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EDITORIAL

WILHELM A BRAYTON.

By DANIEL DE LEON

OBSERVERS of events are familiar with what is called the “Theatricals of the Ruling Class.” Napoleon III walking lovingly arm in arm with the Emperor of Austria after the battle of Marengo; the then Prince of Wales, now King of England, traveling through Ireland “amidst continuous ovations”; Hanna telegraphing to McKinley “God still rules,” when he bought his election to the Senate from a stiff Ohio opposition; the Republican boss of Rhode Island, Brayton, announcing to the country through the associated press that “The American Flag is safe” when, in the teeth of an overwhelming Democratic gubernatorial victory, a Republican minority in his State held the Legislature due to a shameless apportionment whereby less than one-fourth of the people of Rhode Island can control a majority of the seats—these and many more such instances of “Theatricals” are common. Common, however, though they be, and seemingly used thread bare, it has been left to the German Emperor to leap abreast of Brayton and theatricalize some more.

The press despatches from Berlin announce that the supplementary elections having been held, and that about one half of the former Social Democratic seats in the Reichstag having been lost, a “spontaneous popular demonstration” took place; the paraders marched “many thousand strong” to the palace; and the Emperor “with cheeks aglow with emotion,” addressed them saying “I thank you that your patriotic sentiments have brought you here.” Brayton had better go and hide his head in shame. The Emperor can give him cards and spades in “Theatricals,” and beat him, hands down.

On the stage, comedians conceal their actual color under heavy layers of rouge, and however sorrowful their hearts may be, aided by skillful lines of paint, they can hide their sighs in the wrinkle of a smile. It would be interesting to ascertain to how

many inches of red paint the Emperor's "cheeks aglow with emotion" were due, and sighs how many fathoms deep struggled to be concealed in the wrinkles of the Imperial artificial smiles when the returns of the German elections were communicated to him.

De facto the German elections are a defeat to the Kaiser. The vote against his regime has towered upward. Nor is the circumstance of a reduced democratic number of seats conducive to any comfort. On the contrary. That very circumstance, as in the Rhode Island case, contributes to make the virtual defeat more galling, in that the Imperial "victory" is stripped even of that dearest quality to the feudal heart—bravery. The heavily reduced representation in the Reichstag by a party that alone shows a marked growth in the popular heart would, of itself, be enough to arouse suspicion; when, however, that diminished democratic representation is returned, not only with an increased vote, but with the highest vote of any other party, while that same representation is among the smallest of all, then the finger of scorn is pointed at the victor as a player with weighted dice, as a coward who pretends fairness but fights with unequal weapons. This year's Reichstag elections emphasize the utter shamelessness of the German apportionment. Rotten boroughs, casting a few thousand votes, have a representation equal to that of populous districts casting many hundred times more votes. The feudal warrior has become a capitalist craven.

The exigencies of the approaching Revolution act as wondrous levelers. High-born Kaiser and low-born Brayton kiss as equals—both in the ditch of Class Rule chicanery, both in the role of painted theatricals.

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

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