflicted plebeian, and declared that so long as he had a farthing, no Roman should suffer want. His attitude and proposals flew in the face of the property-holding class. Again Plebs Leaders vied with the patriciate in “patriotism” and “respect for the laws of the land.” Manlius was seized and thrown headlong down the Tarpeian Rock,—whence the proverb, “There is but a step from the Capitoline Hill to the Tarpeian Rock”, from glory to martyrdom.

LICINIAN LAW.

During the 50 years that elapsed between the passing of the Canuleian law and the Licinian law, Rome made the greatest progress thitherto made in the expansion of her territory. Wars were numerous, successful; and the spoils were in proportion. It needs no argument to show that all that merely furnished the Plebs Leader element with vaster material to work on. Indeed, the terror of being proletarianized never before weighed heavier upon the minds of the middle class, nor had the distress of the proletariat ever before reached such a pitch. The Plebs Leader element fructified the economic distress to the utmost, and, after considerable sparring, framed the Licinian law, and fought it through to a successful finish.

The Licinian law may be termed a platform with six planks:

1. Restoration of the Consulships;

2. At least one of the two Consuls to be a plebeian;
3. Admission of plebeians to the Colleges of Priests;
4. Limitation of the number of cattle and sheep to be allowed on the commons, as well as the quantity of additional allotments to be allowed to individual holders;
5. The number of free laborers to be proportionate to that of slaves employed on each farm;
6. Alleviation of debtors.

It will be noticed that the first three planks are political, the last three are economic demands. The first three could be enforced immediately upon the enactment of the law; the last three required supplementary legislation. It will also be noticed that the first three cut at the very root of the existing political inequality between patricians and plebeians. Upon the enactment of the Licinian law the Plebs Leader would have supplemented his economic power with the political privileges requisite to safeguard it, and thenceforth he could enjoy with the patriciate the double power of economic exploitation and political usurpation,—including the useful privilege of, whenever convenient, discovering “flaws in the auspices” and “defects in the sacrifices.” On the other hand, the three economic planks, even if enforced, could, by that time, do hardly more than afford temporary relief, and that to some few only: they left crass economic inequality untouched and thereby the power of exploitation unclipt.

The Patricians did not fail to perceive all this. They also knew it was “now or never” with them. And they made ready for their last stand. The struggle is said to have lasted eleven years. More than once in this interval did the patricians offer to grant the last three planks, the economic demands. But the Plebs Leaders resisted,—exactly as the Labor Leader of to-day who rejects the employer’s offer to accept the economic demands made by the men, unless also “the Union is recognized” (loud applause), that is unless the Labor Leader’s status is maintained. The Plebs Leader refused to “settle,” unless settlement was made with him. At last, a new migration to the Sacred Mount being threatened, the patriciate surrendered. The Plebs Leaders had won out to the fullest.—And this was the seventh and crowning “victory” of the series won by the exploited and oppressed plebs.

THE TEMPLE OF CONCORD.

The Licinian law closes this epoch, and I might here close the sketch of it. But there is still one more event to record. The seven stages just touched on are like beads on a string. The string has a knot. And the knot is worth all the beads put together. It summarizes the set. Upon the final passing of the Licinian law, a distinguished Roman patrician, Camillus by name, the Mark Hanna of the Rome of that day—not that the vulgar Jerry Sneak of the bourgeois Mark Hanna could compare, either in point of breeding or of culture, with that distinguished patrician; nevertheless, a Mark Hanna in the sense that Camillus was then, as Mark Hanna is to-day, the type of the economic and political usurping class—Camillus, then, in order to celebrate the event, built a temple at the foot of the Capitol, and dedicated it to the Goddess of Concord. Looked at closely, one can not help but be startled at the close lines of resemblance between Camillus' Temple to the Goddess of CONCORD and a certain creation of our own days,—Hanna's Civic Federation commission of industrial PEACE. (Applause.)

The Temple to the Goddess of Concord was meant for a monument to commemorate the end of internal discord. Did the Temple of Camillus commemorate a fact? Was discord at an end? Did the Licinian law dry up the sources of the discontent that had been gathering during the preceding hundred years? Was crass economic inequality, with its resultant evils, dealt the blow that ended it, or were at least measures taken for its extinction? Giving the Licinian law time to operate, and looking 200 years forward, we find that the census of Italy—Rome having meantime conquered the whole of Italy—showed in all Italy not two thousand families of solid wealth! Looking forward 100 years further, we find Tiberius Gracchus, in Plutarch's life of that Roman, giving the following bird's-eye view of his country: (reading)

“The wild beasts have their caves to retire to, but the brave men who spill their blood in her cause have nothing left but air and light. Without houses, without any settled habitations, they wander from place to place with their wives and children; and their generals do but mock them, when, at the head of their armies, they exhort their men to fight for their sepulchres and domestic gods; for, among such numbers, perhaps there is not a Roman who has an altar that belonged to his ancestors, or a sepulchre in which their ashes rest. The private soldiers fight and die, to advance the wealth and

luxury of the great; and they are called masters of the world, while they have not a foot of ground in their possession.”

Indeed, there was no concord, and none, properly speaking, could be. The Licinian law neither cauterized the evil, nor even placed a salve upon it. The slight economic improvements it promised were hardly attended to. On the other hand, the vaster wars that Rome undertook brought vaster property into the hands of the already overpowering ruling class. The expropriation of the smallholders went on a main. The usurer held high carnival. Slaves deluged the free proletariat;—all the evils complained of at the start were there, only in a form infinitely more aggravated. Was then the Temple to the Goddess of Concord a lie, robust and unqualified? No.

The Temple to the Goddess of Concord DID record a Truth. There WAS concord, but among whom?

The only truly warring factions had been patricians and Plebs Leaders, the participation of the plebs masses being only in the nature of food for cannon. The Plebs Leader element craved political power. It did so out of vainglory; it did so also and especially in response to its true class instincts: It needed political in order to secure and expand its economic power. That political power was in the hands of a clan nobility. What to do? Overthrow the patriciate? That would be to open the sluice-gates to the plebs masses, and endanger the economic power of the Plebs Leader element.

Note this: The Plebs Leader was not in arms against patricianism; least of all was he in arms to overthrow plebsism, meaning economic slavery. Whether or not the Plebs Leader ever indulged in speculations upon the beauty, or the sacredness, or the wisdom, or the necessity concerning “the poor ye will always have with you,” I know not; nor does it matter. What does matter is that the Plebs Leader “followed no ideals,” he “pursued no visions,” he was “practical.” The Plebs Leader justly saw in plebsism a hell; he saw no way for the extinction of the flames that devoured the plebs masses, at least none that did not interfere with his own interests; his political and social economy tallied exactly with that of the patriciate; he sought to secure himself against the dire ordeal of plebs insecurity and poverty. Given such premises, a policy of deception was the inevitable result. The Plebs Leader was bound to work for the perpetuation of all that was essential in the patriciate, with himself, however, as a sharer in the privileges. As a

consequence, the Plebs Leader could feel not a throb in favor of any plan, nor could his mind be open to any thought that made for the abolition of the economic usurpation that he enjoyed, and the obverse of which was the dreaded hell of plebsism. In the deliberate and instinctive pursuit of his class safety, the Plebs Leader was aided by the circumstance of his Order—the name of PLEBEIAN.

The non-patrician landlord and plutocrat was a plebeian. The designation of “Plebeian” covered him, along with the racked middle-class man and the exploited proletarian. The common designation raised the common delusion of a “Common Cause”: only that, as delusions always do, this delusion deluded only those whom it was baneful to: it deluded the plebs middle-class and proletariat: it deluded the patricians themselves, who saw in the bourgeois plebs a “Plebeian,” and ostentatiously showed their contempt for him with aristocratic-oligarchic haughtiness; the plebs bourgeois himself never succumbed to the delusion. A phrase thus took the place of a fact; fractional truth substituted square-jointed scientific truth; the line of class-cleavage was blurred;—and sentiment did the rest. These were the circumstances that manured the soil from which sprang that rank vegetation,—the Plebs Leader.

The Plebs Leader saw his opportunity and used it with masterly skill. He needed but to pursue the routine tenor of his own class interests in order to increase the size of the club—Social Discontent—, that the mere name of “Plebeian” placed in his hands, and that he swung over the heads of the patriciate. At first, alarmed for its economic power as well as for its political privileges, the patriciate soon felt reassured upon the score of the former, and presently discovered in the Plebs Leader the surest protector of both, provided only he were admitted to participation in the latter. The patrician eye was gradually opened. The seven stages of this epoch—beginning with the sop thrown at the Plebs Leaders of admitting picked ones from among them to the role of dumb appendages in the Senate, down to the complete surrender dictated by the Licinian law, when the whole Plebs Leader class was admitted to full patrician political rank—mark the stages of the eye-opening process. During the process, there was discord and struggle enough, but we perceive that the real combatants were the patriciate and the Plebs Leader element. We perceive more: we perceive that peace being established

between the combatants upon the lines it was established, the plebs masses could, at least for a time, be dominated, and that the form their now warped class-struggle would thenceforth take, would, if it ever again took dangerous form, be something materially distinct from what it had been. And so it happened. For the present, at any rate, the patriciate breathed freely, and with it, the Plebs Leader element. Accordingly, we perceive the strategic significance of the Plebs Leader to have been a buttress for patricianism, fraught with the vilest effects upon the plebeian masses.

The Temple that Camillus raised to the Goddess of Concord did accordingly, commemorate a Truth: concord did now reign, and that Temple, though a monument it be cast in antique mold, throws out no faint suggestion of the meaning, at least the aspiration, of Hanna's modern monument of guile—the INDUSTRIAL PEACE COMMISSION, on which capitalists and Labor Leaders are seen in fraternal peace and concord. (Loud applause.)³

Need I, after all this, answer the questions that I posed at starting:—what strength, if any, is there in the Labor Leader, and what is the nature and source thereof? What is the strategic significance of the Labor Leader on the field of the modern Social Question? Is it a strategic force that accrues to the benefit of the Labor Movement or is it one that makes for capitalist interests? Need I answer these questions? Meseems such an answer is superfluous. Well known facts, known to you all, must have all along suggested themselves to you in the course of my narrative on the career of the Plebs Leader. He who is at all informed must have detected the startling resemblance there is between the leading lineaments on the physiognomy of the Plebs Leader and those on the physiognomy of the modern Labor Leader; and he must have perceived that the latter is to modern Capitalism what the former was to the patriciate,—a strategic post of strength for usurpation, of danger for its victims. But I prefer to take nothing for granted.

The social aspect of the country reveals, on the one side, the Capitalist Class possessed to-day of over 71 per cent. of the wealth of the Nation, and thereby in possession of the political powers,—a veritable oligarchy, barely 8 per cent. of the population; on the other side, the Working Class, the modern proletariat, in point of numbers, over 52 per cent. of the population, in point of property, holding less than 5 per cent. of the national wealth,—a veritable

³ [Second *Daily People* installment ends here.](#)

slave class, groaning under the yoke of wage-slavery. And this is no sudden apparition: it has been a slow but steady development. Where such conditions are, it means that a fierce Class Struggle has been on and continues. Leaving aside the middle class, that stands between two fires, hits at and is hit by both, and is by both destroyed, the struggle is between the Capitalist Class and the Working Class. But the days of single combats are no more. It is now organization against organization; and he who says "organization" says "leadership." A cursory view reveals the capitalist leader at the head of one column, at the head of the other column there has long figured the Labor Leader, the leader in the Trades Unions. The significance of the Plebs Leader was disclosed by his acts and the effect thereof. Let his own acts also speak for the Labor Leader. These acts, illumined by the career of the Plebs Leader, will cause the strategic significance of the modern specimen to stand out in no doubtful light.

LABOR LEADER RECORD.

I have here with me (pointing to a big bundle on the table) a mass of documents gathered upon the subject. It will be impossible to go through all of them here to-night. I shall take from this mass mainly the facts furnished by the Labor Leader in political office. In many cases, facts as striking are furnished by the Labor Leader outside of public office,—the same as Plebs Leaders out of office rendered material aid to their confreres in office. But it is now near 10 o'clock, and I shall have to run quickly over, even omit many that come under the category of the official political conduct of the Labor Leader. Voluminous as are the documents I have so far gathered, the collection is far from complete. A pamphlet on the record, even only the official political record, of the Labor Leader will be found to be an invaluable contribution to the arsenal of the Labor Movement.

The first document I wish to quote from is the answer of Comrade J. A. Leach of Phoenix, Arizona, to my inquiry touching the Labor Leaders in public office in his Territory. He says: (reading)

"There are no Trades Unionists holding office in Arizona, that I know of, either elective or appointative. They tried to get an eight-hour law passed in last Legislature, making it illegal to work the miners over eight hours per day. But when the bill was under discussion in the House, it was there held

up to ridicule, and referred to as likely to have a bad effect on the miners, and cause them to become gouty. (Laughter.) The miners of the town of Globe were so dissatisfied with the conduct of the Representative of their county in the Legislature, that the first time he came to town, they seized him, put him on a rail, rode him out of town, and ordered him not to return or they would give him another dose of rail-riding.” (Loud laughter and applause.)

This gives the key to the situation: It gives an inkling of what the Capitalist Class would have to expect if it endeavored, of and by itself, to rivet the chains of exploitation upon the Working Class (applause): it also points the Capitalist Class quite clearly to the policy to pursue, to wit, avail itself of what strategic position there may be to enable it to mask its moves. Did the Capitalist Class take the hint given it by its early experience?

LENDING A COLOR OF LABOR TO CAPITALISM.

The profits of the Capitalist Class represent wages withheld from the Working Class. The fleecing of Labor, implied in the raking in of profits, is predicated upon the existence of a wage-slave class, a Working Class, in short, a proletariat; and the continuance of the existence of such a class is, in turn, dependent upon the private ownership of the means of production,—of the land on and the machinery, capital, with which to work. Given the private ownership of these combined elements of production, and the Capitalist Class will congest ever more into its own hands the wealth of the land, while the Working Class must sink to ever deeper depths of poverty and dependence, every mechanical improvement only giving fresh impetus to the exaltation of the Capitalist and to the degradation of the Workingman. The issue between the two Classes is one of life and death; there are no two sides to it; there is no compromise possible.—Obviously, it is in the interest of the Working Class that the issue be made and kept clear before the eyes of the rank and file, and that Capitalism be held up to their view in all its revolting hideousness. What does the Labor Leader do? He lends to the monster that preys upon the workers the color of Labor by his sanction of its methods.

As leading instances of renderers of this service to the Capitalist Class may be quoted, among many others of less note, Henry Broadhurst, William Abrahams and Richard Bell in the British Parliament, and, in America, the late Robert Howard of the Massachusetts Legislature.

Member of Parliament Broadhurst, is a member of the Stonemasons' Union, at the same time he is a large holder of shares in the Brunner-Mands Chemical Works in England, where 50 per cent. profits is made under conditions of fearful slavery. (Hisses.)

Member of Parliament Abrahams is a member of the Miners' Union, at the same time he is a Director of the London, Edinburg & Glasgow Assurance Co., and of the Calais Tramway, on the latter of which especially the unpaid wages of the employees are "directed" into the pockets of the share-holders, of this M. P. among the lot. (Hisses.)

Member of Parliament Bell is the Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. During the Taff-Vale Railway dispute, he was complimented by the Board of Trades representative as "A Labor organizer who was capable of seeing that a question had two sides." (Laughter and hisses.)

Howard, who had strenuously upheld the Capitalist System in the Massachusetts Legislature, was of the Fall River, Mass., Weavers' Union. When he died,⁴ he was found to be possessed of \$70,000 worth of property, a large part of it in stocks in the very mills in which were fleeced to the skin the weavers of whose organization he was an officer. (Prolonged hisses.)

Nor should omission be made under this head, especially not at this season when the electric motor is throwing the locomotive engineers on their beam-ends, {of} P. M. Arthur, Grand Chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. While Capitalism was slaughtering his Unionmen on the roads, and was getting ready to reduce them to unskilled labor, he, tho' not holding political office, pulled the wool over their eyes, and filled his pockets with railroad stock from which he derived large dividends, yielded by the members of his Union. (Prolonged hisses.)

NURSING ANTI-LABOR DELUSIONS.

The Capitalist Class knows no country and no race, and any "God" suits it so that "God" approve of the exploitation of the worker. Despite all seeming wranglings, sometimes even wars, among them, the Capitalist Class is international and presents a united front against the Working Class. But for

⁴ "Recently died" in the newspaper. Howard, however, died in 1886. (See Gary M. Fink, *Biographical Dictionary of American Labor*, Greenwood Press, Revised Edition, 1974.)

that very reason the Capitalist Class is interested in keeping the workingmen divided among themselves. Hence it foments race and religious animosities that come down from the past.

Again, the earnings of the Working Class decline. This is due to the ever larger supply of labor, relative to the demand. The Capitalist Class knows that what brings on the increased supply is, not immigration so much, but the improved and ever improving machinery, held as private property. For every 1 immigrant, by whom the labor-market is over-stocked, it is over-stocked by 10 workingmen in the country whom privately owned machinery displaces. The Capitalist Class is full well aware that if this fact be known, the conclusion would leap to sight, to wit, that the solution of the Labor Problem is simply the public ownership of the machine: if 50 men, working 10 hours a day, can, with improved machinery, produce as much as 100 did before without such improved machinery, the publicly owned machine would not, as the privately owned machine does, throw out 50 men: it would throw out FIVE of the former TEN hours of work. (Applause.) It is clear as day to the Capitalist Class that it must raise dust over this fact so as to conceal it; and no better means to this end is offered than the fomenting of the plausible delusion that the evil lies in immigration. Anti-immigration laws are the fruit of these two purposes. Such laws kill two flies with one slap; they draw attention away from the nerve that aches, and simultaneously they help to set the workers of the land in racial and creed hostility against the newcomers, who, of course, the Capitalist Class itself sees to it shall not be lacking.—Obviously, it is in the interest of the Working Class that this brace of fatal delusions be dispelled from their minds. What does the Labor Leader do? He helps nurse both delusions.

It is no accident that the Edward F. McSweeneys of the Shoemakers' Union, the McKims of the Carpenters', the T. V. Powderlys of K. of L. antecedents, and now a Frank P. Sargent, Grand Master of the Locomotive-firemen, are the ones picked out by the Capitalist Presidents, and are found ready to fill the places in the Department of the Commissioner of Immigration. (Applause.)

LENDING A COLOR OF LABOR TO CAPITALIST MEASURES.

Capitalism demands ever larger profits. Upon the volume of its profits

depends the power of the Capitalist Class to dominate the Working Class. It follows that Capitalism requires an ever intenser exploitation of the adult worker; that it hungers after the marrow of the children of the Working Class as one of the most efficient means for the lowering of wages and earnings; that it seeks to keep these in the ignorance and illiteracy “befitting the station that God has assigned them to in life”; that it aims at preparing the field in such way as to leave the Working Class at the greatest possible disadvantage whenever it rises in the revolt implied in the strike; and that, while thus seeking to augment its profits, it strains to reduce its taxes, those slices taken from its profits.—Obviously, it is in the interest of the Working Class that a spoke be put into each of these wheels. What does the Labor Leader do? He lends the color of labor to these capitalist manoeuvres.

As instances of this particular service to the Capitalist Class may be quoted, among a great many others, the conduct of John Wilson, Fenwick and Thomas Burt in the British Parliament; of Henry Blackmore and Clarence Connolly, Labor Commissioner and Factory Inspector, respectively, in Missouri; of Stephen Charters in the Mayoralty office of Ansonia, Ct.; of Sam Ross in the Massachusetts Legislature; of J. J. Kinney, E. J. Bracken and James L. Cannon in the Ohio Legislature; and of Samuel Prince and William Maher in the New York Legislature.

In Northumberland and Durham, England, the miners only work six hours per day; but their children, who act as drawers of coal, and are PAID BY THE MEN, work ten hours (hisses), one set of children serving two sets of men. Fenwick and Wilson, both of the Miners’ Union, are Members of Parliament from those two counties; and both of them, together with Thomas Burt, Member for Marpeth, and also of the Miners’ Union, oppose tooth and nail all propositions for the legal eight-hour day. On the last occasion, when the bill was up, March 5 of this year, Wilson, in voting against it, said “he regretted Mr. Burt, who took the same line as he did in the matter, was not present; when he found himself on the same side with Mr. Burt, he felt he was on the side of the angels.” (Hisses and laughter.)

Accidents to children in the factories of Missouri have become shockingly frequent. The law provides for fire-escapes and forbids the employment of children under 14 years. These laws are coolly ignored, and no prosecutions are instituted. Blackmore of the St. Louis Carpenters and of the Building

Trades Council, is the Labor Commissioner, and Connolly of the St. Louis Int'l Typographical Union, is the Factory Inspector under whose shield these crimes on Labor are permitted and committed. (Hisses.)

Under the auspices of Charters, the Carpenters' Union Mayor of Ansonia, a proposition was introduced this spring to retrench on the school appropriations, so as to lower taxation! Thus, besides saving for the capitalists of Ansonia the profits that would otherwise have to go to the school tax, the Charters' proposition amounted to cutting off fully two years from the educational opportunities of the children of the Working Class, and thereby and additionally hurl these young ones into the factories to compete with and lower the wages of the workers. (Prolonged hisses.)

A favorite capitalist flank move to increase the exploitation of his hands, where he cannot reduce wages outright, is the "fines system". Under the name of "fines" enough can be whacked out of the workers' wages to very materially increase the plunder in the capitalist's pockets. The practice was threatening a revolt among the spinners of New Bedford, Mass. Thereupon the Secretary of their Union, Ross, is picked out by the capitalists to run for the Legislature on one of the capitalist tickets, on the express issue of legislating the "fines system" out of existence. Ross was elected, and an anti-fines law passed. Nevertheless, the "fines system" continued in full blast; an aggrieved spinner hauled one of the violators of the law before the Court; the Court pronounced the law "unconstitutional";—and Ross continued in the Legislature, where he neither moved the impeachment of the Judge, nor any new anti-fines bill, and by his sepulchral dumbness gave the sanction of Labor to such a capitalist iniquity. (Hisses.)

Conscious of the fact that, despite all the drag that the Labor Leader is on the impulses of Labor, the workingmen periodically take the bit into their own mouth, the Capitalist Class is intent upon so arranging things beforehand that, when the workingman goes on strike, he may find himself "in a hole, with the wind blowing upon him from all sides." One of the many devices to this end is the enactment of laws clothing street railway employees with police powers: such powers do not add inches to the workingman in behalf of his class, on the contrary: a strike being on, these employees fall under the command of Chiefs of Police and can be handled with effect. A bill to this effect came up in the Ohio Legislature, only the other day; and it

passed with the support of the following Labor Leader members: Kinney, ex-International Secretary of the Metal Polishers' Union and Business Agent of the Cleveland Local; Bracken, ex-National Secretary of the Lathers' Union of Columbus and Secretary when elected; and Cannon, of the Int'l Cigarmakers' Union of Columbus.—Parenthetically, it is of no slight interest here to note that, when, in 1899, a corrupt conspiracy now well known in the annals of the American Labor Movement as the “Kangaroo Conspiracy”, broke out against the Socialist Movement and an attempt being made by the Cleveland wing of the conspirators to pack a certain meeting of the Cleveland Section of the Socialist Labor Party, so as to cause the Section to Kangaroo, the above named J. J. Kinney was on deck; paid up two years' back dues; and tho' vainly, yet strenuously sought to scuttle the Section!—Other devices, looking to the placing of the workers in a helpless hole during strikes are “Tramp Laws”, so-called, whereby a workingman on strike can be adjudged a “tramp” and sent to work in the identical factory against which he struck; “Military Codes” vesting the Courts with power to call out the militia, etc.; etc. Such conspiracies against the Working Class have been enacted into law in this State of New York, and they received the support of Prince of the Int'l Cigarmakers' Union, and Maher of the Cabdrivers' Union,—both members of the Legislature. (Hisses.)

SUSTAINING BY CONCEALING CAPITALIST RECKLESS DISREGARD
OF THE WORKERS' LIFE AND LIMB.

It is not merely by the process of sponging up the wealth⁵ produced by the Working Class that the Capitalist Class undermines the health and life of the workingman. The Capitalist Class is not constructively or inferentially only a cannibal class. The roots of Capitalism are literally watered with the blood of the proletariat. The fields of production—mills, shops, railroad beds, yards—are strewn with the limbs and fallen bodies of workingmen. Capitalist “progress” is built upon the skulls and crossbones of its Working Class victims{.}—Obviously, in the interest of the Working Class is the tearing of the veil of hypocrisy with which the Capitalist Class seeks to conceal these deeds of mayhem and murder, and the giving to them the greatest publicity possible. What does the Labor Leader do? He aids in the

⁵ “Work” in the newspaper.

act of concealment, and thereby lends direct support to the capitalist's reckless disregard for the safety of the workingman's limb and life.

Of this particular service to Capitalism, the following few instances, taken from an inexhaustible quarry, may give an idea:

In Silver Bow County, Mont., Sam Johnson, the Secretary of the Mill Smelters' Union, is Coroner, and Peter Breen, of the Miners' Union, is County Attorney. "Accidents", by which miners and smelters are injured for life or killed, due entirely to capitalist reckless methods, are matters of daily occurrence in the County. Johnson has been in office now 17 months. Aided by Breen, not one,—aye, not one—case has been prosecuted: they are all hushed up. (Hisses.)

Here in this State, the cry went up, it was eleven years ago, on the outrages perpetrated by the Adirondack Railroad Company, Vanderbilt System, upon the men who were shanghaied to build the road. Florence F. Donovan, of the Int'l. Typographical Union, at the time a Commissioner of Arbitration, was appointed to investigate. He was shown to have been bribed by the Company with \$500 to whitewash it; and he earned his bribe; and tho' he went down and out of office in disgrace, the Company went off scot-free! (Prolonged hisses.)

In the State of Washington, when the Great Northern Tunnel, called the "Cascade Tunnel", owing to its heavy grade and length, was first opened, three or four workingmen were suffocated to death, owing to the Company's hurry to operate the road. The State Legislature appointed a Committee to investigate. William Blackman, a member of the Seattle Typographical Union, and, at the time, Labor Commissioner, was put on the Committee to "represent Labor." The Committee reported unanimously the Tunnel perfectly safe, and none responsible for the accident. (Hisses.)

And in Pennsylvania? The mine and factory Inspectors in that blood-stained region, a region shaken up periodically by shocking "accidents" to miners, are Labor Leaders almost to a man. It has grown late, I shall not cumulate instances on this head. You know that the maimed and murdered miners go unavenged, the crimes being screened by those Labor Leaders.

GIVING A COLOR OF LABOR TO CAPITALIST BRUTALITY.

And yet, not all this will stead the Capitalist Class. And they know it.

As a last and most effective string to their bow, when all other means fail, the Capitalist Class thrums on the public powers that it is entrusted with. If, despite all their efforts at suppression and misleading, cajoling and cheating, the indignation of the Working Class breaks loose, the Policeman's club, the rifle of the militia, and, if necessary, of the military power of the Nation itself are brought into requisition. What deception, cajolements, and chicanery may have failed to accomplish, brute force is ordered to bring about, and the workingmen are clubbed, or butchered into subjection.—Obviously in the interest of the Working Class is, at least, emphatic protest against such deeds. What does the Labor Leader do? From his safe perch in office he condones by his silence the brutality of Capitalism, occasionally even applauds it.

A few instances in which this particular service is rendered to the Capitalist Class are these:

John Burns, Labor Leader in the British Parliament, when the miners were shot down by the troops in 1893, and the Liberal Home Secretary Asquith “took upon himself the responsibility for the act,”—John Burns upheld the hand of Mr. Asquith. (Hisses.)

Dave C. Coates, President of the State Federation of Labor of Colorado, as Lieutenant Governor of that State remains silent at the periodical clubbings and shootings of workingmen in his State, and by his conduct accentuates the meaning of his taking the stump for Charles S. Thomas for Governor, who, in 1898, was rewarded by the Colorado capitalists with the nomination for that office in return for his denunciation of the miners of the Bull Hill district as “thugs and incendiaries.” (Hisses.)

In New York, the Sam Prince and William Maher, already mentioned, and before them Williams of the Carpenters' Union sat quietly in their seats in the Legislature while Governors Flower, Morton and the present incumbent Odell, successively hurled the militia of the State against the railway workers in Buffalo, Brooklyn and Albany, on strike to enforce the ten-hour law, and in support of the capitalists who were violating the law. Vested as they were with the power to move the impeachment of these law-breaking Magistrates, the silence of that batch of Labor Leaders was an emphatic expression of approval. Nor should it escape us in this connection that, fresh upon Gov. Flower's conduct, and the applause bestowed upon him

by his supporter and fellow-Democrat, Jacob Cantor, this Cantor becoming a candidate for the Senate, he was pronounced a “friend of Labor,” and he who said the contrary {was} “one who said what is not true,” by another Labor Leader, Samuel Gompers. (Loud hisses.)

In St. Paul, Minn., one B. F. Morgan, a member of Lodge 31 of the Switchmen’s Union, enjoys a place on the police force of the city, and despite—or is it, perhaps, because of—this double capacity, appears as a delegate at the recent Milwaukee, Wis., national convention of his trade. What virtues qualified that Labor Leader for selection as policeman by the capitalist government of St. Paul, you may judge. You may also judge what influences secured his election to the convention, and what his mission there was. (Loud applause.)

In Detroit, Mich., one C. P. Collins had earned his spurs with the Capitalist Class for shooting down the city employees at Connors Creek. Wishing, after that to run for Sheriff, and his capitalist backers fearing that his Connors Creek record would militate against him with the workingmen voters, his backers hired Henry Eickoff of the Detroit Polishers Union to impart to Collins a “Labor flavor.” Collins was elected, and his capitalist backers rewarded Eickoff with the office of Factory Inspector. (Hisses.)

BREAKING OFF THE HEAD OF LABOR’S LANCE.

Obviously, independent political action is the head of Labor’s lance. Useful as any other weapon may be, that weapon is the determining factor. Entrenched in the public powers, the Capitalist Class commands the field. None but the political weapon can dislodge the usurper and enthrone the Working Class, which is to say, emancipate the workers and rear the Socialist Republic,—and none is better aware of the fact than the Capitalist Class itself, nor, consequently, more anxious to have the Labor forces turned from the field of independent Labor political activity. Obviously in the interest of the Working Class is it to fan the independent political fires. What does the Labor Leader do? From England, westward over the United States and Canada to Australia, we find the Labor Leaders solidly arrayed against the very idea. A veritable break-water, they throw themselves with might and main in the way of the flood, and seek to turn the political trend of the Labor Movement into the channels of capitalist politics, where the head of Labor’s

lance, its independent, class-conscious political effort, can be safely broken off.

LABOR LEADER AND PLEBS LEADER.

Such are the facts thrown up by the career of the Labor Leader everywhere, every one of whom, in public office, is there by the grace of capitalist parties. Even in the instances that would seem exceptional, the exception is in seeming only. As far, then, as this goes, the parallel between the Labor Leader and the Plebs Leader is accurate:

Just as the Plebs Leader, the Labor Leader is “practical,” he makes a boast of that; he nurses no “visions,” he “chases no rainbows;”

Just as the Plebs Leader, the Labor Leader sees no way out of the existing Social System. He will admit the evils of Capitalism; it is profitable that he should; but no more than the Plebs Leader of old, does the Labor Leader aim at the extinction of the flames that devour the wage-slave class;

Just as with the Plebs Leader, the Labor Leader accepts the social economy of the Ruling Class: “Poverty always was; poverty always will be”;

Just as the Plebs Leader looked upon the plebeian proletariat and middle class as a hopeless, helpless element, fit only to be used, and brought his religion to sanction the exploitation of these classes, the Labor Leader places no faith whatever in the capacity of the Working Class to emancipate itself;

Finally, and by reason of all this, just as the Plebs Leader sought to secure HIMSELF against plebs distress, and, in doing so, propped up both the economic power and the political privileges of patricianism at the expense of the plebs masses, the Labor Leader of to-day limits his aspirations to the feathering of his own nest, and, in pursuit of this purpose turns himself, at the expense of the Working Class, into a prop of Capitalism.

There remains just one feature to consider, and that the most important of all, in the physiognomy of the Plebs Leader,—the circumstance that placed in the Plebs Leader’s hands the means to carry out his designs. That circumstance, it will be remembered, was his sharing the designation of “Plebeian.” That designation raised the delusion of “Community of Interests” between him and the plebeian middle class and proletariat; it secured for him the confidence of these; it placed in his hands the club that we saw him swing over the head of the patriciate, and with the aid of which he wrenched from

the patriciate the privileges he needed to safeguard himself against the hell of plebsism. This feature was the determining factor in the physiognomy of the Plebs Leader. It was the feature that constituted him into the strategic force that buttressed patricianism, and, consequently, could and did operate with deadly effect upon the victimized masses. How, on this point, stands the case with the Labor Leader? Exactly the same.

The common designation of “Labor” that clings to the Labor Leader, and which he is zealous to cultivate, does for the Labor Leader what the common designation of “Plebeian” did for the Plebs Leader: It covers him, along with the toiling and fleeced wage-slaves in the shops, mills and yards, placing him before these in the light of a “fellow-workingman.” In this instance, as in that of the Plebs Leader, the common designation raises the delusion of “Common Interests”; in this instance, as in that of the Plebs Leader, the people—capitalists as well as proletarians—generally fall victims to the delusion, a delusion that, just as in the instance of the Plebs Leader, the Labor Leader alone remains free from. Accordingly, in this instance, as in that of the Plebs Leader, the common delusion arms the Labor Leader with the club wherewith to wrench from the Capitalist Class safety for HIMSELF. (Applause.)

True enough, the character of that safety differs markedly from that which the Plebs Leader needed, aimed at and got. Theoretical political equality in Capitalist Society, especially in a capitalist republic, eliminates the political issues that arose in patrician Rome. To-day, the only question among the elements, that accept the existing Social System, is economic. And that question is considered solved by the folks of the “practical” brigade when a “living” is secured, that is to say, when IMMUNITY IS GAINED FROM WORK AS A WAGE-SLAVE. Obviously, the landing on the “stairs of safety” with the Labor Leader is far below what it necessarily had to be with the Plebs Leader; with the Labor Leader the landing is brought down to the level of the “Bribe.” (Loud applause.) The lowering of the character of the “safety” with which the Labor Leader is satisfied, quite in keeping with the lowering morality of capitalist atmosphere, does not affect the essence of the Labor Leader’s exploit, nor the nature of its effect. That he can secure such safety; that he is enveloped in a popular delusion which enables him to secure such safety, and that imparts direction to would-be imitators; finally, that, bundle

of ignorance, perverseness and corruption as he is, he succeeds in his double game of double dealing,—that is the important fact, and that fact marks the Labor Leader of to-day, just as the Plebs Leader of old, a masked position, a strategic post and force, that buttresses Capitalism, and the very quality of which can not but operate demoralizingly, disastrously upon the Working Class. (Prolonged applause.)

And this strategic power for evil on the part of the Labor Leader has so far been effective: With increasing rafts of them in public office by the grace of capitalist parties, and still larger rafts of them qualifying for the distinction, we see to-day that, despite an increasing percentage of workingmen, even the Census (laughter) admits a decreasing percentage in wages, and the general situation of the Working Class in the land to-day is well-pictured by the now common and grim joke: “When a workingman has reached 45 years, take him out and shoot him; he is too used up to be of any further account, and is too poor to take care of himself.” And yet, despite these facts, there are those who say: “The Labor Leader amounts to nothing, ignore him,”—which goes to prove that the ostriches are not all of the feathered tribe; and others there are who declare: “The Labor Leader and his organizations need not concern the Socialist Movement, Capitalism itself is destroying both,”—which goes to show how wide of the mark abstract scientific principles, when recited by rote, will fall!

THE DUTY OF THE HOUR.

The Socialist knows that popular well-being implies the emancipation of the race from Class Rule; and he knows that such was not possible at the time the Licinian law was being struggled for,—400 B. C. The abolition of Class Rule had to await the modern machinery of production. Not until mechanical perfection in production can render the production of wealth ample and easy enough to afford to all the leisure that civilization craves, does it become at all possible to abolish involuntary poverty. The Socialist knows all that, and, knowing it, does not suppose that in 400 B. C. aught could have been done to remove the causes at the root of popular suffering. But this other, he knows also, that even if the effects could not then be wholly wiped out, neither was their aggravation inevitable, and that their aggravation was the result of fortuitous circumstances. Those fortuitous

circumstances were the Plebs Leader, together with the superstitions in his favor that he was able to exploit. In the Plebs Leader there was a strategic post of incalculable strength for usurpation, and of consequent weakness for the revolutionary class, the Roman proletariat. The fact having escaped the revolutionary elements of Rome, they, and the whole commonwealth with them, suffered the full consequences. The net result of these combined causes—deepening poverty among increasing numbers; increased power of usurpation in an oligarchy; and, as the hoop to hold these staves together, the delusion born of the term “Plebeian,” that lashed the oppressed in blind attachment to the chariot wheels of the oppressor,—the net result, I say, of these combined causes was one that neither side looked for, but was forced upon both: It was the transmuting of the Roman people into a professional army of free-booters; the revolutionary pulse was turned into the channels of rapine, a development, that, having satiated itself with plunder abroad, finally turned, as I indicated at the start, into a weapon, not for national comfort, but of national suicide.

That the revolutionary elements of Rome should have slipped and fallen is pardonable. Not so with the revolutionary elements of to-day,—the wage slave or Working Class, together with the materials whom its great Cause attracts. In the first place, to slip is easy where to run is yet impossible: the primitiveness of production made it, I explained, impossible for the revolutionary element of Rome to accomplish its emancipation; in the second place, the steps of the Rome of 500 B. C. to 400 B. C. were not lighted by the experience of older civilizations. Not so to-day. (Applause.)

To-day the condition precedent for proletarian emancipation has been reached: the mechanism of production has reached the point where “the wheels move of themselves”: no longer are⁶ civilized conditions for some predicated upon the unavoidable privations of any, let alone of most: civilized conditions are to-day possible for all: and the class-interests of the revolutionary class—the Working Class—dictate the program, the collective ownership of the land on and the tools with which to work, in short, the Co-operative Commonwealth, or Socialist Republic. (Loud applause.) Furthermore, to-day we need not grope in historic darkness. The past throws its light, and no flickering light it is, across our path, to guide our steps. By

⁶ “Is” in the newspaper.

that light we may read the strategic significance of the Labor Leader; by that light we may perceive him to embody, as the Plebs Leader did of old, those fortuitous circumstances that, unless made decided front against, certainly will nullify all the possibilities for good of the age, turn awry enterprises of great pith and moment, and make them lose the name of action.. (Prolonged applause.) The blindness of the Roman revolutionary elements was pardonable; blindness on our part were unpardonable to-day. (Applause.) The army that operates upon hostile territory may not “ignore” a strategic post from which it may be mowed down; nor should a parrot-like recitation of Socialist philosophy be allowed to lull the Socialist Movement into imaginary safety.

Fain, no doubt, would the Capitalist Class of to-day smash the Labor Leader and, along with him, the “Organized Labor” that he operates,—but no more so than, and for the same reason that the Roman patriciate would gladly have smashed the Plebs Leader, together with the organizations on and with which he operated. Why should we expect the modern Usurping Class to have less wit than the patriciate of Rome in utilizing a popular delusion, and seeking to curb Labor with the aid of the Labor Leader? We have seen the patriciate do the trick, tho’ at the cost of no mere trifles, yielded by it to the Plebs Leader; why should the modern Capitalist be supposed to be less “clever,” especially seeing that mere bones to gnaw at suffice to cause the Labor Leader hound to do his bidding? (Prolonged applause.)

But we are past the point of “expecting,” “supposing” and “speculating” upon the subject. Hanna’s imitation, premature tho’ it is, of Camillus’ Temple to the Goddess of Concord removes all conjecture. Along with twenty-four active limbs of Capitalism, we find in the niches of Hanna’s Temple to the Goddess of “Industrial Peace” a choice collection of twelve Labor Leaders,—Samuel Gompers; John Mitchell, President of the United Mine Workers; Frank P. Sargent, Grand Master Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen; Theodore J. Shaffer, President Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers; James Duncan, General Secretary Granite Cutters; Daniel J. Keefe, President Longshoremen’s Association; James O’Connell, President International Association of Machinists; Martin Fox, President Iron Molders; James Lynch, President International Typographical Union;

Edward E. Clark, Grand Chief Order of Railway Conductors; Harry White, General Secretary United Garment Workers; and W. Macarthur, Editor “Coast Seaman’s Journal,” each of whom, without exception, prates of “Harmony between Employer and Employee,” in other words, each of whom upholds the Capitalist system of society. This should be warning enough.

I mean not to, I shall not here take a hand in the discussion that is going on in our Party press on the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance. Nevertheless, at this point I must quote a passage from Letter XX. in that discussion. Comrade Francis A. Walsh, of Lynn, says there (reading):

“If by some great strike taking place and the workers turned in the direction of the ballot box, if the S. T. & L. A. was not there to guide them right, THEY WOULD NATURALLY ELECT THE LABOR FAKIRS TO OFFICE WHO HAPPENED TO BE MISLEADING THEM, AND BY SO DOING THEY WOULD DEFEAT THE PURPOSE OF THEIR OWN SPONTANEOUS, HONEST, WELL-INTENDED MOVEMENT.”

I admit the dialectic point that it does not follow, BECAUSE a certain thing is bad, THEREFORE a certain other is the proper means to remove it. Such a conclusion would need demonstration. Accordingly, I here leave aside that part of this passage which argues that the S. T. & L. A. is needed to avoid the particular danger that he points out. What I here want to underscore is the point made that the Labor Leader—“Labor Fakir” is the term he uses—would under ordinary circumstances, naturally be chosen by the rank and file to head their political outbreaks and that the Working Class would thereby unintentionally defeat their own honest and serious purposes. The Labor Leader would sell out. (Applause.) The Lynn Comrade there hit a nail, and no unimportant one, squarely on the head, so squarely that the blow rings. Moreover, there is nothing to prevent the Labor Leader from committing to memory a few Socialist phrases—the more scientifically sonorous, all the better for his purpose,—and thus adding, to the delusion of “Labor,” that of “Socialism” in his favor. Indeed, the trick is already being tried. And thus, as I stated in my introductory remarks, abstract scientific dissertations, unaccompanied with accurate knowledge on the military topography, so to speak, of the field of the Social Question, may redound to the undoing of the Socialist Movement.

In the fire of the revolutionary discontent during the formative period

from 500 B. C. to 400 B. C., the Roman commonwealth was forged awry into a weapon of eventual national suicide. You have seen why and how. Let there be no fatalism in our councils. The Socialist Republic is no predestined inevitable development. The Socialist Republic depends, not upon material conditions only; it depends upon these,—plus clearness of vision to assist the evolutionary process. Nor was the agency of the intellect needful at any previous stage of social evolution in the Class Struggle to the extent that it is needful at this, the culminating one of all.

Is the revolutionary class of this Age, living under ripened conditions to avail itself of its opportunity and fulfill its historic mission? Or is the revolutionary spark of our Age to be smothered and banked up till, as in the Rome of old, it leap from the furnace, a weapon of national suicide? In sight of the invasion of the Philippine Islands and the horrors that are coming to light, is there any to deny the question is a burning one?

The answer depends, to-day, not upon a knowledge of scientific Socialist economics and sociology alone. It depends upon that and, hand in hand with that, upon an accurate knowledge of the strategic features of the field. Nor is there a strategic post, that the Socialist or Labor Movement should keep its weather eye more firmly on, and take more energetic measures against, than the Labor Leader.

As the Plebs Leader of old was a strategic post of peculiar strength for the patriciate and of mischief for the proletariat, so and for like reasons is the Labor Leader of to-day nothing but a masked battery from behind which the Capitalist Class can encompass what it could not without,—the work of enslaving and slowly degrading the Working Class, and, along with that, the work of debasing and ruining the country. (Great applause.)

TWO PAGES FROM ROMAN HISTORY.

Page II.

THE WARNING OF THE GRACCHI.

BY DANIEL DE LEON.

ADDRESS DELIVERED IN MANHATTAN LYCEUM, NEW YORK,
WEDNESDAY EVENING, APRIL 16, 1902, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
SECTION GREATER NEW YORK, SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY.

(Stenographically reported by BENJAMIN F. KEINARD.)

[*Daily People*, Vol. 2, No. 329. Sunday, May 25, 1902]

COMRADES OF SECTION NEW YORK:

The purpose of this second page from Roman history, "The Warning of the Gracchi," is in a measure supplementary to the first. The first page, "Plebs Leaders and Labor Leaders," was strategic, this one is tactical. The first pointed out a peculiar danger that threatens the Socialist or Labor Movement from without; this one is to point out an inherent weakness of our forces under fire. As the first was intended for aggression, this one is intended for precaution.

LAW OF REVOLUTIONARY SUCCESSION.

The Socialist is not like the chicken in the fable that, having on its back still a bit of the shell of the egg from which he just crawled, looked out into the world and said: "Why, as things are, they have always been, and will be."

The Socialist, whether with such a shell on his back or not, knows that, as things are, they have not always been; and he knows that neither will they always remain so.

The Socialist looks back over history and finds “things,” so far from being in a state of placid, stable equilibrium, convulsed by violent upheavals; and he shrewdly surmises the end is not yet.

The Socialist looks below the agitated surface of that agitated mass, and he discovers that its aspect is not that of turmoil and chaos, merely. He discovers there a succession of well marked social changes, many of them having existed and gone down long before his days, and been succeeded by others, that also disappeared before he was born, to make place for the Social System under which he now lives.

The Socialist looks still closer, and he recognizes in these social changes, not merely a succession, but a progression of revolutions. He perceives that it is not a case of “wave following wave,” but a case of development.

With eyes increasingly trained, the Socialist detects the active agency in each of these progressive upheavals. Each of these upheavals is found to mark the downfall and extinction of a Ruling Class, achieved by a Ruled Class, which, in turn, develops, and enthrones itself on, a new Ruled Class, which, again in its turn, supplants its oppressors; and so on.

Finally, equipped with the key that these researches fit him out with, the Socialist fathoms the secret of the force latent in, and that brings on this progression of revolutions. It is the law of economic evolution. Every Ruling Class represents a distinct Economic System, born of that that went before. The overthrow of a Ruling Class means the overthrow of its Economic System. When the Economic System of a Ruling Class has worn out, when it has been sapped by the Economic System, carried in the womb of the then subject Class, it is cast aside. The downfall of a prevailing Social or Economic System is conditioned upon the ripeness of the Economic System next in order to substitute it; and the executor of such fiats in social evolution is the subject Class, whose class interests dictate the new system, and that then takes the reins of government.

One illustration will do for all. Going no further back than the Feudal System, it is seen to have declined in the measure that—nursed into vigor by the sheltering boughs of the very tree of Feudalism—there rose and gathered

strength a new Economic System, that was able to sap the Feudal System and render the feudal lords dependent upon it. Feudal rule was grounded on LAND. All the same, among the subject Class—the bourgeoisie, or future Capitalist Class—there rose a new, the capitalist Economic System, grounded on CAPITAL, slowly undermining the foundation of the Ruling Class, until the day came when an Economic System different from its own held it by the throat. And then came the toppling over; and then came the struggle; and the Capitalist Revolution was accomplished.

Along identical lines we notice things are proceeding to-day, under the Capitalist System. Again—nursed into vigor by the sheltering boughs of the Capitalist tree itself—there has been rising and gathering strength a new Economic System, that is sapping the Capitalist System and rendering the modern Ruling Class, the Capitalist Class, dependent upon it. Capitalism is grounded upon the INDIVIDUAL operation and ownership of the machinery of production. And again, among the now subject class—the Proletariat, or Working Class,—there has risen, obedient to their own class interests, a new Economic System,—Socialism, grounded on the COLLECTIVE operation and ownership of the machinery of production. The Socialist Economic System has been gradually undermining the Capitalist: individualism in production is vanishing. When the Economic Principles of a Ruling Class are worn out, that Class itself is nearing its finale. The Capitalist Class is on its last legs. When matters came to that pass in feudal days, the victory of Capitalism followed inevitably, as night does day. Is the victory of Socialism, the emancipation of the Working Class, therefore equally inevitable?

The danger is natural, and, therefore, serious, of drawing automatic—or, as the Germans call it, “Schablone”—conclusions from the principles just mentioned. “The Feudal System,” one often hears asserted from many a sincere Socialist source, “overthrew the Theocratic System; the Capitalist System overthrew the Feudal System; the Socialist System MUST, therefore, inevitably overthrow the Capitalist System.” Some put it this way: “Theocratic rule was overthrown by the Feudal Class; the Feudal Class was overthrown by the Capitalist Class; therefore the Proletariat will overthrow the Capitalist Class.” And they consider that, by saying that, all is said that is to be said on the matter. At best these automatic reasoners may grant the usefulness of stimulating the people at large, the proletariat in particular,

with descriptions of the beauties of the Socialist New Jerusalem; and there you are: The Capitalist Class will stand by, cap in hand, and allow the Proletariat—some call it “the people”—to step in;—and there you have your Socialist Republic. (Applause and laughter.)

Socialist science is no automatic affair. It knows and teaches that nothing is the result of any one, but of many causes, operating together. Accordingly Socialist science submits to the microscope the solemn procession of past class uprisings. The additional observations thus gathered disclose this important fact: The Working Class, the subject class upon whom depends the overthrow of Capitalism and the raising of Socialism, differs in an important respect from all previous subject classes, called upon by History to throw down an old and set up a new Social System.

Going again no further back than the days of Feudalism, the distinctive mark of the bourgeoisie, or the then revolutionary class, was the possession of the material means essential to its own Economic System; on the contrary, the distinctive mark of the proletariat to-day is the being wholly stripped of all such material possession. While wealth, logically enough, was the badge of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, poverty is the badge of the proletariat. The sign, the symptom, the gauge of bourgeois ripeness, as of the ripeness for emancipation of all previous subject classes, was their ownership of the physical materials essential to their own Economic System; the sign, on the contrary, of the proletariat is a total lack of all material economic power,—a novel accompaniment to a revolutionary class, in the whole range of Class Revolutions.

Does this difference establish a difference in kind between the proletariat and the old bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class? It does not. But it does establish a serious difference in the tactical quality of the two forces, a difference that imparted strength to the former revolutionary forces under fire, while it imparts weakness to the proletariat.

There was nothing imaginable the feudal lord, for instance, could do to lure the bourgeois force from the path marked out to it. Holding the economic power, capital, on which the feudal lords had become dependent, the bourgeois was safe under fire. All that was left to Feudalism to maneuver with was titles. It might bestow these hollow honors, throwing them as sops to the leaders of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois was not above “rattles and

toys”; but not all such “rattles and toys” could have led the bourgeois revolution into the ground. On the contrary. If already stripped of economic power, the feudal lords had also stripped themselves of exclusive feudal filigrees, they would only have abdicated all the sooner. A “good king,” a “soft hearted duchess,” might have stayed the striking arm for a while. But only for a while. The striking arm was bound to come down. Wealth imparts strength; strength self-reliance. Where this is coupled with class interests, whose development is hampered by social shells, the shell is bound to be broken through. The process is almost automatic.

Differently with the proletariat. It is a force, every atom of which has a stomach to fill, with wife and children with stomachs to fill, and, withal, a precarious ability to attend to such urgent needs. Cato the Elder said in his usual blunt way: “The belly has no ears.” At times this circumstance may be a force; but it is only a fitful force. Poverty breeds lack of self-reliance. Material insecurity suggests temporary devices. Sops and lures become captivating baits. And the one and the other are in the power of the present Ruling Class to maneuver with.

Obviously, the difference I have been pointing out between the bourgeois and the present, the proletarian, revolutionary forces shows the bourgeois to have been sound, while the proletarian, incomparably more powerful by its numbers, to be afflicted with a certain weakness under fire; a weakness that, unless the requisite measures of counteraction be taken, must inevitably cause the course of history to be materially deflected. It is upon this vital point that the career of the Gracchi utters its warnings across the ages to the Socialist.

THE ROME OF THE GRACCHI.

The Rome of the Gracchi—about 100 B. C.—was the Rome of 400 B. C., the time when the address “Plebs Leaders and Labor Leaders” closed, only with the then existing evils intensified by 300 years. All the causes that, 300 years previous, brought on those evils, were at work now, only with the added swing of 300 years’ additional momentum. To those causes there should be added just one so as to help explain and complete the picture.

Actuated by the giddy notions of aristocracy, that had seized the Ruling Class, it took the fancy of being the lords of large cattle and sheep ranges,

rather than of farms. It carried on its designs in this way: Corn was imported free from Sicily and the Asiatic possessions. That rendered valueless, at least not marketable, the corn raised in Italy. Rome having by that time become mistress of all Italy, this policy spread ruin over the whole peninsula. The farmers were bankrupted: their farms were expropriated: and these were added to the lands of the ruling Romans, who thus changed the face of the Italian soil into immense cattle ranges and sheep walks, run entirely by slaves.

The social-economic situation of the time is summed up graphically in the words of Tiberius Gracchus, which I quoted in the course of the first address of this series, to indicate the utter hollowness of the Plebs Leader victories, as far as the middle class and the proletariat were concerned. I shall quote it here again for the sake of completeness: (reading)

“The wild beasts of Italy have their caves to retire to, but the brave men who spill their blood in her cause have nothing left but air and light. Without houses, without any settled habitations, they wander from place to place with their wives and children; and their generals do but mock them, when, at the head of their armies, they exhort their men to fight for their sepulchres and domestic gods; for, among such numbers, perhaps there is not a Roman who has an altar that belonged to his ancestors, or a sepulchre in which their ashes rest. The private soldiers fight and die, to advance the wealth and luxury of the great; and they are called masters of the world, while they have not a foot of ground in their possession.”

—a language that reminds one of the language of the Nazarene, about 150 years later.

When to this is added that a horde of 14,000,000 slaves is said to have been then in Italy; that not 2,000 families were possessed of solid wealth; and that the vertigo had reached the point that a Roman Knight, finding himself bankrupt, tried his luck by freeing his slaves, having them elect him their king, and starting a servile uprising, which, of course, was speedily suffocated, a picture may be formed of the social condition of the Rome of the Gracchi.

As to the political situation, it had remained unchanged, barring one circumstance that is of importance, having quite a bearing on to-night's subject.

Rome, like most of the empires of antiquity, was a city empire. Like Athens, like Sparta, like Carthage, Rome was a city-government, a city-commonwealth; and one may say she was ruled on democratic principles, in the sense that all those who had the right to a say in the government, had a say DIRECTLY, by appearing at the forum, at the marketplace, at a certain place, and there giving their vote. The territorial expansion of Rome brought on a change.

So long as Rome was absorbing only tribes contiguous to the city, the Roman citizen who settled upon the newly acquired territory, could, with comparative ease appear in Rome on election, or voting day, and have his voice heard. In the measure, however, that the conquered territories lay further and further away, this direct participation in the government became more difficult. When, finally, all Italy was a Roman possession, even the Roman citizen colonists were “de facto,” tho’ not “de jure,” disfranchised: presence at the forum in Rome was out of the question.

Somehow, the mind of the ancients ran up against a dead wall in face of the problem thus presented. Modern civilization has solved the problem through “Representative Government.” In Washington, for instance, the laws are enacted that govern this vast country, infinitely larger than the Italy that Rome owned. The laws proceed from Washington; but it is not the people of Washington that enact the laws. The laws are enacted by representatives of the whole country, chosen by the whole people; and in that way the whole people actually legislate. If the laws as passed do not suit them, theirs is the fault. A country can now consist of so many active citizens that it would be impossible for them all to meet and legislate; and yet, however far apart they may reside, they can exercise the suffrage and control the national legislation: representative government makes that possible.

Antiquity had no conception of this. As the Roman citizen abroad in Italy had none but a potential vote—potential inasmuch as it became actual only by his presence in Rome—the Italians, who had not been turned into slaves, were mere political pariahs. They were ruled from Rome. This brought on a social alignment of dire results: Economically, the Italian population, Rome included, remained divided between the landlord-plutocrat and the proletarian classes, with the middle class cutting ever less of a figure; but both these classes fell again into two hostile camps, with the line of cleavage

drawn by the Roman suffrage. On the one side stood the denizens of Rome, rich and poor together; on the other stood the Italians outside of Rome, poor and rich together. Now, then, by the slow alluvial accretions of over 300 years of habit, the ragged Roman proletarian came to consider himself a limb of the ruling power, held together with the Roman landlord-plutocrat by a common bond of political superiority over the vast numbers of free peoples in Italy, outside of Rome.

We have seen, in the course of the address on “Plebs Leaders and Labor Leaders,” the baneful results of the superstition that enabled the bourgeois plebeian, under the cloak of the common designation of “Plebeian,” to pull the wool over the eyes of his “fellow plebeians,” the proletariat and middle class, just as in our own days the Labor Leader does to his “fellow laboring men,” under the cloak of the common designation of “Labor.” So now. Whenever the question came of granting the franchise to the Italians, the down-trodden proletarian of Rome joined his oppressors in violent opposition to sharing with the Italians “the purple of government.”

I hope I have made the point clear enough to warrant the conclusion that the situation that confronted the Gracchi at about 100 B. C. had passed the stage of reform. No tinkering could any longer stand. No enactment of “laws,” and waiting for their slow operation could then touch the evils that afflicted Rome, and, along with Rome, her Italian domain. The day for constitutional methods was gone by. Whenever a nation has reached that point, there are no longer “institutions” in existence; the institutions have become shadows. There is extant nothing but USURPATION. In such emergencies nothing short of revolution is in order.

Such were the conditions that confronted the Gracchi, and which they addressed themselves to correct. Did they realize the nature of the task before them? Did they understand the qualities, the tactical strength and the tactical weakness, of the material at hand to accomplish their task with? In putting these two questions, I am dividing into two a question that can hardly be divided. They are like the obverse and reverse of a medal. They are the two sides of one and the same thing:—the task to accomplish, and the element necessary to accomplish it with. Did the Gracchi understand that? I shall show you they did not; and from the series of blunders that they committed, and the dire result of their blunders, we to-day, in the Rome of to-day, should take warning.

THE GRACCHIAN TACTICS.

The Gracchi were two brothers of distinguished extraction and connections, Tiberius, the elder; Gaius, the younger. They did not figure together; they figured successively. Tiberius began in 133 B. C.; his work was cut short by assassination, committed by the Senators. Gaius took up the work of Tiberius a few years later, and carried it on successfully for a while, in the teeth of the Senate, until, left in the lurch by the proletariat, he fled from Rome, and committed suicide in the contiguous Grove of the Furies. And that ended it, in 121 B. C. This constitutes the Gracchian episode, strictly speaking. Its start, however, should be placed several years earlier, in certain incipient reformatory Movements, the forerunners of the Gracchian episode, proper. The whole period would, accordingly, cover something like a generation, reaching its climax in the Gracchi.

And, now, as to the series of steps taken to accomplish the gigantic task in hand. I shall not here go into a detailed account of the numerous legislative enactments of this period. It is not necessary, any more than in my address, two weeks ago, a detailed account of the Roman constitution was needed. That would only surcharge the picture. The salient and successive acts will answer all practical purpose.

FIRST ACT.

The first act of this period consisted in a reform of the suffrage.

You will remember that the Roman suffrage was exercised by Centuries; that the Centuries were military divisions of the people, ranked according to property; that the highest Centuries, including the Knights, had the fewest numbers and the largest vote; that the Knights and the 1st Century together polled 97 votes, an absolute majority of the 193 polled by all; and that the order of voting was according to the rank of the Centuries, so that if, as happened usually, the first two agreed, the others were not called upon to express their opinion, seeing the voting was by word of mouth.

All this was certainly vexatious: the majority of the citizens was placed at a decided disadvantage: wealth preponderated, poverty was aggravated. The Gracchian Movement attacked this wrongful system first. But how? Did it restore the preponderance of power to where it belonged? No. It tinkered around the form, and merely reduced the evil. It lowered the vote of the 1st

Century from 80 to 70, so that, instead of the first two, it now required the solid vote of the first three Centuries to carry the day. Instead of 2 Centuries having the power to out-vote 5, 3 Centuries—still a minority—were left with power to out-vote 4; and the shuffling was carried a step further by the provision that the Centuries were to vote promiscuously and not by rank, as formerly,—as though trump cards became any the less trumps by the order in which they were played. There was a third provision that properly comes under this head. It preceded the others. It was a provision for a secret ballot,—thereby attuning a vast revolutionary purpose to clandestine methods.

SECOND ACT.

The Licinian law, described in full in the address on “Plebs Leaders and Labor Leaders,” had remained a dead letter. The Licinian law, among other things, limited the number of additional acres that could be acquired by an individual from the public domain. Despite its provisions, the landlord-plutocracy had proceeded, if anything, more high-handedly than ever to appropriate what it never had a right to, being State property, but, moreover, to do so now in violation of express enactments. The Sempronian law—so called from the middle name, Sempronius, of the Gracchi—dug up the old Licinian law, and, at a time when even its provisions had lost whatever curative power there may have been in them 300 years before, proposed, not the old Licinian law in all its fullness, but that law in a diluted form. Besides the number of acres allowed by the Licinian law to be appropriated from the public lands, one half the number was now allowed in addition to each holder for each son; the remainder was to be redistributed, and indemnity was provided for possible property expropriated from the expropriator.—The Sempronian law was a compromise with Usurpation.

THIRD ACT.

But although Tiberius Gracchus sought to circumvent the Revolution, the Counter-Revolution promptly locked horns with him. His colleague in office had the power to block him, and he did; at least he tried to. His support was constitutionally necessary for the enactment of the law. “Seen” by his patriciate colleagues, Tiberius’ colleague refused his sanction; and tho’ at times he wavered under the fervid pleas of Tiberius, he finally resisted all

entreaties and even threats. For a moment Tiberius seems to have caught a glimpse of the revolutionary requirements of the task he had set his cap to. He threw legality to the dogs. "Unconstitutionally" he ordered the proletariat to depose his colleague; and, walking roughshod over the tatters of the torn Constitution, pushed the law through.

But the glimpse of the requirements of his task, caught by Tiberius for a moment, vanished as soon as caught. Instead of fanning to a flame the spark that his conduct had kindled in the breast of the revolutionary mass behind him, he grew apologetic; sought refuge and justification in legal parallels; and thus cooled off and extinguished the spark.

The Senators were not slow in taking advantage of the reaction in their favor. Tiberius speedily fell by their own hands, clubbed to death in plain view of the populace, that stood by, or ran off awe-stricken.

FOURTH ACT.

Four years later Gaius took up the work of his brother where Tiberius had been forced to drop it.

Gaius saw the Senators' hands red with his brother's blood, and looked upon that body as the barrier against which Tiberius had been dashed. Gaius determined to protect himself against danger from that quarter, first of all. How? By sweeping it away? No. By raising a rival to it. Did he, then, at least raise the rival power to the dreaded Senate out of the revolutionary forces at his back? Yet, again, no.

The Equestrian Order, the Knights, consisted of the same economic interests that had been incensed at the measures of Tiberius; and they, though not the direct perpetrators of his assassination, had seconded, and rejoiced in, and profited by the crime. To all intents and purposes, they were as guilty as the Senate itself. And yet that element it was that Gaius Gracchus turned to. He halved the powers of the Senate and clothed the Equestrian Order therewith. When warned, his answer was: "I am raising an enemy to the Senate: the Senate and the Equestrian Order will kill each other off." We shall see whether they did.

FIFTH ACT.

For a while the Gracchian policy seemed successful. Senate and Equestrian Order did get into each other's hair. In the meantime, anxious to

strengthen his own hands in a positive, and not merely negative, way, Gaius put through successively two laws, which set the coping stone on the series of Gracchian blunders, and, watched by the light of certain modern occurrences, look as if enacted for the express purpose of causing the Gracchian tactics to serve as a bell-buoy to warn the Socialist Movement of this generation of sunken rocks in its course.

The first of these was a law providing for 3 colonies. With funds from the Roman Treasury, these colonies were to be set up, outside of Italy, of course, so as to afford immediate relief to the proletarian mass. The patriciate promptly parried the thrust. It out-bid Gaius for popularity with the proletariat by offering them 12 colonies.

SIXTH ACT.

The second of these two laws was a provision for the free distribution of corn among the poor. The proletarian masses, the revolutionary class, were expected by that measure in particular to become firmly attached to their leader—like domestic animals or children to him who feeds them. (Applause.)

Proceeding along these lines, and having arrived at this point, Gaius Gracchus thought himself in condition to take up a question that his penetration told him was a “sine qua non” to all lasting improvement in the condition of Italy, and, withal, the most ticklish, in view of the existing popular prejudices and habits of thought, to wit, the question of the Italian franchise. But the moment he mentioned that subject, it was as if by a magic touch he had solidified the denizens of Rome against himself. Knights and Senators suspended their wranglings, on the one hand, and, on the other, all recollection of the “improved form of the suffrage” in Rome; all recollection of the Sempronian law; all expectations of relief from the prospective three colonies; aye, all gratitude for free corn was forgotten, and thrown to the winds. So completely did the proletariat fall away from its idol that the Senate and Knights found no difficulty in fomenting a sedition against him. Forsaken by all but a few close friends and one devoted slave, Gaius first took refuge in the Temple of Diana, where, falling on his knees, he implored the gods to punish the Romans with eternal slavery for their base ingratitude. Beseechd to save himself for better days, Gaius left the Temple and fled

from the city across the river. But his pursuers were hot upon him, and suicide freed him from further agony in the Grove of the Furies.

CANONS OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION.

Out of the ship-wreck of the Gracchian Movement and tactics 10 planks come floating down to our own days. They may be termed the warnings uttered by the shades of the Gracchi. They may be erected into so many Canons of the Proletarian Revolution. These canons dove-tail into one another: At times it is hard to keep them apart, so close as their inter-relation, seeing they are essentially differentiations of a central idea, thrown up by the singular nature, already indicated, of the proletariat as a revolutionary force:

I.

THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION ABHORS FORMS.—It was a blunder of the Gracchian Movement to devote time and energy to the changing of the forms of the suffrage. The characteristic weakness of the proletariat renders it prone to lures. It, the least favored of all historic revolutionary classes, is called upon to carry out a revolution that is pivoted upon the most complicated synthesis, and one withal that is easiest to be obscured by the dust that its very foe, the Capitalist Class, is able to raise most plentifully. The essence of this revolution, the overthrow of Wage Slavery, cannot be too forcefully held up. Nor can the point be too forcefully kept in evidence that, short of the abolition of Wage Slavery, all “improvements,” either accrue to Capitalism, or are the merest moonshine, where they are not side-tracks.

It matters not how the voting is done; it matters not whether we have the Australian ballot or the Maltese ballot; it matters not whether we have the secret ballot or the “viva voce” ballot;—aye, if it comes to it, it should not matter whether we have the ballot at all. (Applause.) All such “improvements”—like the modern “ballot reforms,” and schemes for “referendums,” “initiative,” “election of Federal Senators by popular vote,” and what not, are, in the very nature of things, so many lures to allow the revolutionary heat to radiate into vacancy. They are even worse than that: they are opportunities for the Usurper to prosecute his own usurpatory purposes under the guise, aye, with the aid and plaudits of his victims, who

imagine they are commanding, he obeying their bidding,—as we see happening to-day. (Applause.)

The proletarian's chance to emerge out of the bewildering woods of "Capitalist Issues," is to keep his eyes riveted upon the economic interests of his own Class,—the public ownership of the land on and the tools with which to work,—without which the cross he bears to-day will wax ever heavier, to be passed on still heavier to his descendants. No "forms" will stand.

II.

THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IS RELENTLESSLY LOGICAL.—Often has the charge been made against the Socialist Labor Party that it is "intolerant," that its officers are "unyielding." The Proletarian Revolution can know no "tolerance," because "Tolerance" in social dynamics spells "Inconsistence." Tiberius Gracchus overlooked the principle, and all that therefrom flows, in his revamped Licinian law. If the Sempronian law meant anything; if the attitude of Tiberius, together with that of the proletarian mass that took him for its paladin, meant anything; it meant that the landlord-plutocracy of Rome was a criminal class,—criminal in having plundered the Commonwealth of its estate, doubly criminal in turning its plunder to the purpose of degrading the people and thereby sapping the safety of the state. The only logical conclusion from such premises and posture is a demand for the unconditional surrender of the social felon. (Applause.) The Sempronian law, so far from taking this stand, took the opposite. By its confirmation, implied only tho' the confirmation was, of proprietary rights in stolen goods, by its provision for indemnity to the robbers, the Gracchian Movement became illogical: it thereby became untrue to itself. It truckled to Usurpation: it thereby emasculated itself.

With the Proletarian Revolution, not a point that it scores, not an act that it commits deliberately, not a claim that it sets forth may be at fisticuffs with one another, or with the principles that they are born of. Capitalism is a Usurpation: the Usurpation must be overthrown. Labor produces all wealth: all wealth belongs to Labor. Any act that indicates,—or rather I shall put it this way:—any action, that, looking towards "gentleness" or "tolerance," sacrifices the logic of the situation, unnerves the Revolution. With the Proletarian Revolution, every proposition must be abreast of its aspirations (applause);—where not, it limps, it stumbles, and falls.

III.

PALLIATIVES ARE PALLIATIONS OF WRONG.—Plausible are the phrases concerning the “wisdom of not neglecting small things,” and the suggestions to “accept half a loaf, where a whole loaf cannot yet be had.” The Gracchian Movement yielded to this optical illusion. Even the old Licinian law, much more so its revamped form of a Sempronian law, was cast in that mold. “All that the people were entitled to they could not get”: they were to have a “first installment,” a slice of what was due, in short, a palliative. The Gracchian Movement thereby gave itself a fatal stab.

If the palliative could trammel up the consequence; if it could be the be-all and end-all here, then, what ills might flow might be ignored as negligible⁷ quantities. But here also the relentless logic of the Proletarian Revolution commends the ingredients of his poisoned chalice to the bungler’s own lips.

In the first place, the same hand that reaches out the “palliative” to the WRONGED, reaches out the “palliation” to the WRONG. The two acts are inseparable. The latter is an inevitable consequence of the former. Request a little, when you have a right to the whole, and your request, whatever declamatory rhetoric or abstract scientific verbiage it be accompanied with, works a subscription to the principle that wrongs you. Worse yet: The “palliative” may or may not—and more frequently yes than otherwise—be wholly visionary; the “palliation,” however, is ever tangible; tangible to feeling as to sight; no visionariness there. The palliative, accordingly, ever steels the Wrong that is palliated.

In the second place, the palliative works the evil of inoculating the Revolutionary Force with a fundamental misconception of the nature of the foe it has to deal with. The tiger will defend the tips of his mustache with the same ferocity that he will defend his very heart. It is an instinctive process. The recourse to palliatives proceeds from, and it imperceptibly inculcates the theory that he would not. It proceeds from the theory that the Capitalist Class will allow itself to be “pared off” to death. A fatal illusion. The body of Tiberius Gracchus, mangled to death by the landlord-plutocratic tiger of Rome, sounds the warning against the illusion. The tiger of Capitalism will protect its superfluities with the same ferocity that it will protect its very

⁷ “Neglectable” in the newspaper.

existence. (Applause.) Nothing is gained on the road of palliatives; and all may be lost.

IV.

THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION BRINGS ALONG ITS OWN CODE.—When, at the critical stage of the revolution he was active in, Tiberius Gracchus took a “short cut across lots,” and removed, regardless of “legality,” the colleague that blocked his way, consciously or unconsciously he acted obedient to that canon of the Proletarian Revolution that it must march by its own light (applause), look to itself alone, and that, whatever act it contemplates, it judges by the Code of Law, that, tho’ as yet unformulated into statute, it is carrying in its own womb. When, afterwards, Tiberius looked for justification to the laws of the very class that he was arrayed against, he slid off the revolutionary plane, and dragged his revolution down, along with himself. The revolutionist who seeks the cloak of “legality,” is a revolutionist spent. He is a boy playing at soldier.

It was at the Denver Convention of the American Federation of Labor, in 1894, that a scene took place which throws much light upon the bearing of this particular point on the Movement of our own days. The A. F. of L., at a previous Convention, had ordered a general vote upon a certain “declaration of principles.” Among these principles there was one, the 10th, which a certain class of people, who called themselves Socialists, were chuckling over with naive delight. They claimed it was “Socialistic.” One of their number had bravely smuggled it (laughter) into the said “declarations.” They were by that maneuver to capture the old style Trades Unions, and thereby “tie the hands of the Labor Leaders.” (Laughter.) For a whole year these revolutionists had been chuckling gaily and more loudly. The Unions actually polled a majority for all the “principles,” the celebrated “Plank 10” included. At the Denver Convention the vote was to be canvassed; but the Labor Leaders in control threw out the vote (laughter) on the, to them, good and sufficient reason that “the rank and file did not know what they had been voting for.” (Laughter and applause.) That’s not the point. That’s only the background for the point that I am coming to. But before coming to that, let me here state that the rank and file meekly submitted to such treatment. The point lies in a certain droll scene that took place during the debate to throw out that vote. The scene was this:

The revolutionist who had surreptitiously introduced “Plank 10” in the “declaration of principles,” and thereby schemed to capture the Unions by ambush (laughter), a gentleman of English Social Democratic Federation antecedents, one Thomas J. Morgan, now of Chicago, was storming in that Denver Convention against the Labor Leaders’ design to throw out his “Plank 10,” and incidentally, as he expressed it himself, was “putting in fine licks for Socialism.” Suddenly his flow of oratory was checked. A notorious Labor Leader, to whom the cigar manufacturers of America owe no slight debt of gratitude, Mr. Adolf Strasser of the International Cigarmakers’ Union, had risen across the convention hall and put in: “Will the gentleman allow me a question?”

“Certainly.”

“Do you favor confiscation?”

The answer is still due. (Loud laughter and applause.) Mr. Morgan collapsed like a punctured toy-balloon.

That scene should have been engraved to preserve for all time pictorially the emasculating effect of ignorance of this canon of the Proletarian Revolution upon that venturesome man who presumes to tread, especially as a leader, the path of Social Revolution, notwithstanding he lacks the mental and physical fiber to absorb in his system the canon here under consideration. (Prolonged applause.)

As I said, the Proletarian Revolution marches by its own light; its acts are to be judged by the Code of Legality that itself carries in its folds, not by the standard of existing Law, which is but the reflex of existing Usurpation. Indeed, in that respect, the Proletarian Revolution shares a feature of all previous revolutions, the Capitalist Revolution included. A new Social System brings along a new Code of Morals. The morality of the Code that the Proletarian Revolution is impregnated with reads like a geometric demonstration: Labor alone produces all wealth, Idleness can produce maggots only; the wealth of the land is in the hands of Idleness, the hands of Labor are empty; such hard conditions are due to the private ownership by the Idle or Capitalist Class of the land on and the tools with which to work; work has become collective, the things needed to work with must, therefore, also become collective;—get from under whosoever stands in the way of the inevitable deduction, by what name soever he may please to call it!

(Prolonged applause.) Accordingly, no militant in the modern Proletarian Revolution can be knocked all of a heap by the howl of “Confiscation.”

Plutarch, whom Professor Lieber shrewdly suspects of responsibility for much of the revolutionary promptings of modern days, touching upon these two acts of Tiberius Gracchus, produces without comment—a severe sarcasm in its place—Tiberius’ elaborate legal plea in defense of his removal of his colleague: a Revolution that needs to apologize for itself had better quit (applause); and he comments upon the Sempronian law in these touchingly incisive terms: (reading)

“There never was a milder law made against so much injustice and oppression; for they who deserved to have been punished for their infringement of the rights of the community, and fined for holding the lands contrary to law, were to have a consideration for giving up their groundless claims, and restoring the estates of such of the citizens as were to be relieved.”

Preach to the proletariat, in the most convincing way a man may please, the abstract principles of their own, the Socialist Revolution, and then let that man seek to sugar-coat the dose with suggestions or acts that imply the idea of “buying out the capitalists,” and he has simply wiped out clean, for all practical purposes, all he said before: he has deprived the Revolution of its own premises, its pulse of its own warmth. (Great applause.)

V.

THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IS “IRREVERENT.”—Karl Marx—the distinctive feature of whose philosophy is that it stands with its feet on earth, and is supremely practical,—throws out, right in the midst of an abstract economic chapter, the point that it is essential to the stability of Capitalism that the proletarian look upon the conditions surrounding him as of all time.

Reverence of the blind type is a fruit of latter-day Capitalism. Starting as an iconoclast, the capitalist winds up a Mawworm. And it is essential to his safety that the proletarian masses take him seriously. The root of this blind reverence is the belief in the antiquity of the subject revered; and that implies the future, as well as the past. Capitalism, along with its gods, its gods, along with it, are all pronounced “sacred,” “ever were and ever will be, life

without end.” The capitalist foments such “reverence”; and, while he pushes his parsons forward to do the work, he holds himself out as the High Priest. The Usurper ever needs the cloak of sanctity;—and therefore it is of importance to strip him bare of the cover.

The posture of Tiberius materially played into the hands of this useful capitalist deception. He cultivated reverence for the Magistracy. The plea in defence of his deposition of his colleague was a santification of the class of the Usurper. It riveted superstitious awe on the minds of the proletariat, whose striking arm never could be free until its mind was emancipated. When the reverentful proletarians trampled over one another, reverently to make way for the senators, who, sticks and staves and broken furniture in hand, rushed forward to slay Tiberius, the luckless reformer could not have failed to notice that the arrow that killed him was steadied by a feather plucked from his own reformatory pinions.

Irreverence—not the irreverence of insolence, which is the sign-manual of the weak, but the self-sustained irreverence that is the sign-manual of the consciously strong because consciously sound—is one of the inspiring breaths of the Proletarian Revolution.

Reverence for the Usurper denotes mental, with resulting physical, subjection to Usurpation.

VI.

THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IS SELF-RELIANT.—The tactics of Gaius Gracchus in seeking support or protection in the Equestrian Order, by raising it to Senatorial powers, was a grave tactical misstep. Instead of inspiring the Proletarian Movement with self-reliance, he thereby trained it to lean on others than itself. The Proletarian Revolution must, under no circumstances, play the role of the horse in the fable.

You know the fable? It is a pretty one. A horse was being harassed by a lion. The horse found that his opportunities to graze were impaired by that roaring beast, that lay low in the bushes and threatened to jump upon him, and frequently did jump upon him, and not infrequently scratched him to the point of bleeding; so that the horse, finding the area of his pasture narrowing, and his life threatened either way, entered into a compact with a man. According to agreement, the man mounted the horse, and by their joint

efforts the lion was laid low.—But never after could the horse rid himself from the man on his back. (Laughter.)

By the action with which he clothed the Equestrian Order with the powers it had not formerly wielded, Gaius Gracchus certainly weakened the Senate, but he thereby also, and in the same measure, extended the number of the political participants in the political usurpations, that had backed and brought on the social distress which he was combating. The Equestrian Order was of the identical class that profited by the Senatorial iniquities. By setting up the Equestrian Order with powers formerly wielded by the Senate Gaius Gracchus was safer from the latter quarter,—but only in the sense that the horse in the fable was from the quarter of the lion after his alliance with the man. Gaius, like the horse, had saddled himself with a master. And the hour came when the master threw him.

That it is a waste of time and energy for the proletarian to knock down the Democratic party, however oppressive that party be, if the knocking down is to be done by saddling itself with the Republican party, a partner of the Democratic oppressor; that, however resentful the proletariat may be at a Republican President or Governor, who throws the armed force of the State or Nation into the capitalist scales in the conflicts between employer and employee, it were a mere waste of energy to substitute them with their Democratic doubles;—all that is elemental. The absurdity is illustrated by the fate of the horse in the fable. There can be no real knocking down of either party until they are both simultaneously knocked down; that knock-down blow is in the power of the proletariat only. (Applause.)

All this is elemental. But equally elemental, tho' the point be more hidden, should the principle be that the Proletarian Revolution must not only not seek, but must avoid, as it would a pestilence, all alliance with any other Class in its struggles, or even skirmishes, with the Capitalist Class, the landlord plutocracy of to-day. Here, again, the peculiar tactical weakness of the proletariat, the proneness to yield to lures, manifests itself, and needs watchful guarding against by its Movement.

There is no social or economic class in modern society below the proletariat. It is the last on the list. If there were other classes below it, the Proletarian Revolution would not be what it is, the first of all with a world-wide, humane programme. All other Classes, while seeking their own

emancipation from the Class that happened to be above, were grounded on the subjection of a class below. The Proletarian Revolution alone means the abolition of Class Rule. It follows from such a lay of the land that any Class the proletariat may ally itself with must, tho' oppressed from above, itself be a fleecers' Class, in other words, must be a Class whose class interests rest on the subjugation of the workers. Such a class is the modern Middle Class. It, like the man in the fable I have just recited, can ally itself with the proletariat only with the design to ride it. However plausible its slogans, they are only lures.

So long as a Proletarian Movement seeks for "alliances abroad," it demonstrates that it has not yet got its "sea legs": any such move or measure can only deprive it of whatever chance it had to develop and acquire them. The Proletarian Revolution is self-reliant. It is sufficient unto itself.

VII.

THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION SPURNS SOPS.—Sops are not palliatives. The two differ essentially. I have explained the palliative. The sop is not a "slice," an "installment," ladled out in advance, of what one is entitled to. It is an "extra," a "bon-bon," a narcotic, thrown out to soothe. Accordingly, the sop adds as little to the character and directness of a Movement as does the palliative. The essential feature of the sop is, however, that it is a broken reed on which to lean, a thing no clear-headed revolutionist will ever resort to. It was upon just such a reed Gaius Gracchus sought support when he proposed the establishment of three colonies for the relief of the Roman proletariat.

What could these colonies accomplish? In the first place they were in the nature of a desertion. The colonists were to leave Rome, the soil of Italy, in short, the battle ground, to set up far away in Africa, in Spain, in Sardinia. But, above all, in what way could colonies⁸ relieve the distress in Rome, unless undertaken on a gigantic scale{} that is to say, on a scale of wholesale migration from the city? And that would nullify their very purpose. At any rate to propose only three colonies was the merest sop thrown at his army. The revolutionist must never throw sops at the revolutionary element; the instant he does, he places himself at the mercy of the foe; he can always be

⁸ "Colonists" in the newspaper.

out-sopped. And so was Gaius Gracchus. The proposition for 12 colonies with which the patriciate answered Gaius' proposition for 3, completely neutralized the latter, leaving the "honors" on the side of the patriciate. Nursed at the teat of the sop, the Roman proletariat decamped to where they could get {the} largest quantities of that commodity. And that, more than any other one thing, stripped Gaius of his forces. Once he was deserted and downed, the bigger sop of 12 colonies never materialized. It had answered its narcotic purpose, and was dropped.

On this very point, there is an all-around remarkable illustration, fresh from the oven. I here read to you from a telegram sent from Chicago on April 2,—only two weeks ago—to the Milwaukee "Social Democratic Herald," and signed "Jacob Winnen." Referring to the vote polled in Chicago by a capitalist party proposition for "municipal ownership" the day before, the Social Democratic Winnen says: (reading)

"Two-thirds majority cast for municipal ownership shows that Socialism is in the air." (Laughter.)

The labor field of Chicago has been convulsed a deal more than that of New York. As a result of that, or possibly due to the Lake air (laughter) the capitalist politicians of Chicago are, if such a thing be possible, "quicker" than even the New York politicians. (Laughter.) I admit that is saying a good deal. We have seen, even in New York, "municipal ownership" often of late used as a stalking-horse by individual politicians. Unterrified Socialist agitation has familiarized the public mind with Socialist aspirations, tho' still only in a vague way. The politician, being "broad" besides "quick," has no objection to polling "Socialistic" votes. Being "quick" besides "broad," {he} has no objection to the performance if he can indulge in it by giving the shadow for the substance, all the less if he can thereby run Socialism into the ground. "Municipal ownership" lends itself peculiarly to such purposes. It sounds "Socialistic," it looks "Socialistic";—and yet we know the term can conceal the archest capitalist scheme. His nursery-tale theory concerning his God-given capacity to run industries having suffered shipwreck, the capitalist can find a snug harbor of refuge in "municipal ownership." It is an ideal capitalist sop to catch the sopable. (Applause.) We know all that. It is in view of all that that the Socialist Labor Party "municipal programme" has been drawn up as it is. It renders the S. L. P. man sop-proof from that side. Accordingly, it is

not surprising to find the “municipal ownership” sop or dodge in full blast among the Chicago politicians. It is there in such full blast that in the municipal campaign, which closed there with the election of April 1, “municipal ownership” was a capitalist party political cry: The platform so declared it; and the speeches of the politicians of that party resounded with “municipal ownership” of railways, of gas plants, of electric plants,—well, of everything in sight. And the Chicago politicians had sharp noses; how sharp may be judged from the double circumstance that the Socialist Labor Party vote at the election rose considerably, while the Social Democratic party—with a national platform declaration on “municipal ownership” that plays into the hand of the sop—went down so markedly that its statisticians have had to seek shelter for their diminished heads behind “percentages.” (Laughter.) Such, then, was the situation in Chicago. The intelligent Socialist perceives the sop of “municipal ownership” in that campaign: it cannot escape him. The large vote polled for that capitalist “municipal ownership” proposition, so far from smoothing, can only cause his brow to pucker. That vote discloses vast chunks of Socialist education left unattended to: vast masses left so untutored as to be caught by fly-paper. No cause for joy in the phenomenon. (Applause.) And yet this Social Democrat rejoices: (reading)

“Two-thirds majority cast for municipal ownership shows that socialism is in the air.”

“In the air,”—I should stutter! Very much “in the air,”—everywhere, except on Chicago soil! (Applause and laughter.)

Two-thirds majority cast for a municipal ownership proposition, emanating from a capitalist political party, “shows that Socialism is in the air,” and is pointed to with joy!—Can you imagine such childish fatuity? For this man, the Gracchi lived and labored, bled and died—in vain! (Great applause.)

Let the modern revolutionist try the “municipal ownership” sop, and he will find himself out-municipal-ownshipped. Nothing there is more demagogic than Usurpation. For every 1 “municipal ownership” he may propose, the Capitalist Class will propose 12,—the same as, for every 1 colony proposed by Gaius Gracchus, the Senate out-sopped him with a proposition for 4, drew his support away from him, and threw the threatened revolution flat on its back. And Gaius Gracchus had himself lent a hand. Every sop,

thrown by Gaius at the proletariat, was a banana peel placed by himself under their feet. Of course they slipped and fell.

Not sops, but the unconditional surrender of capitalism, is the battle-cry of the Proletarian Revolution. (Great applause.)

VIII.

THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IS IMPELLED AND HELD TOGETHER BY REASON, NOT RHETORIC.—Speech is powerful. No doubt. But all is not said when that is said. The same nature of speech, that answers in one instance, fails to in another. Whatever the nature may be of the proper speech on other fields, on the field of the Proletarian Revolution it must be marked by Sense, not Sound; by Reason, not Rhetoric. The training of the Gracchi, of Gaius in particular, disqualified them in this. They had been tutored from infancy by Greek rhetoricians. Now, rhetoric, like a ship, may cleave the waters of the Proletarian revolution; but these close after it, and presently remain trackless.

Organization is a prerequisite of the Proletarian Revolution. It is requisite by reason of the very numbers involved; it is requisite, above all, as a tactical protection against the tactical weakness that I have pointed out in the proletariat as a revolutionary force. Other revolutions could succeed with loose organization and imperfect information: In the first place, they were otherwise ballasted; in the second, being grounded on the slavery of some Class, a dumb driven herd of an army could fit in their social architecture. Otherwise with the proletariat: It needs information for ballast as for sails; and its organization must be marked with intelligent co-operation. The proletarian Army of Emancipation cannot consist of a dumb driven herd. The very idea is a contradiction in terms. Now, then, not all the fervid and trained rhetoric, at the command of the Gracchi and lavishly used by them, could take the place of the drill that the Roman proletariat needed on hard, dry information. The Gracchian rhetoric pleased, entertained, swayed,—but did not organize. Could not. At the first serious shock, their forces melted away,—just as we have seen proletarian forces again and again melt away in our own days. (Applause.)

Rhetoric is a weapon of reform; it may plow the ground, it does not sow. The Proletarian Revolution wields the tempered steel of sterner stuff.

IX.

THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION DEALS NOT IN DOUBLE SENSE.—It is at its peril that a revolution conceals its purpose. This is truest with the Proletarian Revolution.

Gaius Gracchus had set his cap against the Senate. He conceived that body to be the embodiment of all evil. That he looked only at the surface of things appears from his conduct in clothing the Equestrian Order—men of the senatorial class—with senatorial powers. Nevertheless, it is the Senate he sought to overthrow. In his mind that was the barrier against social well-being. His revolution aimed at the overthrow of the Senate. But he kept the secret locked in his breast, and only allowed it to peep through by indirection.

It is narrated of Gaius that, meaning to convey the idea that, not the Senate but the people should rule, not the Senate but the people should be considered, he differently from the orators of old, stood with his face towards the forum, and not towards the Senate, in his public addresses. This was a bit of pantomime, unworthy a great Cause that called for plain language in no uncertain tones. By such conduct Gaius Gracchus could only raise dust over his designs. And that could have for its effect only to weaken him. It could not throw the affronted foe off its guard. On the other hand, it could only keep away forces needful to his purpose, whom straightforward language would attract.

It is only the path to servitude that needs the gentle, the path to freedom calls for the ruder hand. Pantomimes, double sense and mummery may answer the purpose of a Movement in which the proletariat acts only the role of dumb driven beasts of burden. Pantomimes, mummery and double sense are utterly repellent to, and repelled by the Proletarian Revolution.

X.

I stated introductorily to these Canons of the Proletarian Revolution that they dove-tailed into⁹ one another, seeing they all proceeded from a central principle. That central principle may be now taken up as the tenth of these canons. It sums them all up. You can not have failed to perceive it peeping through all the others. It is this:—

THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IS A CHARACTER-BUILDER.—

⁹ “In” in the newspaper.

The proletarian organization, that means to be tributary to the large Army of Proletarian Emancipation, can not too strenuously guard against aught that may tend to debauch its membership. It must be intent upon promoting the character and moral fibre of the mass. Characterfulness is a distinctive mark of the Proletarian Revolution. Foremost, accordingly, in the long series of Gracchian blunders, stands the measure of Gaius for the free distribution of corn. By that act he reduced the Roman proletarian to beggars. Beggars can only desert and compromise, they can not carry out a revolution. (Applause.)

Their energies consumed with the tinkering on “forms”; their intellect cracked by illogical postures; their morale ruined by palliatives; the edge of their revolutionary dignity blunted by “precedents”; their mental vigor palsied by the veneration of the unvenerable; their self-reliance broken by leaning on hostile elements; their resolution warped by sops; their minds left vacant with rhetoric; their senses entertained with pantomimes; finally, their character dragged down to the ditch of the beggar;—what wonder that, the moment the Roman proletariat were brought to the scratch, they acquitted themselves like beggars, made their peace with the Usurper, and left their leaders in the lurch? (Great applause.)

The task is unthankful of submitting to rigid criticism the conduct of men of such noble aspirations as the Gracchi. Nevertheless, it must be recorded that, of all the distressing acts of the Gracchi, none compares with the conduct of Gaius when, finding himself forsaken by the masses that himself had debauched and thus virtually driven from him, he implored in the Temple of Diana eternal slavery for them in punishment for their “base ingratitude,”—exactly as in modern times, Utopians, turned reactionist, have been seen to do. (Great applause.)

WARNINGS FROM THE PAST

In the course of the first of these Two Pages from Roman History—“Plebs Leaders and Labor Leaders”—I pointed out the serious danger that lurked behind the automatic-mechanical system of reasoning on the domain of the Social Question. The man who would say: “The capitalist lives on the proceeds of labor; the more the capitalist gets, the less there is for the workingman; the more the workingman gets, the less there is for the capitalist; between the two there is an irrepressible conflict; harmony

between them is impossible; therefore Mark Hanna's Industrial Peace Commission is bound to be a failure;{?}—the man who would say that would speak truly. And yet grave was the blunder shown to be that such conclusion leads to, if it complacently stops there.

We saw wherein the danger lay from a review of the career of the Plebs Leader. Between the patriciate and bourgeois plebeians, on the one hand, and the rest of the plebeian order, on the other, there was a conflict as irrepressible as that between Capitalist Class and Working Class. Concord between the two was out of question. Yet we saw what happened. The impossibility of concord between the exploiters and the exploited of Rome caused neither Camillus' Temple to the Goddess of Concord to crumble, nor the conditions which it actually was a landmark of to break down. What happened was a continuance of social development that moved, we may say, along the resultant of the forces, that lay in the "irrepressible conflict" together with the ignorance on, and the manner in which the conflict was handled. And we saw how dire the issue.

Just so with regard to to-night's subject. A mechanical, "schablone," style of reasoning would blind us to the peculiar, the exceptional tactical weakness that the proletariat labors under as a revolutionary force. And the blindness would be fatal.

The Gracchian episode in Roman history supplemented the episode, whose close was marked by Camillus' Temple to the Goddess of Concord. Rough-hewn in the quarry of 500 B. C. to 400 B. C., the proletariat of Rome was 300 years later shaped into final shape in the smithy of the Gracchian tactics. And what was that shape? An army of legions, whose motto was a mockery of the Socialist maxim that we know to-day. The Socialist maxim is: "Workingmen, you have nothing to lose but your chains, and a world to gain!"—a world of human happiness, from your own noble efforts. The maxim that arose in the army of revolution that the Gracchi shaped was: "Proletarians, you have nothing to lose but your weapons, your sword and pike, and a world to gain!"—from what? from the favor of your General! how? through rapine!—would it, in these days of electric rapidity, take 500 years to shape the proletariat of the land into another world-fagot?

As in biology, the same elements, submitted to different temperature and atmospheric pressure, will produce different substances, so in sociology. The

Socialist Republic will not leap into existence out of the existing social loom, like a yard of calico is turned out by a Northrop loom. Nor will its only possible architect, the Working Class—that is, the wage earner, or wage-slave, the modern proletariat;—figure in the process as a mechanical force moved mechanically. In other words, the world's theater of Social Evolution is not a Punch and Judy Box, nor the actors on that world's stage manikins, operated with wires.

As the first of these Two Pages from Roman History, by drawing attention to a strategic danger that besets the path of the Socialist Movement, pointed to the urgency of providing safeguards; so this second Page, "The Warning of the Gracchi," by drawing attention to a tactical weakness of our own forces under fire, points to the precautions that the conditions demand.

And we, then, to-day, in this country, the country that nearest comes to Rome since Rome went down,—well may we look back to the lessons of those days. Well may we take to heart the career of the Plebs Leaders; well may we take to heart the tactical blunders of the Gracchi; and from the one and the other receive a warning for our conduct in this generation. (Great applause.)

{THE END.}

[Transcribed for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America, November 2001,
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