

EDITORIAL

## JOHN SPARGO, A SPECIMEN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**I**T is not the *Daily People's* purpose to hound Mr. John Spargo by citing the second installment of the castigation administered to him by Franz Mehring, the German celebrity on the life of Marx, for Mr. Spargo's catch-penny biography of Marx, which Mehring not only pronounced fustian, but justly characterized as and proved to be "an insulting disregard for the International Socialist Movement." This article has a higher purpose than hounding.

In a letter to Mehring, published in the *Neue Zeit* of the 10th of last month, Mr. Spargo seeks to justify himself. What methods does the gentleman adopt? Let the following passages from Mehring's reply—the antidote which accompanies Mr. Spargo's letter in the same issue of the *Neue Zeit*—serve as a sample of Mr. Spargo's method: "I know not who has made Comrade Spargo the compliment [as Spargo claims] of having given an 'essentially true picture' of Marx's Life and Work. One thing is certain—it was not I, seeing that I consider his biography 'essentially false.' . . .

"One more probe of the conscientiousness of Comrade Spargo. In my supplementary edition [on Marx] I made in a short sentence the observation that Marx was promoted at Jena in his absence, according to information imparted to me from the records of the University of Jena. I was of the opinion that Comrade Spargo had copied this passage in the inaccurate form that Marx had appeared in person in Jena in order to realize the first part of his ambitious dreams. In the above explana-



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tion, however, Comrade Spargo declares: Quod non! [Far from that!] Out of consideration for the reputation of the German Universities, he had, on the contrary, undertaken an extensive research, in order to ascertain whether promotions ‘in absentia’ [in absence] were possible in Germany, and he discovered numerous friends, and more than one University man, all of whom assured him that such singular performances did not take place at German Universities. To inquire direct from me he abstained from on the ground of my having left unanswered at least two letters from him, of which two letters, be it said in passing, not one ever reached me, and, of course, the sober course of inquiring direct from Jena never occurred to his luxurious phantasy.”

The serious taints that mark Mr. Spargo’s work and methods mark the methods and works of the Hillquits, the Hunters, the Simonses, indeed, of all the Socialist party intellectuals who have written books on the Movement in America, and who have crossed the Ocean with budgets of slander against the Socialist Labor Party. With one and all there is a great affectation of knowledge; with one and all there is a great parade of painstaking accuracy; with one and all there is ostentatious candor of argument, just as with Mr. Spargo; and—just as with Mr. Spargo, with one and all the knowledge collapses into a heap of rubbish, no sooner looked into; the pretence of accuracy stands exposed as false pretence, no sooner tested; the candor is transformed into viciousness at the slightest touch.

Often have S.L.P. men expressed wonder at the easy acceptance that these tainted goods from America have received among many of our European comrades. Are these comrades constitutionally gullible; and, if they are what hope is there of ever removing the false impressions they have been duped into accepting regarding the Movement in America?

The fate that has betided Mr. Spargo at Mehring’s hands answers both questions.

Anxious to see a strong Socialist Movement in America, and their hands full to overflowing with their own home concerns, our European comrades have no time to look critically into the mass of false information that they are flooded with by what may be called Spargo-Hillquit-Hunter-Simonism. Soon, however, as the Spargo-Hillquit-Hunter-Simonism, encouraged by success, touches matter that Europe

knows all about; that instant the seemingly gullible rise to the occasion.

The S.L.P. may rest easy so far as its future standing in Europe is concerned. The success that Spargo-Hillquit-Hunter-Simonism has had is a sort of rope that Providence lets those have for whom Providence has hanging in store.

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Uploaded March 2015

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