

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 4, NO. 21.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, JULY 21, 1903.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

AT THE BIER OF LEO XIII.

By DANIEL DE LEON

PROBABLY the best known passage of all Macaulay's works is that in which, after ascending the long line of Popes, he foretells an equally long and illustrious line, extending into that distant future, when some traveler from New Zealand will take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge, and sketch the ruins of St. Paul's. The charm of historical generalization has concealed the serious historical flaw in Macaulay's forecast. No more than the brilliant Rhine fall of Schaffhausen can be seen in the sluggish waters of that river's dune-soaked deltas in Holland, or could be detected in the ocean that absorbs it, is the Papacy of old to be seen in the Papacy of to-day, or is it likely to be detected in the Ocean of Future Civilization.

When the Papacy—accepting its own substantially correct genesis—sprang into existence it throbbed with a moral sense that placed it at war with wrong ON EARTH, and that thereby gave it a power and splendor, which it now enjoys in tradition only. It almost savors of the affectation of learning to enumerate the illustrious men—from St. Augustine up and down—, and the burning words they uttered and mighty deeds they occasionally performed, against the mighty in wealth. The early Papacy, as the early Fathers of the Church, perceived the wrong that lay at the bottom of private property, and the even grosser wrongs that that led to. These men were Communists. Those were the days of the Rhine fall at Schaffhausen period of the Papacy.

To-day, to adhere to the simile, the Papacy has run into the ground; its splendor, and its brilliancy and, consequently, its real power, are now like the sluggish waters of the Rhine deltas in Holland. To-day, the Papacy is essentially different from what it once was. Once the staff of the oppressed, it has now become the staff of the oppressor. Once illumined by St. Augustine, it is now illumined by

St. Capital. As completely as the pure rain-bow tinted Rhine waters at Schaffhausen have lost on the beach of Holland purity and tint, and are impregnated with the surrounding defilement, so completely has the Papacy of old, now about running into the Ocean of Future Civilization, lost its one-time purity and tint, and become impregnated with the soilure of the soil that it traversed and is traversing,—and that has overcome it. As weak and decrepit as the pathetic almost-centennarian, who has just expired and whose chief achievement was that of a successful valetudinarian, is the one-time Papacy of to-day,—artificially kept alive, as he himself was artificially kept alive for the last seventy-two hours of his alleged existence.

London Bridge may yet, some day, fall into decay; one of its broken arches may yet, some day, offer a stand for some sketching traveler; and not impossible is the prospect of St. Paul's, some day, presenting a pretty subject of architectural ruin. But the light that once illumined the Papacy has gone out. More likely it is that that remote traveler from New Zealand will pick out for his subject the crumbling ruins of the once majestic light-house in which once burned the light lighted by Clement I, and whose wick was trimmed by St. Augustine.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded January 2007