

# The People.

VOL. VII, NO. 24

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1897

PRICE 3 CENTS

EDITORIAL

## The Eighteenth Brumaire.

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**W**ith this issue we start the publication in English of one of Karl Marx' most profound and most brilliant monographs. It may be considered the best work extant on the philosophy of history, with an eye especially upon the history of the movement of the proletariat, together with the bourgeois and other manifestations that accompany the same, and the tactics that such conditions dictate.

The recent populist uprising; the more recent "Debs movement"; the thousand and one utopian and chimerical notions that are flaring up; the capitalist manoeuvres; the hopeless, helpless grasping after straws, that marks the conduct of the bulk of organized labor; all of these, together with the empty-headed, fishy figures who are springing into notoriety for a time and have their day, mark the present period of the movement in the nation a critical one. The best information acquirable, the best mental training obtainable are requisite to steer through the existing chaos that the death-tainted social system of to-day creates all around us. To aid in this need information and mental training, this instructive work is now placed into the hands of our readers, and is commended to the serious study of the serious.

The teachings contained in this work are hung on an episode in recent French history. With some this fact may detract of its value. A pedantic, supercilious notion is extensively abroad among us that we are an "Anglo-Saxon" nation, and an equally pedantic, supercilious habit causes many to look to England for inspiration, as from a racial birthplace. Nevertheless, for weal of for woe, there is no such thing extant as "Anglo-Saxon," and, of all nations, said to be "Anglo-Saxon," in the United States least. What we have from England, much as appearances may seem to point the other way, is not of our bone-and-marrow, so to speak, but rather partakes of the nature of "importations." We are no more English on account of them than we are Chinese because we all drink tea.

Of all European nations, France is the one to which we come nearest. Besides its republican form of government, the directness of its history, the unity of its actions, the

sharpness that marks its internal development, are all characteristics that find their parallel here best, and vice versa. In all essentials the study of modern French history, particularly when sketched by such a master-hand as Marx', is the most valuable one for the acquisition of that historic, social and biologic insight that our country stands particularly in need of, and that will be inestimable during the approaching critical days.

For the assistance of those of our readers, who, unfamiliar with the history of France, may be confused by some of the terms used by Marx, the following explanations may not be out of place.

On the 18th Brumaire (Nov. 9th), the post-revolutionary development of affairs in France enabled the first Napoleon to take a step that led with inevitable certainty to the imperial throne. The circumstance that fifty and odd years later similar events aided his nephew, Louis Napoleon, to take a similar step with a similar result, gives the name to this work—*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*.

As to the other terms and allusions that occur, the following sketch will suffice:

Upon the overthrow of the first Napoleon came the restoration of the Bourbon throne (Louis XVIII and Charles X). In July, 1830, an uprising of the upper tier of the bourgeoisie, or capitalist class—the aristocracy of finance—overthrew the Bourbon throne of Charles X and set up the throne of Orleans, a younger branch of the house of Bourbon, with Louis Philippe as king. From the month in which this revolution occurred, this monarchy is called the “July monarchy.” In February, 1848, a revolt of the industrial bourgeoisie in turn dethroned Louis Philippe. This affair, also named from the month in which it took place, is the “February revolution.” *The Eighteenth Brumaire* starts with that event.

Despite the inapplicableness to our own affairs of the political names and political leaderships therein described, both these names and leaderships are to such an extent the products of an economic-social development that has here too taken place with even greater sharpness, and have their counterparts here so completely, that, by the light of this work of Marx, we are best enabled to understand our own history, to know whence we come, whither we are going, and how to conduct ourselves.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded October 2003