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EDITORIAL

“IN DISTRESSO VERITAS.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

WINE is said to be a great extractor of truth from the otherwise impenetrable cavities of the human heart or mind. Wine may or may not be that. Sure it is that distress does the extracting to perfection. Two incidents, almost simultaneous, demonstrate the discovery, and throw wine into the shade.

Almost simultaneous occurrences are the recent national convention of the Social Democracy factions at Indianapolis and the present outbreak of the Steel Strike. As to the former event, it was an attempt at the impossible task of harmonizing elements, the law of whose existence is discord; as all theories on which Capital and Labor are to harmonize must of necessity go to smash, no scheme can prove effective to unite wild cat political elements. As to the latter event, it was a bolt out of a clear sky that suddenly paralyzed the swelling schemes of a gigantic capitalist undertaking. This short sketch of the two events suffices to denote that DISTRESS in no slight degree marked the faces of both the unitarians and the stock-jobbers in steel everywhere. As to the unitarians, they struggled and they tugged; they “buried their hatchets” and yet the edges remained above ground, inflicting cruel, jagged cuts; they shuffled and they twisted; and the net result was that out of that seething caldron rupture leaped forth in the shape of as many parties as there are States; the Social Democracy came out with vastly more fractures than it went in. As to the stock-jobbers in steel they have been traveling out of one sweat into another, each chillier than another. DISTRESS, accordingly, was the overmastering sentiment of both sets, unitarians as well as stock-jobbers. And what was the result? That both let out the truth.

The Social Democracy, with its sanitary Armory-building and capitalist politician contingency, as well as the stock-jobbers are in the habit of catering after the Labor vote: periodically, the one and the other declare their “supreme admiration for and profound devotion to the laboring classes.” In their distress,

however, they both let out the cat. The stock-jobbers are calling the labor men "slums," while the unitarians, driven to again change their names, and anxious to come as near as possible to "Socialist Labor Party," went on record, to use the language of one of them recently immortalized in these columns, as considering Labor mere "frills and furbelows" and dropping that. Between the epithets "frills and furbelows" and "slum" there is no essential difference in this connection. The essence of the feelings expressed by the steel stock-jobbers in the word "slums" is that all their usual protestations of admiration for and devotion to Labor is a lie; ditto, ditto with the gentry with whom the opinion prevails that Labor is "frill and furbelows,"—all the more seeing they set themselves up as the bright particular paladins of Labor.

Let VINUM pass the palm over to DISTRESSUM. Henceforth let the proverb be:

"In distresso veritas."

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

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