

FIRST EDITORIAL

THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IS NO GIDDY-HEADED ATALANTA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

In previous issues reference has been made to a recent book on economics issued by Prof. **Richard T. Ely**.¹ Numerous errors, fallacies, incoherencies that appear in it have been pointed out in these columns and exposed. The book might be utilized as a veritable “vade mecum” to exemplify sound reasoning by contrast with its procession of blunders. To a certain extent it has been utilized that way in these columns, and, as occasion offers may be put to still further use, later on, in the same line. However, before dismissing the book for the present, it is well to contemplate it in the “all together” and by the light of the large number of similar productions that the modern Social Question or Socialist Movement is just now being deluged with. Such contemplation will reveal an interesting sight.

The classic legend tells of **Atalanta**, a ravishing maid, of physical vigor but light of head. She was a swift runner, and, of course, was beset with suitors. Her condition was to run a race: He who out-ran her should have her; he whom she out-ran was to be forthwith beheaded. The charms of the maid overcame the dangers of the courtship. Many applied, but only to lose their heads instead of winning her



ATALANTA AND HIPPOMENES

Guido Reni (1575–1642)

¹ [Richard T. Ely, *Monopolies and Trusts*, MacMillan Co., N.Y., 1900. See J. Bernstein, “Current Literature,” *Daily People*, Sunday, August 26, 1900.]

at the goal. She out-ran them all. Finally, one presented himself who had observed her closely, and concluded that, matchless in a fair race, she was conquerable by stratagem. The race started with him in the lead, but her vigor of sinew was such that she gained on him rapidly. When almost up to him, he dropped a glittering apple; the gay-looking thing fascinated her as it rolled off; she stooped to pick it up, lost time thereby, and he took a spurt forward. Again she began to close upon him; and again, at the right moment, he dropped an apple, which, again stooping to pick up, made her again lose time, enabling him to recover his lead. For the third time Atalanta had closed the distance between her and her running mate; the goal was now almost within reach; she was certain to pass him and touch it; but he had a third apple in reserve, which, rolling down again, caught her eye, caused her to lose time in stooping for it, and gave Hippomenes the victory.

The stratagem applied by Atalanta's successful suitor is the stratagem that the upholders of the present monstrous social system of capitalism are seeking to bring into play against the Socialist Movement. A race is being run between the two. The inherent vigor of Socialism has enabled it to nearly close the distance that Capitalism first had the lead of, and to insure its triumph. At this stage, glittering apples are let drop in its path in the shape of "banale" economic literature. Like Atalanta, losing time in stooping to pick up the apples that Hippomenes tempted her with, Socialism is expected to lose time and fritter away its energies in tackling the hair-splitting arguments and involved sophistries that the "intellectuals" are getting up to order so as to tempt it with.

But all of no avail. The Socialist Movement is no giddy-headed Atalanta. As solid in mind as in body, it can not be wheedled out of the direct forthright. With the goal steadily in sight, it will reserve all its energies to reach it, the complete overthrow of the latest and last system of human enslavement—The Capitalist System of Exploitation.

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

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