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EDITORIAL

## “SUCCESS” AND “FAILURE.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

**P**ROF. J. Lawrence Laughlin of the University of Chicago, addressing the members of the Citizens' Industrial Association of America, whose guest he was at a banquet in the Auditorium last week, declared that “Socialism is the philosophy of failure.” We believe the professor was sincere in the expression of his opinion. We do not believe it was merely a case of a man indulging in some perfunctory phrases, intended to repay his hosts for the wining and dining that they treated him to. Nor do we believe that the professor had stimulated himself with the proper quantity of stimulants into a holding-a-stiff-upper-lip attitude. We believe the professor actually believed what he said, and complacently rests in his belief. It is only in the measure that the professor was actually sincere that his attitude answers a useful purpose in these critical days. It acts as a reflecting glass in which the past is reproduced, and the future is forecast, as well as some present phenomena are understood.

Just such banquets as the one given at the Auditorium were given in Rome in the days of Claudius and Nero; and just such posture as held by Prof. Laughlin towards Socialism was then held towards that gathering social-political movement known as “Christianity.” Its recruits came from the social “Failures”; the class in power esteemed itself “Success”; and yet the “Success” was submerged by the “Failure.”

Just such banquets as the one given at the Auditorium were given at Windsor in the days when Charles I walked, whip in hand, into the House of Commons, and treated the Speaker to a piece of his mind. At these banquets the posture held by Prof. Laughlin towards Socialism was the posture held by the pig-tailed feudal cavaliers towards the “dealers and merchants” and the “dissenting” “Roundheads.” The latter were the “Failures,” hereditary “Failures”; the cavalier class was

“Success”; and yet the “Failures” soundly dusted the “Successes,” and opened a new era in England.

The memoirs of the France of the Ancient Regime run over with accounts of the banquets—just such as given at the Auditorium—at which the habitues of the Tuilleries in all the candor of conviction held towards the “bourgeois” the language that Prof. Laughlin holds towards Socialism to-day. The Court of Louis XVI sincerely regarded itself as “Success,” a howling “Success,” the grumbling bourgeois as “Failures.” And yet “Failure” upturned “Success,” and now reigns supreme in France.

Franklin tells of the contempt in which, as a representative of the then merely protesting American Colonies, he was held at the Court of St. James. At the banquets, in which the loyal supporters of King George gathered, “Failures” was a mild name compared to the names bestowed upon the rebelling colonists by the “Successes” who basked in the warmth of the approval of Crown and Parliament—just as Prof. Laughlin at the Auditorium banquet. And yet the very spectacle of the banqueters and their professorial guest at the Chicago Auditorium is a monument of how again “Success” proved failure, and “Failure” success.

Still more recently, not fifty years ago, Auditorium banquets are reported in Greeley’s *Conflict Between the States*<sup>1</sup> to have been held, at which the Prof. Laughlins of those days, some times in anger, some times in a bantering mood, but ever from the bottom of their conviction, pronounced Abolitionism what Socialism is pronounced to-day—“the philosophy of Failure.” Needless to go into the details of how the “Failure” staved in the head of the “Success.”

No need of multiplying examples. The instances quoted furnish the alphabet with the aid of which to decipher the Past and the Future, and understand the Present.

Not from “Success” but from “Failure” does society draw those forces that have pushed civilization forward at each recurring critical period in the annals of the human race. Prof. Laughlin is no new apparition. He is as old as the hills; and he fulfills to-day the useful mission of furnishing the living exhibit, by which to demonstrate that canon of the modern “Philosophy of Failure,” Socialism, which

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<sup>1</sup> [Greeley, Horace. *The American Conflict*. Hartford, 1864–1866.]

establishes that no amount of book learning, no amount of opportunity, ever suffices to enlighten a ruling class however foot-in-the-grave it may be, that the day of the failure of its own Success is at hand, and the day of the success of what it ignorantly terms “Failure” is upon it.

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