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EDITORIAL

J. OF PHILADELPHIA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHEN one reflects upon the career of J. Mahlon Barnes of Philadelphia; his acting as informer against his own Union, and then, when his Union had him where the hair was short, purchasing peace by turning traitor to his then party, the Socialist Labor Party; his corruption in the office of National Secretary to which he was promoted in the party he then turned to, the Socialist party; his activity in get-rich-quick schemes; his immorality during his administration; the brazenness with which he indulged his slanderous proclivities even against the grey hairs of Mother Jones;—when one considers the “gigantic gains” made by the S.P. under the National Secretaryship of the said Barnes;—when, finally, one reads the encomiums that the Hillquits, the Spargos, the Hunters and other dignitaries of the said S.P. shower upon the Barnes in question;—when all these things are considered together, then one insensibly betakes himself to linking fancy unto fancy, mounting from the present gradually up into remote and still remoter days, till the mind is arrested by the historic figure of George of Cappadocia.

The remarkable career of George of Cappadocia is the subject of one Gibbons' most brilliant pages. Gibbons runs rapidly over the manner that George of Cappadocia rose from obscurity by the arts of the flatterer, the sycophant and the parasite; how the patrons, upon whom he assiduously fawned and whom he flattered, procured for their vile dependent a contract to supply the army with bacon; how his employment, mean itself, was rendered infamous by him; how he accumulated wealth by fraud and corruption till he was compelled to escape from the pursuits of justice {and} resign under fire; how, after his disgrace, he embraced the profession of the Christian sect of Arianism, through which he was promoted to the archiepiscopal throne of Alexandria; how his sinister instincts re-asserted themselves in his

new office; how his entrance into Alexandria was that of a barbarian conqueror, where each moment of his reign was polluted by cruelty and avarice, until at the accession of the Emperor Julian, named the Apostate, he was physically torn to pieces; finally, how Arian partisanship aided by fraudulent Bishops, introduced his worship into the bosom of the Catholic church, and “the odious stranger, disguising every circumstance of time and place, assumed the mask of a martyr, a saint and a Christian hero; and the infamous George of Cappadocia has been transformed into the renowned St. George of England, the patron of arms, of chivalry, and of the garter.”¹

We never knew what the J in J. Mahlon Barnes originally of Philadelphia stands for, but a bird’s-eye view of his own and of the career of George of Cappadocia justifies that, if this were the conclusion that, if this were the 4th, instead of the 20th century, Bishops Hillquit, Spargo, and Hunter would surely find their account in transforming J. of Philadelphia into St. J.;—and the chest of the Socialist Movement heaves with relief at the certainty that the 20th is not the 4th century, and that posterity will not have such a grotesque imposition palmed off upon it.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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¹ [Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter 27.]