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EDITORIAL

## MODERN METAMORPHOSES.

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**T**HE shipbuilding interests, interested in the Panama Canal, and entrenched behind the Republican party, have dug up from the arsenal of the Democratic party, behind which the anti-shipbuilding interests are entrenched, the Democratic party's platform declaration of 1856 in which the Isthmus is pronounced legitimate prey for the United States, and the country is urged to pounce upon, seize and keep Panama. Thereupon the anti-shipbuilding interests, now holily opposing the Panama scandal, have returned the compliment, and digging up from the arsenal of what was then virtually the present Republican party, have flung at it its then counter declaration in which the "highwayman's plea that 'might makes right'" is branded as "in every respect unworthy of American diplomacy" and as fit to "bring shame and dishonor upon any government or people that gave it their sanction." Here we have something more than a "Black Crook" transformation. It is a double-compound turn about, each side now occupying the exact position it once denounced and sanctimoniously or patriotically denouncing the position it once occupied. Has either abandoned its own center of gravity? Not in the least.

In one of the circles of Hell that Dante conceived and described, the penalty of the miserable sinners, turned to venomous serpents, is to wrestle with one another, until each gradually loses his own and assumes the likeness of the other; they then fall apart, resume their wrestling in their transformed shape, are re-transformed, re-fall away, and re-commence into all eternity. That was the chastisement conceived by the poet and "anatomist of crime" for the crime of double-faced robbery. Not their external manifestations but the spirit of swindle and rapine—that was their center of gravity, and that the punishment brought out. It is so now with the pro- and the anti-Panama move of double-faced rapine. Thus

fathoming the phenomenon of this the latest transformation, all the kindred phenomena are understood, and their common point of contact is detected.

Free traders have been seen to turn into ferocious protectionists; these in turn have been seen to turn into rabid free traders. Silver standard men have been known to change and crawl before the golden calf; and gold standard men have been witnessed turning about and clinging to free silver as to a national Messiah, and so forth and so on—just as now one-time anti-rapine men are playing the brigands on Panama and one-time pro-rapine men are now posturing as Morality on a Monument—exactly as the double-faced robbers in Dante’s circle of Hell changed appearances. What does it mean?

It means that in all these instances the two “opposites” are in fact “doubles,”—two sides of the identical medal. The center of gravity with both is never changed. That center of gravity is their material interests. It is not the aspect of the robber, but the act of robbery, that held Dante’s double-faced felons in perpetual struggle with one another. So here. It is not the external manifestation of the warring capitalists, but their capitalist quality that, holding, forces them to the wrestlings and eternal changes of base which they restlessly exhibit. And that capitalist interest is bottomed upon the skinning of the working class.

From an immoral source nothing but immorality can flow. The capitalist system is grounded on the immorality of the plunder of the workers. So grounded, it cannot choose but wobble and change face, color and aspect. The capitalists have changed face on Panama. Their political parties reflect the fact. Leave them alone, give them time and this generation will not pass before they will have again re-changed their face and form—just like the double-faced robbers placed by Dante in Malebolge’s perpetual torture.

But why leave them to their torture? Why not end it by blotting out the robber swindle of capitalism, and rearing the Socialist Republic?

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