

**DEBS; HIS
AUTHORIZED
LIFE AND LETTERS**

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Debs; his authorized life and letters by David Karsner

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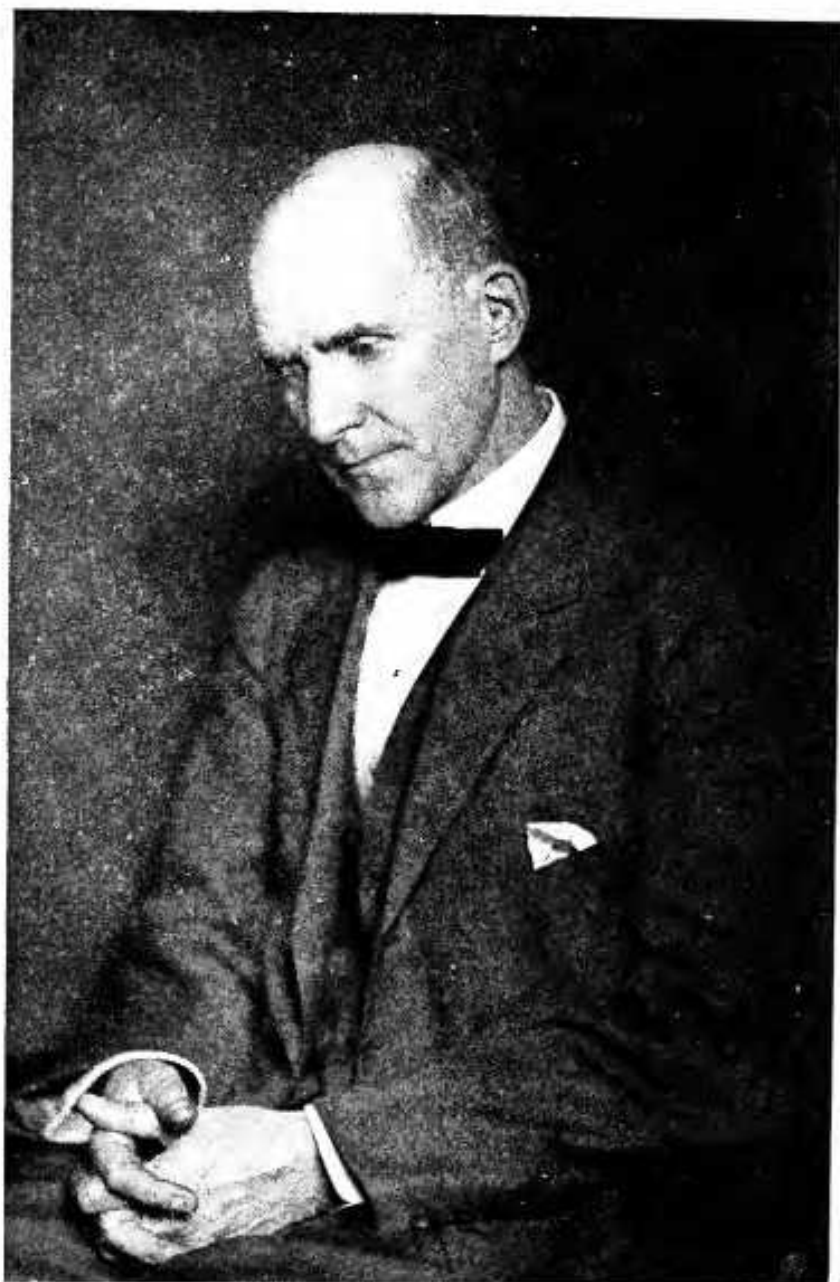
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DAVID KARSNER

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Photograph by Allen Drew Cook

EUGENE VICTOR DEBS

DEBS

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BY
DAVID KARSNER



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INTRODUCTION

DEBS'S AUTHORIZATION AND INDORSEMENT

EUGENE VICTOR DEBS, a federal convict in the United States Prison at Atlanta, Ga., was prohibited, under the prison rule, from doing any sort of writing except the one letter a week to his family. He could not, therefore, *write* an introduction to this volume. Consequently, I visited him at the Atlanta Prison on July 17, 1919, and in the presence of Warden Fred G. Zerbst, Debs authorized and authenticated this record of his life in these words:

"I am exceedingly glad that you were commissioned to write this book which, I am sure, will come to be recognized as an important and an imperishable contribution to American labor history. Although the rules of the prison do not permit me to write an introduction to your book, or to do any writing of any kind aside from my one letter a week to my family, in this spoken word I authorize you to write the story.

"I give to you as the author, and to Boni and Liveright as the publishers, not merely my word of approval and hearty indorsement of your book, but my warm appreciation of this manifest interest in the cause in which I have been privileged to serve all of my life. You will write just the kind of a book that Time and History will require, and in every line, on every page you will be speaking for me with my authority, given to you without reservations or qualifications.

"More than any other person you have been pe-

cularly identified with the whole story since it began with the trial in September, 1918. Your daily reports of the trial in Cleveland, your several accounts of the trip we took from Terre Haute to Moundsville Penitentiary last April, and your several interviews with me at Moundsville, all printed in *The New York Call*, were rare specimens of newspaper accuracy and journalistic skill. I say this not as flattery, but as the personal conviction which I have expressed to you in writing before.

"Honestly, I do not know of a man in America who is placed in so advantageous a position, from so many angles, to write this book, as yourself. I suppose that other books along similar lines and covering the same subject will be bound to follow, but already you are fortified with a thorough knowledge of the case and have an understanding and an appreciation of its historic significance to be able, more than any other, to write authoritatively. As you have so far been the newspaper historian of my trial, conviction and imprisonment, you will now become the historian of the whole story in a much larger and more permanent sense.

"And I indorse and shall stand by your book as being the real and true history of such facts, incidents and data that you may deem necessary to write about, comment upon or interpret, and you therefore understand without further word from me that I place abundant faith in your moral and intellectual integrity. If I did not feel absolutely sure that you would discuss your subject frankly, fearlessly, justly and accurately, and in the same intellectually honest spirit that I would write of it, I should of course be compelled to withhold my imprimatur from your book.

"During this past year, crowded with these momentous months when we have been together under the most trying circumstances, you have measured beyond every test of loyalty and devotion as a friend and com-