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SECOND EDITORIAL

THE FINEST FRUIT OF THE TREE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

The papers have been teeming with praises of the late [C.P. Huntington](#) and throwing panegyrics over his virtues ever since he turned over the task of plundering wage slaves and bribing legislators and judges. He is called the “greatest exponent of American Individualism, the best product of American civilization” by the capitalist praise-mongers. They chorus together that “he had but one extravagance,” he would spend money lavishly upon his daughter.

To know how he spent his money on this daughter will throw more light on what is meant by “American Individualism” as understood by capitalism than columns of fulsome eulogy. This “American Individualism” might be understood by some to imply a sturdy scorn of un-American titles, effete nobility, etc., coupled with a fine contempt for the degenerate snob who seeks to gild the fine gold of American citizenship with the pinchbeck glitter of a subject’s title. Not so!

His daughter is known as the Princess of Hatzfeld. Huntington’s extravagance appears in his purchase of this title. Coarse and ignorant, he had the same notion of titles as he had of art. He had the money and why should he not “purchase nobility” for his family? He would ascend from the rank of a common citizen of a Republic to the elevation of becoming the grandfather of a third brat. He would purchase a coronet for his daughter, as he would purchase a horse, a railroad or a cheese. The Prince of Hatzfeld had received his title and rank from his grandfather, why should not this “greatest exponent of American Individualism” be ennobled and get his rank from his own grandson?

This is what is meant by the scurvy crew of our capitalists by “American Individualism”: to peddle pinchbeck wares, embezzle, defraud, have successful fires or “originally accumulate” enough money to go into labor fleecing on a large scale; then bribe and bully legislatures, subsidize newspapers and exploit workingmen until you are numbered among the multi-millionaires; then indulge in “one extravagance” which reveals the toady’s instinct of fawning at the feet of a king and the tuft-hunting snob’s contempt for the Republic.

In nothing more than in his “one extravagance” did this modern Captain Kidd show how great an “exponent of American Individualism.” As the ripened fruit of the tree of capitalism, he was just what the toadies who chant his praises call him: “the bright product” of that overripe social system which will soon follow its predecessor “greatest exponent” to the political grave.

Starting out with pinchbeck ware, Huntington fittingly ended with a pinchbeck title. As he was the finest fruit on the tree, it is time to chop down that tree and cast it into the fire:—“By their fruit shall ye know them.”

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

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