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EDITORIAL

W.K. VANDERBILT, JR.

By DANIEL DE LEON

EVEN casual readers of newspapers are aware of the proficiencies of crowned heads and Princes. The press despatches have taken care of that. There is not a European crowned head or Prince whose expertness in science, arts and letters has not been vaunted some time or other. The vulgar mind has the notion that these Princes and crowned heads are idlers, with all the vices of the idler, and expert only in that. But such notions are only vulgar; they are vicious and incorrect. For instance: did not the Czar of Russia quite recently “personally inspect” the engines of his warships and display “close technical knowledge”? Has not King Edward VII. been positively stated to be a “specialist on Shakespeare”? And on what is the German Emperor not a specialist, from painting down or up to electricity? And yet there are people so incredulous as to doubt the alleged facts, although published black upon white.

So likewise it is very much to be feared that the press despatches concerning the skill and usefulness of W.K. Vanderbilt, Jr., will be love’s labor lost upon certain folks. The press despatches announce the young man as having been elected a Director and Vice-President of the Utica and Mohawk Valley Railway Company and the Syracuse Rapid Transit Company. That is a very likely story, the wicked folks will say, and quoting Marx, the source of all their pestiferousness, that a man does not become a capitalist because he is a captain of industry, but he becomes a captain of industry because he is a capitalist—just as a man does not become a Prince because he is a King, but he becomes a King because he is a Prince. The story, accordingly, of W.K. Vanderbilt, Jr., hitherto known to the world only for his dangerous feats—dangerous to the pedestrians more than to himself—with speedy automobiles driven at reckless speed—the story that the gentleman has become a Director and Vice-President is not surprising; but what the vicious will decline to

believe is that the gentleman has “carefully trained himself on the science of railroading”, and is going to devote his “whole attention to his duties” for which he “is eminently qualified by laborious study”—that chunk of truth the vicious will doubt.

It is a pity that there are people so constituted that they will not believe a thing, even if the capitalists, or other people interested in its being believed, pay round sums to the papers to have it published.

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