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EDITORIAL

WITTE IN OVERALLS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE onward moving revolution in Russia having ripened to the point of an “armed general strike”, the labor-fleeing class of the Empire feel decidedly sick—how sick may be judged from the latest manifesto issued by their tomtit Count Witte. The manifesto deserves to be scanned clause by clause. It runs thus:

“Brother Workmen—”

Oh, they are “brothers”! But yesterday the Witte set would not wipe their feet upon the workingman: to-day they are his brothers. Truly, in revolutions, men ripen fast. Truly, also

The Devil being sick, the Devil a monk would be.

“Get to your work.”

Why, we thought we were all “brothers”. One set of brothers should not say to the other set: “Get to your work”; they should say: “Let us all get to our work”. The wolf’s claws seem to be too long to remain wholly concealed under the sheep’s skin.

“Cease making disturbances, and have pity on your wives and children”.

That’s just what they have—“pity on their wives and children”—whence they refuse to leave these any longer in their present state of misery, with the prospect of future misery morefold, unless they do “disturb” things.

“Do not listen to bad advice”.

The advice the workingman has hitherto been listening to brought him to his

present pickle. Moreover, it sounded very much like the one Witte is now ladeling out. The only difference is that it was not then, as now, ladeled out in overalls. Whatever advice the workingman may now listen to can not possibly be worse than the advice he formerly swallowed up credulously, and now has got onto.

“The Emperor has ordered us to devote special attention to the labor question”.

That’s just what the enlightened workingman does not want them to, and has got tired of their doing. In Russia, as in America, the Labor-fleecers class have been long doing nothing but “devoting attention to the labor question”—special, specialer, specialest attention. The workingman now proposes to devote his own attention to his own concerns.

“For this purpose, his Majesty has created a minister of trade and commerce which must especially seek to establish just relations between workmen and employers.”

Fudge! The age of miracles is over. “Just relations between workmen and employers” could only be a miracle. How come there to be employers, how workmen? Surely no man out of a lunatic asylum would think of working for another if he could work for himself. Are employers born with the land on which to work strapped to their backs, and with the machinery needed to work with snugly packed upon their shoulders? Hardly. The land is the gift of Nature, the capital the product of social labor. For any human being to be without these, he must either have been forcibly or by chicanery stripped of his share of them, or, in a fit of fanatic devotion for Usurpation, somewheres called Capitalism, stripped himself of all his havings, that insured him independence, and left himself a pauper to be employed by others. The latter theory is inadmissible. Only the former will stand. Can just relations be established between the spoiler and the spoiled? Can one win wrongly, and yet not play false? Witte’s overalls are falling off.

“Have patience”.

That ass’s virtue is at about the end of its tether. Labor has hitherto been fed

on patience. It has chewed long enough upon air. It now demands a more substantial menu.

“All that is possible will be done for you”.

Nothing that is “possible”, only the “impossible”, can be done FOR the Working Class. Whatever is “possible”, that has to be done BY the Working Class itself.

“Listen to the advice of a man who sympathizes with you and wishes you well”.

The Devil being sick, the Devil a monk
would be;
The Devil being well, the Devil a monk
was he,¹

is the evident response from the Russian Working Class.

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

¹ [English proverb.]