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EDITORIAL

THE PHELPS DODGE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE are two distinct “Venezuelan Complications” on the tapis. One is trite, the other fresh; one is distant, the other nearby; one is a farce, the other a thrilling drama.

The one of these two “Complications”—the trite, the distant, the farcical—is being enacted some 1800 miles from the City Hall of New York. The navies of “first class powers,” long known in those confines and to history as the “collectors for fishy debts,” are fore-gathering along the coasts of Venezuela, as they have so often before all along the littoral of Latin America, in the endeavor to enforce claims that in any other court would be summarily thrown out, together with the claimants, as preposterous, if not fraudulent. The move is trite enough to hardly deserve a “C-Head” news paragraph. It is so trite that, notwithstanding the occasional solemn instances, when the would-be “collectors” had to withdraw with furled flags and broken heads, as from Mexico in 1849, '61 and '65, Peru in '64, Argentina in the forties, San Domingo in '64, etc., etc.,—it is, we say, so trite that the rule of the would-be “collectors” clearing out, much as importunate, seedy and red-nosed deputy-Sheriffs are frequently induced to clear out when pretending to want to make a levy, gives a generic color to the move. That “Venezuelan Complication” calls but for passing notice. Trite, distant and farcical, it is not even interesting.

Otherwise with the other “Venezuelan Complication.” It is not trite, but fresh; it is not a farce, but a thrilling drama. This particular “Venezuelan Complication” is being fought out within a stone’s throw of our City Hall; and that the fight is hot there are all visible proofs of. It is visible in the editorial and also in the reportorial columns of the metropolitan capitalist press. Some of these have been bought by the fishy creditors of Venezuela, and their language is full of self-righteousness: “trifling, dodging debtors

must be taught a lesson." Others betray quite clearly the fact that the negotiations to buy them have broken off: they are trotting out the rickety ghost of the Monroe Doctrine. A third set finds itself on the "anxious seat": if negotiators have approached them, the negotiations are still on: if not yet approached, they would like to be: in the meantime this set is journalizing on both sides of the question, and "showing what they can do" by exhibiting samples of their power of invective: they are like dogs in the leash, anxious for the fray, i.e., for a bribe. And as these three sets snarl, who is so flint-hearted as not to feel his heart touched at the tragedy enacting back of all these several degrees of snarls? Who does not feel interested in the "issue." For here, indeed, is an issue. It is "to be or not to be." Even tho' one may not have the gambler's spirit, he can't but feel at least his curiosity pricked. Will paper so-and-so's "samples" secure something for it? How much did paper so-and-so get? The bribe-fund of the fishy creditors is a limited magnitude. What one bribee gets is not there for any other. Like a pack of hounds these capitalist metropolitan papers are tugging at a bone. This, indeed, is a "Complication." Not even in Venezuela, should the worse come to the worse, will the battle lines surge to and fro more thrillingly than they are surging now—under the shadow of our City Hall.

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