

EDITORIAL

## A GENIAL, THOUGH UNEXPECTED, HUMORIST.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**O judge by his photograph, Mr. W.C. Brown, Senior Vice-President of the New York Central lines, is a cold, steel-trap, practical man. The judgment is wrong. He is a humorist, a genial, jovial funny-dog of the most rollicking type.

In a recent interview held upon him by one J. Kimberly Mumford, Mr. W.C. Brown, tried to prove that in these days of corporations, opportunities for young men were twenty times more plentiful than formerly.

“The thing [for a young man] to do,” he said, “is to bend every energy in him to doing to-day, as well as it can be done, what he has to do. The man who does that doesn’t have to worry about promotion. Promotion will look for him.”

And again:

“A man does better to apply himself to every day’s duty as it comes along; and as for advancement, it will come looking for him, because there is a great demand for competent men in high positions.”

This in itself is rare humor, humor of the sort which consists in stating solemnly a thing so well known to be false that it needs no Artemus Ward footnote to it—“N.B.—This is a goak!”—in order to be recognized and enjoyed.

But Mr. W.C. Brown is no slip-shod artist. Plain-as-the-nose-on-your-face as the joke is, he made doubly sure that the point would go home. This he accomplished by seeing that the interview with him appeared in the magazine which published it, *Harper’s Weekly*, only some weeks after the readers of that journal had been put in a receptive mood for it by the following story, printed in those same columns:

“Two young college men were industriously spending their summer vacation in the testing room of a large electric manufacturing works, where they were able to supplement their studies at the technical school by practical application and experience. The July afternoons were long, and the work at times very slack, so in one of these intervals of half idleness the young men determined to turn to and give the laboratory in which they worked a thorough cleaning. It was at this juncture that the janitor happened along—an old retainer whose years of usefulness had long since passed. Catching sight of the young men industriously scouring the grimy windows, he stopped to watch them approvingly.

“That’s right, boys,’ he exclaimed at length, nodding his head encouragingly. ‘That’s the way I got my start.’”

The story of this old retainer, whose “years of usefulness had long since passed,” without having lifted him out of a menial janitorship; the story of this old retainer, who had “got his start” cleaning windows, had conscientiously cleaned windows all his life—he must have been conscientious and painstaking or he would not have been “retained”—and was now in the winter of his life still a cleaner of windows; that story reveals how promotion and advancement “come looking for” the man who does his “every day’s duty as it comes along.” It is the flaring semaphore by which, lest anyone should miss it in spite of its self-evidence, Mr. W.C. Brown blazed the way to the understanding of his little joke.

Let none say that he is not a genial, though unexpected, humorist.

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

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