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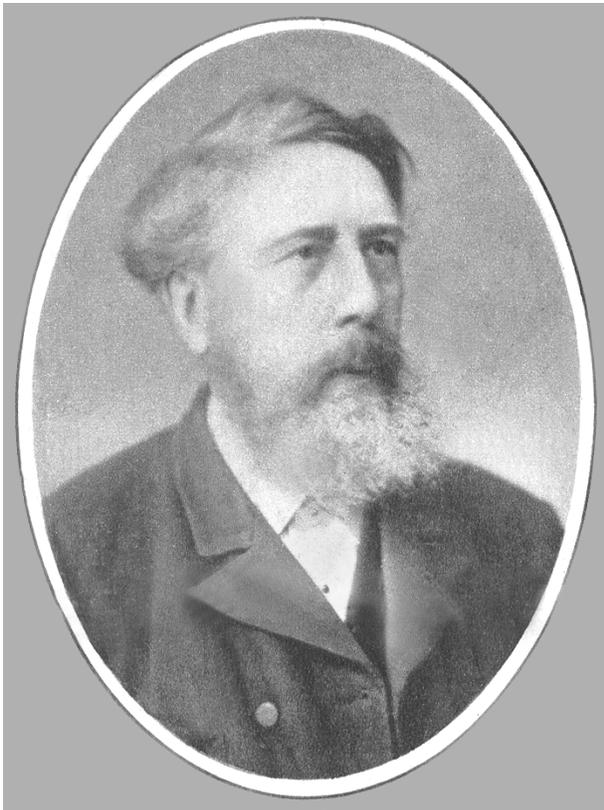
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FIRST EDITORIAL

## WILLIAM LIEBKNECHT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**W**ith the demise of [Liebknecht](#) there passed a central figure from the stormy political boards of Europe. Nevertheless, central as his figure was, the loss—to those to whom it is a loss—is incomparably slighter than the passing away of any of the leading figures who are expositors of the present social order. In this lies a deep distinction between the Socialist and the Capitalist Social Order, at this stage of development.



WILHELM LIEBKNECHT (1827-1900)

A Bismarck, a Gladstone, a Crispi—none of these can depart without a shock to the Social Order that produced them, and whose upholders they were. Crumbling as the edifice is which they prop up, the loss of the propping-up qualities is felt deeply; and mourning, far and wide, seizes those dependent on the continuance of “what is.” The men are few who combine in themselves the needed good and bad qualities that go to the upholding of a social edifice that is doomed, and breaking down. The finding of a fit successor is always doubtful.

Not so with the Socialist Movement at this stage of social transition. With a movement in motion, men become of secondary importance: the Movement is paramount; IT is the essential thing. In so far as men are needed, the Movement itself produces them, as fast as needed, just as a wave of equal or even greater height and power ever rises from the bosom of the stormy ocean ready to take the

place of the one that has just dashed itself into spray. Such is the case with all social systems at their revolutionary stage. Such was the case with the Capitalist System, when it was struggling for a footing to wrestle with and finally overthrow the Feudal System; and such is the case to-day when Socialism, the legitimate offshoot of Capitalism, is in turn struggling for a footing to wrestle with and finally over throw the last vestige of human slavery.

Firm in his convictions, unapproachable by corruption, true throughout to the Cause of the Emancipation of the Proletariat, Liebknecht was the product of a Movement that has in its bosom as many others to follow until its mission shall have been fulfilled.

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

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