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FIRST EDITORIAL

THE “NEW POLITICAL APPARITIONS.”

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A short time ago, the “philosophical” editorial department of the capitalist papers blossomed forth into a series of articles on the “New Political Apparitions,” that would have in future “to be reckoned with.” Among the “apparitions” Potato-Patch Pingree figured foremost. The “philosophers” were right, and yet wholly wrong: the new political apparitions will have to be reckoned with, but in a sense very different from the one meant.

When the Pullman or American Railway Unions strike broke out, this Pingree rocketed himself into notoriety, and kept on ascending in a pyrotechnic splendor of pyrotechnic displayfulness of “Reform” flashes, stars, flowers and sparks. He was broad as the spheres;; not a freak “Reform” notion was too freakish to be excluded from his hospitable breast, or from the fluent speeches, that, like water, poured out of a can, flowed out of his mouth. From “municipal ownership” à la Glasgow, down to “single tax,” all were welcome, all were preached. Of course, Pingree pronounced himself a “Friend of Labor.” What else could he be, being so “radical?” The “suckers,” of which the late lamented Phineas T. Barnum said there was once born every minute, bit at the bait, and the Pingree-Rocket rose, and rose higher still. The “Labor Vote,” that valuable, indispensable fish that all frauds and schemers angle for with “Reform” bait, flocked to Pingree. He became Mayor, he became Governor. It was at that season that the “philosophical” articles started. The “philosophers” looked on in alarm: here was the apparition of a Pingree, holding his place in the Republican party, controlling its caucuses and primaries in his city and State, dictating his own and other nominations, successfully overcoming opposition in his own party’s machine, looming up as a national political magnitude! Surely, thought they, here is demagoguery rampant and triumphant; it will place its stamp on the Old Parties’ platforms; the demagogues will try to, and who knows but succeed in, forcing their own nominations upon National Conventions; these new apparitions will have to be reckoned with; oh, Lord, what is

coming!—Quite recently the news from Detroit, where Pingree has his shoe factory, must have set the “philosophers” at ease; it overthrows the card-house of their reasoning.

The “Reformer,” the “Labor Friend” Pingree was struck against by his employés on account of low wages and other routine capitalist outrages; and simultaneously comes the announcement from the best possible source that PINGREE IS TO RETIRE FROM POLITICS. The “apparition” was not at all a political, it was an economic apparition; it used demagogic politics without political aspirations or ultimate design; Pingree’s acts had not public office in view but the free advertising of his business; it was a manœuvre in the competitive field against fellow-competitors who had been crowding him in the market. By his conduct he was enabled to dictate terms, not in political caucuses, but in capitalist economic caucuses of his own trade, and be admitted as a Peer—which he was not before. That accomplished, he is ready to “retire from politics,” and ready also to drop demagoguery, as the strike of his employés demonstrates.

What Capitalist Society HAS now, and will henceforth for a while have to reckon with, are, not apparitions that will contest the supremacy of its leading members on the national political field, but apparitions that will by demagogic arts pick up politics as a temporary club with which to club themselves entrance into and admission in the economic sanctum of Upper Capitalism.

But the S.L.P. will presently have a word to say in all this.

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