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EDITORIAL

ROOSEVELT ON THE FLYING TRAPEZE.

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PRESIDENT Roosevelt is back in Washington. During his tour, he delivered, according to the cash register, kept by an Arkansas paper{,} just 141 speeches. That's a goodly number, absolutely and relatively. And yet, of the whole string of pearls there is not one that can compare with that in which this passage occurs.

“We have no plutocrats in this country. If the people have bad laws it is their own fault.”

It were hard, in the whole gamut of reasoning, whatever the domain, to find a more brilliant instance of flying-trapeze performance. When the distinguished “orator and thinker”—to say nothing of his military faculties—starts by declaring that—

“We have no plutocrats in this country”;

the crowd at our national hippodrome holds its breath, very much as crowds at smaller hippodrome tents hold their breath when the flying-trapeze performer throws himself headlong down from the dizzy height he had just soared up to. “Will he dash his brains?” is the anxious question, that fills the minds of all present. The identical question must have filled the minds, and caused the hearts to stop beating, when our beloved President got off that line;—a line as obviously in violation of all facts, facts that are sensible to the feeling as to the sight of everyone; as obviously in violation of all reason, as the idea that a human body could escape destruction when hurled down through space; as obviously in violation of social economics as the physical flying-trapeze performer's feat is in violation of the laws

of gravitation; in short, so preposterous an utterance that it and its utterer are justly expected to be seen going to pieces the next minute. And yet, not so. Just as in the instance of the skilful physical trapeze performer, a cry of relief goes up when he is immediately again seen swinging, smiling and safe, and once again in line with all the laws of nature, and is applauded to the echo, so in this our Presidential instance of intellectual flying-trapezeing. The popular breath returns, and deafening applause, well merited applause, greets him when he is immediately again seen, swinging, smiling and safe, and once again in line with facts and sociologic laws, on the bar of—

“If the people have bad laws it is their own fault.”

Beautiful!

It needs all the error of the first part of the sentence in order to bring all the soundness of the second and closing part of the sentence into striking relief. For the sake of the latter, the former is pardonable, even justifiable.

Bravo! Well done, Teddy!

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