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EDITORIAL

ASTRONOMICAL ECONOMICS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

AMONG the Senators gathered in Washington who enjoyed exceptional opportunities of education and of subsequent experience none ranks higher than Elihu Root, the junior Senator from New York. It surely is not meant for idle flattery to their New York colleague when more than one of the other Senators refer to him in terms of admiration and deference. Take him all in all, Elihu Root may be said to impersonate in Congress the best the best type of bourgeois intellectuality in the country. It is fair to say that a peep at the bourgeois mind through the telescope of Elihu Root will convey the best and correctest picture of the bourgeois class. Such a peep may be had by a perusal of the Senator's speech in Congress on the Postal Savings proposition. In the course of that speech the following crucial passage occurs:



ELIHU ROOT (1845–1937)

“For many years we have had a regularly recurring series of financial panics. Our financial system in some way fails to respond with the right reaction to the mysterious movements of public feeling and sentiment and interest in the great trade and financial affairs of the earth. We all know that there is a misfit somehow, so that when the string is drawn tight in the finances of the world our system is pulled the wrong way. There has been much argument about it, but evermore we come out of the same door wherein we went. We have had a monetary commission now seeking to solve the problem, after long deliberation and investigation, unable to commend to us a suitable conclusion; but that lack of proper relation between our financial system and the ever recurring possibilities of trade and finance is a fixed and admitted fact. No one disputes it. Our only dispute is as to how to remedy it, and we have not yet found how to remedy it. . . . The panic comes. As the battle turns to the rout of the defeated army, as the crowd chokes the door of the theater on fire and tramples each the other down, panic seizes our people, and the banks are unable to

respond. . . . When those times come, as come they will again," etc., etc.

What a picture does this telescope disclose!

A misfit in social and economic affairs is acknowledged; picked committees are admitted to have been set to work to locate the misfit, and are admitted to have toiled without success; the law underlying the misfit is pronounced "mysterious"; and the convulsion of another, and yet another panic, world without end, is resignedly prophesied. In the person of one of its foremost representatives, the Elihu Root telescope displays to the gaze the bourgeoisie with crossed arms and bended head in acknowledged impotence in the presence of the Economic Question of the day.

Not otherwise does man stand in the presence of astronomic phenomena. He might prefer day to last; whatever his wishes, the sun goes down periodically, periodically bringing about darkness. Hurricanes, devastating hailstorms, cloud bursts—all these atmospheric phenomena satisfy man that "there is a misfit somehow." "No one disputes" the evil of these recurrences; that they are evils "is a fixed and admitted fact." They have occurred before, they will "come again." "Mysterious" is their origin; they are unavoidable; man is impotent to prevent them.

Intellectual bankruptcy typifies the bourgeois who really would remedy the man-wrought evils of the day. He, no less than his brother who cares not to remedy the evils, both of them being comfortable amid the hailstorms of the economic misfit, is the last personage from whom help may be expected by the swelling class that is perpetually scourged, and periodically scourged still worse, by the alleged "mysterious" workings of Capital.

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