

# The



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EDITORIAL

## IS IT PROPHETIC?

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE **Bradley-Martin** ball presents an aspect that seems, so far, to have been overlooked. Hitherto it was used either as a text for the discontented to prove the extravagance of the idle rich in the midst of the toiling poor, or as a text for pulpiteers to discant on, and an occasion for them to implore their rich pew holders to be less ostentatious with their stolen goods. But there is a third point that well merits attention, and that suggests the question: Are the Bradley-Martin class guided by a prophetic instinct?

It will be noticed that the most favorite impersonations on the occasion are characters that figured conspicuously on the scaffold during the bloody era of the French Revolution, when the oncoming capitalist, rendered frantic by the danger that beset the revolution which he had conjured forth, seemed to lose his head, and, in the panic of fear that he was thrown in by the attitude of the ruling class, sought and succeeded to cool his brow in the blood of the feudal nobility which he had thrown from power. At the Bradley-Martin ball there were not less than five Marie Antoinettes, rafts of courtiers, male and female, of the time of Louis XVI., and a large crowd of the nobility of those days. The originals of all of these, who did not manage to cross the frontier in time, were slaughtered; their heads, stuck on pikes, and their hearts, spitted on the prongs of pitchforks, were marched through the streets of Paris to the tune of "Down with the Aristocrats."

In our own days we are approaching one of those historical epochs when a ruling class, rotten-ripe for overthrow, is to be hurled from power by the class below. The class whose dissolution is now approaching is the identical one, only now in its decrepitude, that made the French Revolution, and which, made frantic by the conspiracy of the feudalists, was driven to commit the horrors of that great social upheaval. The class whose triumph is now at hand, the proletariat or working class,

not yet ripe a hundred years ago for masterhood, played a hundred years ago the role of food for cannon in behalf of the capitalist revolutionist. Ripened now, or rapidly ripening, to perform its own part, it is about to fulfill its historic mission—abolish class distinctions by placing in the hands of all the people the tools of production, which, if owned by a class, make that class master and all others slaves.

In pursuit of its noble mission, the class-conscious proletariat organizes upon the lines of peace. Its path is the political path, its weapon the ballot. Its success would be prompt and easy but for the conduct of the capitalist class. This class is now resorting to fraud; it is seeking to cheat the workers out of their ballot; it is blocking the path of peace and thereby introducing the tactics of violence—just the same as the French feudalists did a hundred years ago. In view of all this, the Bradley-Martin ball and its costumes suggest the questions: Are these people animated by a prophetic instinct? Do they realize that their shameless breaches of the suffrage law and their conspiracies to disfranchise the people tend to force the citizens to resort to violence? And, finally, do they mean to suggest to the oncoming revolutionist the drastic methods adopted by their own class, when it rose against the feudality of France, by reproducing the characters that stood in the way of their revolution in that country?

Inscrutable are the ways of Providence. Its methods to teach a lesson are its own. All that can be done by the Socialist is to hasten his peaceful work of education, and thus prevent, if possible, the verification of the prophecy that seems to be trumpeted to the people of this land by the significant characters that have danced the cotillion of honor at the Bradley-Martin ball masque.

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

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