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ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

AN OPEN LETTER TO THOS. E. WATSON.

By DANIEL DE LEON

TO Thos. E. Watson,
Thomson, Ga.
Sir:—

Your, publication—*Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*—for the current month, just received, contains a “dare,” addressed to several persons, myself included. You say: “Daniel De Leon, you have been assailing me in your paper; and you are the translator of Herr Bebel’s obscene book, *Woman Under Socialism*. . . . Now, I dare any of you, and all of you, to come into this magazine and discuss Socialism. You may have ten pages a month. I just dare any and all of you to come. . . . Will you come? I am rubbing my fist right under your noses, you know.—THOS. E. WATSON.”

This thing of “fist-rubbing right under one’s nose” at long and safe distance may be chivalry, as *she* is understood in Thomson; it is not chivalry as *she* is understood in the code to which I was trained, or which Socialism promotes. Let’s come to closer quarters.

I accept your “dare” to “come into your magazine and discuss Socialism.” Determined to allow no time for the ardor of your “dare” to cool off, and also in order promptly to test the sincerity of the “dare,” I forward to you within, and registered, the twelve articles which have appeared in the *Daily People*, and the corresponding *Weekly People*, in the course of the last five months, and in which I successively and seriatim join specific issue with you on your objections to Socialism. If your “dare” is not bluster, and if your fist-rubbing is not swagger, you will promptly publish the enclosed articles in your magazine, and in the order of their dates. I claim for them the ten pages tendered to me.

Better than an abstract treatment of Socialism, these articles should meet your

challenge for “a discussion of Socialism” in your magazine. The articles take up one by one, in the order in which you attacked them, leading features of the vast domain of Socialism.

“Jacob’s Two Rung Ladder to Nonsense” and “A Belated Son of Loyalty” contrast Socialist dialectics with the dialectics that you ply against Socialism. They answer the purpose of two introductory “rounds.”

The other ten articles follow you into specific subjects:

“Horrible Example of 16 to 1 Mental Training” clinches with you on your pet subject of “Socialist immorality,” incidentally furnishing proof of the unreliability of your citations against Socialist writers.

“The Mother Right” makes the fur fly of your concept regarding the institution of marriage.

“Disemboweling’ Labor” closes with you on the “blacklist.”

Finally, “Watson on Interest,” “A Lesson in English to Tom Watson,” “Watson and Surplus Value,” “Watson and His Duchess,” “Duck-in-Thunder Watson,” “Watson on Crystallized Labor,” and “The Secret of Tom Watson’s Irritation,” tackle your assaults on Socialism concerning the “returns of money,” the source of “value,” the source of “profits,” the “materialist foundation of history,” the merchandise status of the wage earner, the difference between “feudalism” and “capitalism,” the inevitableness of capitalist breakdown. There still remain extensive areas of Socialist science untouched. They remain untouched because you have not yet attempted to “disembowel” them. For the present the subjects touched upon by these articles should do. If the position you take on these subjects is right, and the position taken in the above articles is wrong, Socialism could not stand.

The titles of the last seven articles might give, in the minds of the uninformed, a color of justice to the charge you make against me that I have been “assailing” you. Such a charge, coming from you, who, to cite one of many instances, use the word “Jew” as a discredit to a man; who seek to make so personal a matter an argument against Marx, “a Jew,” and Ricardo, “another Jew”; and who go to such lengths of personal “assault” as to state three times in your magazine for December that Engels was a “Jew,” when the fact is that, for weal or for woe, Engels was a Jew as much as you are—from so reckless an assailer the objection that I have been

“assailing” you sounds odd, even if it were true. But the charge is unwarranted. If the Editor of a publication is its owner; if, on top of that, such an Editor identifies his personality with his publication so completely as prominently to weave his own name into the publication’s name—*WATSON’S Jeffersonian Magazine*; and if, on top of all that, such an Editor continuously seeks to illustrate his points with auto{bio}graphic sketches, to the extent of setting up himself, his household, aye, even his private bed chamber, as specimens,—such an Editor not only invites, he compels being personally tackled. The very language and tone of your “dare” obtrude your personality into the discussions. The *Daily People*, as the official organ of the Socialist Labor Party, attacks principles. In the conflict, men may not always be ignored: without men to uphold principles these are vapor, not worth notice. Only in this sense have you been, and are you now, grappled with—a proceeding that is all the more unavoidable in sight of your own setting up yourself as a specimen. To ignore a specimen constantly “rubbed under one’s nose” would justify the charge of “wandering from the question.” That Socialism never does.

At all points, accordingly, the enclosed articles come within the requirements of the ethics of a discussion, and meet your “dare.”

DANIEL DE LEON,
Editor *Daily People*.

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