

EDITORIAL

GOOD OR EVIL GENIUS?

By DANIEL DE LEON

MR. Richard Canfield—the now celebrated Canfield; the Canfield whose gorgeous gambling den our redoubtable District Attorney Jerome broke into sensationally with an axe; the Canfield on whose lips hung the fate (if he were tried) of scores of millionaires' sons patrons; the Canfield, who this many a moon has been on the lips of our Goo-Goos as a (what, a?) nay, as THE horrible example of gambling—Mr. Richard Canfield confessed guilt, paid a \$1,000 fine, and is now “a convicted criminal.”

Whether Mr. Canfield was much affected or not by his “disgrace” and by the riotous publicity given thereto by our “moral,” our “saintly,” our anti-gambling capitalist press, we know not. But this we know, that either Mr. Canfield's Good Genius hastened to vindicate him, and turn the laugh on his pharisaic accusers, or his Evil Genius rushed to point the moral of his actual crime by exposing its national feature, with himself relegated to the rear as merely an individual and minor social pimple. Hardly was Mr. Canfield gloatingly pronounced “a convicted criminal” by the pharisaic press of the land when an explosion took place in the Holy of Holies of the very class whom that press speaks for. It was the explosion of last Wednesday in the stock exchanges. Here are some of the passages describing the scene: “Brokers ran wild and delirious”; “pandemonium reigned”; “several speculators fainted”; “fortunes were made and unmade”—at all points scenes of gambling dens. The explosion was so violent that the pens must have dropped from the pious and moral editors and reporters, and when these worthies recovered their quills they had forgotten all about Richard Canfield. Space was needed for the bigger, the more immoral, the more criminal gambling den that capitalism supports, that capitalism approves of, and, what's more, that capitalism cannot live without.

If Mr. Canfield is of the class of people to whom to be ignored is the worst of all calamities, then he will grieve to see how soon he was thrown from under the lime-light. In that case it was the gentleman's Evil Genius that played him a scurvy trick. But if, on the contrary, Mr. Richard Canfield is a man with any degree of self-respect concealed somewhere about him; if he resents being made a scapegoat by a lot of gamblers, infinitely worse than himself; if he chafes at the idea of having alone to bear the onus of the hypocrisy of the capitalist system;—if he does, then will he rejoice at the event that so swiftly wiped him clean by pointing to gambling as the essence of the existing social system. In that case it was the gentleman's Good Genius that stirred its stumps.

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

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