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EDITORIAL

## BERGER'S MISS NO. 8.—THE WORST SO FAR.

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**K**EEPING in mind that Victor L. Berger did not speak, but read, the speech which he delivered in the House, sitting on June 14 in Committee of the Whole on the tariff on wool; also considering that, although the speech was read, it was withheld a full day, and not published until the *Record* for the following session;—in short, considering that the speech was written down before delivery, and was, after delivery, polished up, the conclusion is justified that the effort was Mr. Berger's best, and expected by him to be worthy of the occasion—the debut of Socialism on the floor of Congress.

Fain would we, a second time, stretch a point in favor of Mr. Berger, and record his "Second Hit," as a relief to the scandal of the long procession of "Misses" that the gentleman has so far scored in Congress. It can not be done. The performance of June 14 is the sorriest "Miss" of all, down to that date.

In attempted justification for having left unchallenged any of the innumerable, to the Working Class, pernicious economic and sociologic tenets which, down to June, were being daily reeled off in Congress by both Democrats and Republicans, Mr. Berger authorized the statement that he was not there to convert capitalist Congressmen. For the conversion, for the instruction of whom were such utterances prepared, written down in advance, and carefully looked over after delivery, as these, for instance:

"I want it understood that there is no such thing as protection to labor in any tariff bill."

"You are continually making laws for the protection of life and property—for the protection of the lives of those who own the property, and for the protection of the property they own."

"No matter whether we have a high tariff or free trade, competition has a

tendency to weed out the economically weaker concerns.”

“Business men are always patriotic when there is profit in sight.”

The manufacturers palm off their private issues as national issues.”

“In the steel mills of Pittsburg, Chicago and Milwaukee, where 30 years ago the so-called princes of labor used to get from \$10 to \$15 a day, the modern white coolies get \$1.75 for 12 hours a day, seven days in the week—having no time to praise the Lord, and no reason either.”

“Free trade is no panacea.”

“It [labor] has protected itself by strikes and boycotts, which have been declared by the Supreme Court of the United States to be illegal.”

“Our so-called free workers are sometimes worse off—from the purely economic point of view—than the blacks were under slavery before the war.”

“The employer who can fleece and skin his workmen best is best equipped for the fight in the open market.”

“For the poor people the times are always hard.”

“Various remedies have been proposed. Single tax, more silver dollars, greenbacks, and a dozen other remedies have been offered. But since none of them does away with the deadly effects of competition, and with the effect of the machine on the workman, I must dismiss them as insufficient.”

“As long as these implements of production—land, machinery, raw materials, railroads and telegraphs—remain private property, only comparatively few can be the sole owners and masters thereof.”

“The workingman's labor has become a mere ware in the market.”

“The yarn, the cloth, the metal articles which now come out the factory are the joint product of the many people through whose hands they had to go successively before being ready. No single person can say of them: ‘This I have made.’ Yet these social tools and social products are treated in the same way as they were at the time when the tool was an individual tool, and when the product was created by the individual.”

These sentences are types. They are fair specimens from Mr. Berger's maiden speech. From them the whole of the June 14 effort may be judged.

What sustained argument does such a speech contain to prove WHY

Socialism—the Industrial Republic on the ruins of the Political State—is THE solution, the ONLY solution, the logical solution?

With the exception of the two passages quoted last—disconnected, dislocated, fragmentary and obviously un-understood chips of Socialist philosophy, timidly pushed forward, like the spooks that timidly advance from the medium's cabinet—the speech is of the tribe that has been heard in the country, off and on, for the last fifty years, from all manner of Discontents.

Mr. Berger declared he had “a message to deliver.” Was this a Message, the Socialist Message? But for Mr. Berger's saying he was a Socialist, the “message” is hard to distinguish from that which is being delivered from the platform of the Single Tax; of Prohibitionism; of Greenback and Free Coinagism; of the Roman Catholic political hierarchy, whence, quoting the encyclical of Leo XI, the distress of the workers is specified, and the cruelty of the rich condemned; or from the platform of Anarchy;—in short, from the political platforms of all Movements that are, either the breath of Sentimentality, or the bourgeois class-ignorance, if not denial, of economic and sociologic Fact.

The re-assertion of distress (even Democrats and Insurgent Republicans are indulging the sport)—that merely is not, can not be the Message that the occasion calls for—the stomach of the proletarian and otherwise public mind has been stuffed to repletion with such indigestible mental food. Bald, unsubstantiated, undemonstrated assertions, defectively cribbed from Socialist literature—neither that can honor the bill that the Age is pressing for collection.

WHY—the allegations contained in the speech being true—WHY is Socialism, and not Single Taxism, Prohibitionism, Greenbackism, Romanism, Anarchism, nor yet Protection or Free Trade, tariffs, high or low, or any other political scheme the solution? The faultiness of all of these is no proof of the correctness of Socialism. WHY is Socialism the correct answer to the modern social Sphinx? THAT was the Message expected; yet, of that, not a word worth the while.

Not a word in demonstration of the stupendous sociologic fact that the Capitalist System condemns the proletariat to the status of goods, wares and merchandise—a casual assertion only.

Not a word about the imperious economic Law that decrees the death of the

small producer, all factitious legislation in opposition notwithstanding—not a word in demonstration of the pregnant economic fact.

Not a word about the smallness of the wealth now actually in existence, together with its insufficiency to afford a civilized existence to all, despite the modern potentiality of affluence for all, with excessive toil for none—not a word in demonstration and explanation of the tell-tale phenomenon.

Not a word about the juridic-economic Law according to which the tenure of possession of the necessities for production is bound to be adapted to the method of using the same; hence, that the method of production now having again become collective, the tenure of possession of the necessities therefor the march of Civilization orders must likewise become collective—not a word in demonstration of that great ethnic fact—only a clumsy and confused utterance regarding the same.

Not a word to guard against the quagmire of Sentimentality—not a word of warning, and proof that Suffering is classless, differing only in degree, not in kind—on the contrary, words without end promotive of the common delusion.

Not a word regarding INTERESTS—not a word in demonstration of the illuminating sociologic fact that it is INTERESTS that bear the class impress, and that it is CLASS INTERESTS that carve the history of the race, its Past, its Present, and its Future—not a word.

Not a word to clarify the field by drawing sharp and clear the Class Struggle of to-day—not a word.

Not a word, accordingly, not an argument to enable the Wage-Slave Class to bowl down the preachments of the pack of politicians, professors and pulpiteers, along with their capitalist press, whose function it is to fill the air with false and conflicting and confusing reasoning.

Not a word about any of these Facts and Laws, big with Revolution—Facts and Laws which explain the present social unrest, disorder and turmoil, which marshall the Nation the path that it must tread, and which point imperatively to Socialism and Socialism alone as the goal—not a word.

Of all that, not a word; in other words, not a word of the Message that the hour is thundering for.

That Message, true enough, is difficult to understand. It requires close

attention; close reasoning. Nevertheless, the hard conditions of the times have turned the stomach of the Working Class against the windy declamations of yore, and dieted them with a taste for solid mental food. Not since the closing of the Civil War, when the Social Question first raised its head throughout the length and breadth of the land, have the toilers been in a mood to hear the Message of Socialism as they were on June 14, when “the first and only Socialist in Congress” rose for the first time in his seat to address them, as they hoped, from the Nation’s capitol, in the Nation’s capital. They were hungry to hear. It was a psychologic moment such as the Nation’s proletariat had never before experienced. The moment was lost. The Message remained un-delivered. Instead of stilling the hungry ear of the revolutionary class of the land, “the first Socialist in Congress” put at ease the apprehensive mind of his bourgeois fellow Congressmen—and made himself solid with them. Our proletariat craved for LIGHT—light to light their path for their own independent thinking—they were given, instead, a dark-lantern.

For two months, since the entrance in Congress of “the first Socialist” there, expectation had been agog. As day passed upon day, and week upon week, and the second month upon the first, with the silence unbroken from his seat—despite the numerous challenges couched in repeated anti-Socialist utterances on the floor from his bourgeois colleagues—many there were, we among them, who borrowed consolation from the thought that Mr. Berger was a German. As such we hoped he would eventually make good the German proverb to the effect that what takes long in the making will finally be good: What he did was to make good the English proverb: “‘Tis your addled egg that takes long hatching.”

When the hour granted to Victor L. Berger expired, and his maiden speech was delivered—then, while the bourgeois Representatives crowded around him with sincerely glad handshakes—the Genius of Socialism, who, up to the last minute, had hovered around him, dropped her head in sorrow, and took flight from his side.

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