

EDITORIAL

## PHRENOLOGY—ANCIENT AND MODERN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**P**ULITZER'S paper, the *New York World* of the 1st of this month reproduces with gusto, under the caption "The Wise Solon on Socialism", a passage from the drama *Solon in Lydia* recently written by a German, Theodore Herzl,<sup>1</sup> as an argument against, or counter-blast to the progress made by Socialism in Europe. The passage quoted by *The World* for American consumption is the following:

"A young Greek came to the King of Lydia and said to him: 'I am in possession of a secret by which I can manufacture wheat. Your people shall have their food free.'

"The King replied: 'Fulfill your promise and you shall marry my daughter.' The court rejoiced. Only the wise Solon shook his head in doubt.

"The young and ardent Reformer filled a great building with the wheat he had manufactured by his secret. The people left their work and came to look. He gave them bread, saying to them: 'The people shall have their food free.'

"The butchers and bakers and builders and all the workingmen thereupon stopped work, saying to each other: 'Why should we toil day after day for small wages? We can get our food free.' They crowned the young Reformer with a laurel wreath and he married the King's daughter. Only the wise Solon still shook his head and murmured in his beard: 'Wait and see what happens when there is no longer need to work.'

"The sick died in the hospitals because the physicians said: 'Why should we work? Our food is free.' The dead lay in the streets because the gravediggers said: 'Why should we work? Our food is free.'

"The rumor spread that the store of food would not last, and in the struggle to obtain it the strong trampled the weak, and the policemen and judges said to each other: 'Why should we work to keep order? Our food is free.'

"The life of the city stopped. The streets were dark at night. Riots grew

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Herzl, or Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), founder of modern Zionism, also authored several utopian plays and novels about a future Jewish state.

unchecked. Men were slain. Robbers robbed with impunity. The town was given up to anarchy and chaos, because men had only to go and fetch their food and need no longer work for it. The country sank into bestiality; men became animals because their food was free. The King was left alone in his palace because his servants said to each other: ‘Why should we serve any one? Our food is free.’

“On the third night, at the height of the disorder, the wise Solon took a vial of poison and poisoned the young Reformer while he slept. His secret died with him. The store of corn was exhausted, and with the necessity to earn bread, peace and prosperity were soon restored to the country.”

Such is the posture of Herzel and his quoter on the subject of machinery or other improvements to labor—a posture that clearly implies, if it means any thing, either that machinery and scientific discoveries must be stamped out as injurious to the human race, or that they must be promoted only for the benefit of the few, leaving the masses in primitive condition of abject toil. Such, furthermore, is the interpretation of the modern Herzel and *World*, which quotes him with relish, of the mental and spiritual elevation of the Ancients.

Now let the Ancients speak for themselves:

“If every tool, when summoned, or even of its own accord, could do the work that befits it, just as the creations of Daedalus moved of themselves, or the tripods of Hephaestos went of their own accord to their sacred work, if the weavers’ shuttles were to weave of themselves, then there would be no need of apprentices for master-workers, or of slaves for the lords.”

Thus spake Aristotle, the greatest mind of the days that the modern Herzels and *Worlds* pretend to interpret. Thus did that great thinker explain the reason for the existence of slavery, which meant Labor, in his days; and thus, simultaneously, did he foreshadow the day when slavery, or arduous toil for the masses, WOULD CEASE TO HAVE A REASON, AND SHOULD BE ABOLISHED—the day when the weaver’s shuttle would move of itself, in short, the day of the modern perfected machine.

Nor was the thinker alone. Poetry seconded with lofty strains the profound thought of philosophy:

“Spare the hand that grinds the corn  
“Oh, miller gillers, and softly sleep.

“Let Chanticleer announce the morn in vain!  
“Dea has commanded the work of the girls  
“To be done by the Nymphs, and now  
“They skip lightly over the wheels  
“So that the shaken axles revolve  
“With their spokes, and pull round  
“The load of the revolving stones.  
“Let us now live the life of our fathers,  
“And let us rest from work and enjoy  
“The gifts that the Goddess has sent us!”

Thus sang Antiparos, the Greek poet, hailing the invention of the water-wheel, an invention, as Marx tersely observes, that is the elementary form of all machinery, as the bestower of freedom to female drudges, and the bringer back of the Golden Age.<sup>2</sup>

Contrast the profoundness of the wisdom, the loftiness of the sentiment, the humanity of the heart of the Ancients, as they actually were—contrast that with the thought, the sentiment and the heart of the Herzels and the *Worlds*, who traduce them by interpreting them according to the vulgar and base standards of the “thinkers” and “songsters” of the present-day capitalism.

“Oh!” exclaims Marx, as he cites and reviews those passages from the Ancients, “Oh, those heathens! They understood—, as the learned Bastiat, and before him the still wiser McCulloch have discovered—nothing of political economy and Christianity. They did not, for example, comprehend that machinery is the surest means of lengthening the working day. They, perhaps, excused the slavery of one on the ground that it was a means to the full development of another. But to preach the slavery of the masses, in order that a few crude and half-educated upstarts might become ‘eminent spinners,’ ‘extensive sausage-makers,’ and ‘influential shoeblack dealers’—to do this they lacked the bump of Christianity.”<sup>3</sup>

And we may add—they lacked the bump of the Jew-Christian strumpets of the Capitalist Class.

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<sup>2</sup> [Marx quotes this poem in *Capital* and identifies the author as Antiparos, which is an island. Most likely Archilochus (680–645 B.C.)]

<sup>3</sup> [*Capital*, Chapter 15.]

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