

The People.

VOL. V, NO. 28

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1895

PRICE 3 CENTS

THIRD EDITORIAL

‘Captain’ Consuelo

By DANIEL DE LEON

It is a favorite yarn in the collection of capitalist nursery tales that the capitalist is endowed with certain mental qualities which enable him to direct production; that these qualities confer upon him the mission of “captain of industry,” and that by virtue of such captaincy he is entitled to the lion’s share of the products of the working class which he now absorbs.

That this is all pure fiction stands demonstrated by mountains of evidence and experience.

Every observer, however casual, knows that modern capitalism has developed into stock corporations; that the stocks are held by whomsoever buys them; that one holder may and generally does hold stock in mining, manufacturing, railroad, i.e., in a great variety of concerns; that they never set foot in the factories or mills; that they live abroad or away from the place where their wealth is produced; that they have no knowledge of how their concerns are conducted; that all they keep track of and attend to is the scooping in of the profits; and consequently, that the title of “captain of industry” is a pure assumption.

Furthermore, the courts have more than once placed their official seal upon the fact that it is not the “captains of industry,” but their employees who do all the work and the directing. The courts have done so every time they have spoken these alleged “captains” free from blame for wrongs committed in the management of their affairs on the plea that the “captains” were not aware of how their concerns were being managed, and the courts have with equal truth and clearness stated on such occasions the fact that it was the employees, i.e., the wage slaves, who, from top to bottom, ran the concerns, from which premises they drew the conclusion that all responsibility lay upon the shoulders of the latter.

It seems, however, that not in one respect only, but in all, capitalism is bound to be suicidal. Not only does itself raise and discipline the recruits that must eventually

slay it; not only does itself take from under it the economic ground on which it stands; it goes further; in its development destructionward itself takes care to furnish the object lessons that tear and to light the strong beacon lights that dispel the fine-spun tissue of myths with which it seeks to justify, if not to sanctify, its rule of fraud. The increasing frequency with which of late our "heiresses" are being married to European lordlings mightily exposes the capitalist claim concerning the "captain of industry" rights that are arrogated by the idle and sponging class.

So long as the alleged "captain of industry" was a male, the unwary might be taken in. He hustled about, got himself interviewed, and appeared as "director" of the stock corporations. A false wind was hereby raised that might deceive some. But when the popular interest excited by these marriages with European princes brings out the fact and rubs it under the popular nose that a lot of girls, brought up conspicuously in idleness and the vanity of dining and dancing parties, have for their dowers untold millions, or rather a capitalist untold million-power to fleece the workers with, and thus sponge unto themselves the lion's share of the fruits of the American workmen—when that is conspicuously held up to public view, as it happens through these marriages, then the "captain of industry" excuse for the robbery of the workers becomes laughable.

In Europe, Queen Victoria, who, much more so than Cassio, "never set a squadron in the field, nor the division of a battle knows more than a spinster{,}" is "colonel" of the Prussian hussars, the intelligent world laughs at the silly title; now, here in America, "captain of industry" Consuelo Vanderbilt sets the people thinking with their brows knit and their jaws set.

The People, Vol. V, No. 28. Sunday, October 6, 1895

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

Uploaded February 23, 2003