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EDITORIAL

AN IRREPRESSIBLE HUMORIST.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IF it be true that the genuine humorist is he who is funny even when not aware of it, then the palm for humor may not be denied to Mark Twain. Upon the news that peace was concluded between Russia and Japan, the author of *Innocents Abroad* launched the following declaration from his retreat in Durham, N.H.:

“Russia was on the high road to emancipation from an insane and intolerable slavery. I was hoping there would be no peace until Russian liberty was safe. I think that this was a holy war in the best and noblest sense of that abused term and that no war was ever charged with a higher mission.

“I think there can be no doubt that that mission is now defeated and Russia’s chains riveted, this time to stay. I think the Czar will now withdraw the small humanities that have been forced from him and resume his medieval barbarisms with a relieved spirit and an immeasurable joy. I think Russian liberty has had its last chance, and has lost it.

“I think nothing has been gained by the peace that is remotely comparable to what has been sacrificed by it. One more battle would have abolished the waiting chains of billions upon billions of unborn Russians, and I wish it could have been fought. I hope I am mistaken, yet in all sincerity I believe that this peace is entitled to rank as the most conspicuous disaster in political history.”

This is humor; humor of the keenest; and what is humor if it be not keen? In a way, it partakes of the “gallows drollery” of the man, who, being about to be hanged, protested with the sheriff that if he put that noose too tight around his neck it would choke him.

Of course the “Peace of Portsmouth” is a disaster,—at least it is meant to turn into such.

Japan had shot too well. Her cannon-balls reached as far as the heart of the Moscovite Empire, and exploded there. The explosion begot other explosions. The popular heart took fire: the chains of Moscovite tyranny were to be snapped. Nor did the shock end there. It leaped the boundaries of Russia. It shook every State in Europe. It leaped the Atlantic: it was felt, ominously felt, in America. As the vibrations of the central shock traveled Westward, its effects translated themselves into the language and aspirations of nations who had their respective "Russian Revolutions" behind them—radical bourgeois aspirations, national independence, and, finally, Labor independence, were the successive utterances of the westering repercussions of the explosions in Russia, set agoing by the Japanese guns in Manchuria. The ruling classes of the world took alarm. From being at first unpopular, the Moscovite began to be sympathized with. Tyrants the world over recognized their kinship. The Czar's disasters conquered for him the alliance of the world's oppressors. Each battle won by Japan gave new impulse to the revolutionary fervor that was circling the globe. Another victory was impending. It had to be warded off. It was warded off. Peace was dictated at Portsmouth by Roosevelt, who acted as the representative of the world's Labor oppressors.

Jesters and fools at the courts of old were philosophers in fact. With no purpose to compare Mark Twain with the motleys of old, his humor in this instance is as keenly philosophic as theirs. Nor does the keenness of the joke lose from the circumstance that causes, unconsidered by the author of *A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*, will thwart the purpose of the peace dictators. His joke has well brought out their object. That is enough for the nonce.

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

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slpns@slp.org