

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 6, NO. 233.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1906.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

THE PERCENTAGE OF SCATTER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE “harmony” that has broken out between ex-Anna Gould and her loving husband Count Boni Castellane is one of those incidents providentially supplied by Nature’s Laws to illustrate Socialist Truth and confute Capitalist Fiction. More than one Truth does this particular incident confirm, more than one Fiction does it demolish. Let’s take up one of these.

The problem of the concentration of wealth into the hands of the few, and its resultant problem of pauperization, with its long train of evils, for the masses, has long engaged the thoughts of thinking minds. The Mosaic law sought to remedy the evil by a system of periodical re-distributions, called “jubilees”; others, with breasts less full of controversy, sought to meet the issue by fleeing from it, seeking to turn man’s mind from the earth, where he is born, and turning it towards heaven, where he is not; others again, perceiving fractions of the Truth sought to reform society, some by single tax methods of land valuation, others by restrictive measures of production; finally, the Socialists propose a comprehensive reconstruction of society intended to eliminate the cause of the evil. It is beside the question in this inquiry to determine which of these schools has the whole Truth. Suffice it to observe that they all agree upon the principle that wealth tends to concentrate into ever fewer hands. As against them stands the capitalist economist. He denies the principle. He grants the tendency of wealth concentration only as a transitory phenomenon. According to him wealth is in constant flux: it concentrates and scatters, concentrates again only again to scatter, and so on perpetually. According to him and to some mystic law, which he does not attempt to define, wealth concentration takes care of itself by itself re-scattering and thus undoing all the evils of mass pauperization. The capitalist economist even affects to prove his theory. He seizes greedily upon every prodigal who wastes his inheritance, and points to such instances as proofs of his claim. Unfortunately for the superficial capitalist

economist, there is periodically a Castellane revelation that scatters his theory.

The legal proceedings, to which the Castellane row has led, bring out two sets of facts—one, that the Count's debts are immense; this fact would give a color to the claim of the capitalist economist; here we would have a spend-thrift making ducks and drakes of the millions which his deceased father-in-law plundered and collected from the American working class; the other set of facts, however, gives an insight below the surface of things: the scatterer could scatter only ONE-TENTH OF THE GOULD HOARD: nine-tenths of that hoard stuck to the nails of the money lender who loaned him the advances that he needed. In other words: The concentrated, the bulk of the concentrated Gould wealth remained concentrated; it changed hands from the Gould family into the money lender's family; but that is not to "scatter"; one member of the capitalist class lost it, another member of the same class got it; it remained, accordingly, in the capitalist family, or class; what was scattered was relatively a trifle, only one-tenth; even if it were spent upon the working class, that small percentage cannot counteract or overthrow the larger percentage of concentration; but even that percentage did not go to labor—not of the ranks of the Working Class were the precious "purity-of-the-family-upholding" ladies upon whom Jay Gould's son-in-law bestowed the ten per cent. of "scatter."

The concentration of wealth into the hands of the capitalist class is a steady process. In the course of the process, the concentrated hoards frequently change hands, but only in lump. Vulgarly superficial capitalist economy calls that "scattering." Socialist economy points to the fact that the hoard remained in the hands of the same class that held it before. There is a leakage during the process, a "scattering"; the percentage thereof is, however, trifling—one-tenth in the Castellane instance, a little more in some, a good deal less in others—and even that percentage of scatter, like little rivulets, temporarily turned from the main stream, naturally trickle back again to where they came from.

Here is a social ulcer. Socialism alone carries the lancet that will cut it out.

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

Uploaded February 2009

slpns@slp.org