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Thou Hast Conquered, Oh Galilean!

By DANIEL DE LEON

At the Democratic mass meeting, held on the evening of the 10th instant in Cooper Union, Mr. Joseph R. Buchanan, now Popo-Democrat of New Jersey, was one of the speakers. Mr. Buchanan is quite well known to many Socialists, and is quite well remembered by a good many more. He was once a member of the Socialist Labor Party, at least he held a ticket of membership; but he got tired; he tried “short cuts” and “one thing at a time” methods; he did not, to use his own expression, “like to take it all out in waiting”; not wishing to “wait,” he became a turn-coat; nay, worse than that, he became a traitor to the cause he had recognized as true; he sold out to the Democratic party in 1888. Later he became a Populist, when, to his intellectually crooked mind, it looked as if Populism was to be a tidal wave; more lately, as the expected tidal wave turned out to be a fizzle, he jumped off into the Bryan Democracy, which, having joined Populism, again deceived the itchy-palmy with promises of rapidly “getting there.” It will be noticed that “haste not, waste not” was not Mr. Buchanan’s motto. He was in a terrible hurry. Hence his abandonment of the straight road of Socialism, which he imagined would take too long, and the hostility to the party which he since evinced. At the meeting aforesaid, Mr. Buchanan must have received a surprise or two; two-thirds of the audience was Socialist. They had come to see the show. Before, after and during his speech the feature of the meeting were the repeated cheers given for the Socialist Labor party, and more than once, when he called upon his hearers to vote for freedom, the response from the audience came back full and vigorous into his face: “Yes, by voting for the S.L.P. ticket!” It must have been painfully clear to Mr. Buchanan, first, that Socialism had grown much faster than any thing he had recently been connected with; and, secondly, that his bitter hostility to it, as bitter as only apostates can be, had in no way hemmed its progress. The S.L.P. was plainly in the ascendant, all else that evening was plainly on the decline.

Quite a number of years ago there was a celebrated Christian apostate—the Emperor Julian. Upon ascending the Byzantine throne, he threw off Christianity and started upon a course of reinstating the gods of Roman mythology. The apostate Julian sought by all the means at his command to prop up the theologic system that

the course of civilization had rejected; pedantry, diplomacy, terrorism all failed. The older deities could not recover a foothold. Time had undermined their former pedestals. After a life-time of struggle, and while approaching death with the unquestioned failure of his policy before him, together with the unquestioned growth and vigor of the new dispensation which he had been combating, the apostate Julian exclaimed in despair:

“Thou hast conquered, oh Galilean!”

As he stood on the Cooper Union platform, still seeking to side-switch the Socialist Labor Party and to prop up parties whose futures lie behind them, and yet seeing the evidence of the total failure of his years of toil in the vigorous expansion of the S.L.P., Mr. Buchanan’s heart seemed to ache within him, at least his pallid face, growing more pallid by the minute, denoted as much; while his white, quivering lips closed with a sound that the knowing Socialists present distinctly heard:

“Thou hast conquered, oh S.L.P.!”

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

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