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SECOND EDITORIAL

## PEGASUS YOKED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**E**lla Wheeler Wilcox is known in the land as a poet of no mean fervor. She is the Sappho of America. As such she has reached distinction, that is enviable; now, however, she is about to reach distinction, that is unenviable.



Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850–1919), American poet—but no sociologist.

In the columns of the *Journal* Ella Wheeler Wilcox now makes her appearance, a would-be teacher of the workers. She commends their striving to improve society: aye, she commends their wanting Socialism, but, she argues with them, they are going about it in the wrong way. “Begin with yourselves,” she says: “become unselfish, be kind, be thoughtful to others, to children, to the weak. Not until then may you talk about social reform”!!

In other words:

“Workingmen, waste your energies in changing the results of your condition, but never give a thought to changing the cause of those conditions. Let the capitalist class gnaw at the ribs of your ship, and make holes into it, through which the water pours, fit to

drown you: never mind that; be you, workingmen, busy at bailing out the water; not until you have bailed out the water have you any business to try stopping the holes through which the water pours in upon you!”

Pegasus, the steed of the Muses, once free and pure, has come under the yoke. The gold of the *Journal*, which, in upholding capitalism, breeds the sins of harshness and cruelty, has shackled the noble steed's flights. And now, instead of arousing that virile anger and indignation that are creative of good, it seeks to ply the salve, that dulls pain, misleads, and allows the disease full swing.

If Pegasus can come down to vilely inspired prose, shall not weaker humanity be pardoned for coming down in other ways? If capitalism—Hearstdom, or Bryandom, or McKinleydom—can corrupt the noble steed, is it a wonder that they can and do debase humanity?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, as a *Journal* decoy for capitalism, takes her place along with brutified humanity, and each in her way calls out in powerful appeal:

“Oh, workers of America, lay the axe to the root of the Upas tree; fell capitalism; fell it quickly, for we are sinking, sinking fast!”

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

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