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EDITORIAL

PARKE GODWIN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE death of **Parke Godwin**, the noted American essayist, orator and journalist, rolls aside the curtain of a life whose lights and shadows combine in presenting a personality typical of a certain sign-post, that the students of modern events and approaching deeds should read with attention.

Parke Godwin's intellectual cradle was the region of Princeton, N.J. There, in particular, the sentiment, that had lent inspiration to the great revival wave led by Jonathan Edwards, soon solidified in men of intellectual power. Feeling and letters combined. The former revolted at a spectacle, supposed to be exclusively European and not conceived as possible in America,—the spectacle of involuntary and spreading poverty. Not yet did or could the economic development furnish the material data for the understanding of the laws underlying the phenomenon, least of all for the practical way out. In sight of such circumstances the thinking element in the population divided, according to the make-up of their hearts, into two camps:—the hard-hearted concluded that the submersion of the masses was a natural and inevitable law of nature and of society, and settled down to avoid themselves being submerged by trying all the harder to submerge others; the kind-hearted revolted against any such tenet of fatal popular sorrow, and they became Utopians. The wave of Fourieristic colonies that then swept over the land was the product of the latter sentiment and element. Brook Farm was one of its fruits. Of course, the wave spent itself impotently. Lacking economic basis, devoid, accordingly, of scientific guidance, the Socialistic colonies collapsed, Brook Farm among the rest. Whither went the noble hearts and minds, who had taken part?

Though never himself a member of the Brook Farm Colony, Parke Godwin was of it, more than in spirit merely. He sympathized so strongly with the movement, that his was the pen that wrote the first address in behalf of the Colony, and he was

not only the editor of its organ, *The Harbinger* in this city, but the subsequent author of a work on *Popular View of the Doctrines of Charles Fourier*.—Whither went his associates, whither he? ALL, HIMSELF INCLUDED, HIMSELF AT THEIR HEAD, TURNED ARCH REACTIONISTS!

It was no accident that the New York *Evening Post*, of which Parke Godwin was an editor and an inspiring force, was the utterer in later years of the doctrine of the “rifle diet” for the workingmen, and the advocate of the theory that justified the railroad corporations to defend “their realms” arm in hand. Sentiment, unguided by sense, unbanked upon economic and material fact, is like a meteor in space. Even though less of bulk and crushing power than the conservative rocks, that, never flying off the handle, stuck to the mountain ledge, the erratic meteor may, on its return trip, produce devastation. So with the Utopian.

Brilliant in pen and speech, and cutting a wide swath in the country’s history, Parke Godwin blazons by his career a path that must be shunned, an element that must be guarded against, and sure to be attracted by the Socialist Movement,—the path of Utopia, the brigade of the “Intellectuals.”

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