

EDITORIAL

A POLITICAL FORECAST.

By DANIEL DE LEON

CONCRETE forecasts with regard to persons are proverbially risky. No forecaster can be posted upon all the factors, which, bearing upon a certain individual, determine his ultimate conduct. Fully aware of the slippery ground upon which he treads who seeks to peer into the future of an individual, nevertheless, aware that, however far from the bulls-eye the forecast may fall, it will fall within the circle of the target, provided the known facts are properly weighed, we venture the forecast that Col. Theodore Roosevelt will some day be seen to call himself and to chieftain a political movement styled "Socialist."

We are not forgetful of the fact that Roosevelt has repeatedly been shown in these columns to be of the man-on-horse-back temperament, and of the Caesarian mold in history. It is the cumulating evidences of this fact, that, joined with more recent developments, suggest the eventual appearance of Roosevelt under a banner inscribed "Socialism." The combination—Roosevelt and Socialism—is, of course, baroque; but so is Roosevelt,—and all the Roosevelts whom the waves of history have washed upon the shores of Time.

Socialism, as he who knows anything knows, aims at human emancipation, not by political tenets, but by the establishment of material conditions upon which Freedom can be planted. This implies a social revolution. Nor is this all.

The social revolution, implied in Socialism, needs for its success the action of the least favored of all present classes; and, what is more, of all revolutionary classes that have yet stepped upon the stage of history. The task of educating and organizing at least a necessary minimum of this revolutionary class with the minimum knowledge to resist the onslaughts and, worst of all, the wiles of the Ruling

Class, is gigantic. Even the bourgeoisie in its pre-revolutionary era was frequently disintegrated by alternate applications of the feudal mailed and the feudal velvet band. The bourgeois, however, could not be permanently broken up. Its strength lay in the growth of its economic power. It is otherwise with the modern revolutionary classes. The proletariat declines in economic power. Accordingly, in the measure that proletarian might in numbers waxes, there increases proletarian precariousness of existence; hence, proletarian nervousness; hence, proletarian lack of self-reliance; hence, proletarian desperation; hence, proletarian proneness to superstition. Hand in hand with this progression goes, it is true, Socialist education counteracting the above-mentioned downward progression. Indeed, viewed from the angle of the sociologic tussle, modern society presents the spectacle of a race between Socialist Education and Proletarian Demoralization;—which will succeed in heading off the other?

We hold that, properly weighed, the social influences of the day that make for Proletarian Education will triumph, and triumph gloriously. This notwithstanding, so vast are the influences which make for Proletarian Demoralization that they are to be reckoned with. These influences, together with their immediate product, a demoralized and submerged layer of the proletariat, not only heat into life, they also attract certain sinister figures. Richard II. applying to Wat Tyler's mob for the privilege of being their leader; more recently, Louis Bonaparte starting, or utilizing, the "Society of December"; the "millionaire" Crassus of Roman days identifying himself with the rag-tag and bob-tail that hugged Catilina and was hugged by them; the succession of "tyrants" in Greece and the Aegean Isles;—these be many variants of the identical type. In all these instances, mass precariousness of existence begot mass nervousness; mass nervousness begot mass lack of self-reliance; mass lack of self-reliance begot desperation; and desperation begot superstition.

A superstitious mass in economic straits looks for saviours from "above." In Rome the saviour was looked for from the "Senatorial rank." Elsewhere from the wealthy. On the same principle that weak lungs are the points of gravitation for the tuberculosis microbe, such mass mentality is the point of gravitation for the tribe of the Roosevelts. Any flag will do them; any device is good enough for their purpose.

“Socialism” will not prove an unacceptable mantle within, or flag under which, given the continuance of favorable conditions, Col. Theodore Roosevelt may yet be seen braggadociating across the stage of the American social drama.

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