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EDITORIAL

ST. ANTHONY OF CAPITAL.

By DANIEL DE LEON

FOR almost a generation Anthony Comstock has filled the public eye. At first he filled it slightly; as time went on, he filled it more and more. The day arrived when he filled, in a sense, the most conspicuous place in the nation. He was a national Censor of good morals.

Comstock's activity was felt everywhere. Classic works of art and literature came under his ban. It came to pass that great paintings were excluded from public gaze, great statues were condemned, and an inquisitorial spirit began to pervade the Post Office, threatening a return of the days of the public fagot. People relied on the Spirit of the Age and trusted that Comstockism would not send us back to the Dark Ages, and good-naturedly people began to joke on the new Censor. Pantalets were to be painted on the Venuses, and pantalets were to be clapped on the lower extremities of Franklin's statue on Printing House Square. But while many took this easy view of the Comstock outbreak, there were those who did not. They saw in it a serious affair. And they were right. The decision of the Comptroller of the Treasury just rendered against Comstock proves that the seriously inclined had the correct penetration.

Comstock has for years held the position of Post Office Inspector as the active head of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. The office carried a nominal salary of \$100 per annum from the United States Government. A man moved by pure motives, and well paid by his own Society, was, of course, not to look for big pay from the Government. "Lucre was not his aim." And indeed Mr. Comstock never drew his \$100. Mark that!

But what did Mr. Comstock do? His P.O. commission entitles him to ride free on every road in the United States carrying United States mails, being practically good for transportation throughout the country. Now, despite this, Mr. Comstock has, at least in a number of cases, charged mileage, and \$1.50 per diem in addition for attendance. In

other words, under the atmosphere of disinterested sanctity raised by his relinquishing the \$100 nominal salary, Comstock pocketed many times more! The Department finally got tired of this, held up Saint Anthony's claims, and ordered Marshal Henkel to pay none more.

Saints, patron Saints{,} are symbolic of the epoch and the spirit that gave birth to them. A savage will have an uncouth block of wood for his patron Saint; a devotee of music will give birth to a Raphaelic St. Cecilia; and so on. Likewise the immoral spirit of Capitalism. It will also raise its patron Saint, the St. Anthony of Capital, who will pantalet the legs of Beauty and leave unpantaleted the legs of Fraud.

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