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EDITORIAL

GREEN GOODS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ONCE upon a time in the history of the American Labor Movement there lived—for all we know he lives still, as a squeezed orange, with none so poor to do him reverence—an individual with the patronymic of Gunton. He was christened George. The two G initials, together with the matter that he professed, caused the gentleman to be better known as Prof. Green Goods.

Prof. Green Goods was from Manchester, England, where he was a mechanic. He migrated to America in search of better wages. Soon he struck off for salary, or subventions. Gifted with a certain degree of low cunning he soon discovered he could make more money in New York by prostituting himself to the masters of his class than by producing surplus values for them.

This was in the Eighties. The Labor Movement had just then begun to bubble up. As was to be expected, there was much nonsense sputtered in the bubbles. But, as was also to be expected, the sane note of Socialism could also be caught among the jarring notes of nonsense. George Gunton caught the note. It became his stock in trade—not for the benefit of his fellow wage slaves, but to their injury. For a consideration, or several considerations, “in hand paid and duly acknowledged,” from the Standard Oil and from the Vanderbilt Interests, the quondam mechanic George Gunton was transformed into a “professor,” and was set up and let loose among the workers to do, under the guise of being a workingman himself, what it would not have been possible for his paymasters to achieve. Thus was launched Prof. Green Goods.

With a keenness of penetration that was worthy of a better cause Prof. Green Goods seized upon a certain feature of Socialism, the argument against which was plainest and most plausible, and the error of which hostile argument easiest to overlook.

Socialism holds out well-being for all, and Socialism proves its case with a double-edged sword—one edge indicts capitalist society for restricting production, the other edge proves the plentifulness of co-operative labor. Prof. Green Goods said nothing about the latter, and seized upon the former. His argument was: “The Socialists themselves admit there is not enough to go round. What moon-calves the Socialists are for promising well-being to all. Divide up, and nobody would enjoy well-being.” And playing upon the bourgeois instilled cupidity and visionariness of his workingmen audiences, he would wind up: “If Socialism comes, then whoever of you has achieved wealth for himself will be reduced to want,—there is not enough wealth for everybody to be rich.”

One Prof. Green Goods having worn out, 'tis time for some other to turn up with No. 1's arguments. And No. 2 would have easier sailing. Life was made a burden to Prof. Green Goods by the Socialists, especially *The People*, who camped upon his trail, and rendered the plausibility of his fraudulent argument less and less plausible, despite the shield that Columbia College held over the fraud. The facts that the Congressional investigating committees are now wringing out of the mouths of Trust magnates might re-galvanize into seeming life the corpse of the “There-is-not-enough-wealth-to-go-around” argument. What a picnic would it not have been for Prof. Green Goods to quote from the official findings that the bulk of Steel Trust wealth came over night; that it is even worse with Sugar; that railroads carry “water” enough to float all the navies of the world; that woollens are more “watery” than watermelons; that mines are, relatively, on paper, etc., etc., etc. What a chance would not that be for Prof. Green Goods to prove his point with “Even the supposed wealth is not ample enough for all; and now it turns out that even that wealth is merely suppositious!”

Seeing that the original Prof. Green Goods is no longer to be had, his successor is due. True he would last still shorter time. But there always are people enough ready to turn a “green goods” penny, and people enough to be in taken in by goods that are green.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org