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EDITORIAL

SMALL FAVORS THANKFULLY RECEIVED, LARGE ONES, ETC.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ELSEWHERE in this issue will be found a re-print of an article entitled: “The Social Lynching of Goriky and Andreiva,” which appeared in the *Independent* of April 26, and is written by Prof. Franklin H. Giddings of Columbia University. The article is remarkable—remarkable for its cleverness and remarkable for its dullness, remarkable as an exhibition of moral courage and remarkable as an exhibition of moral turpitude, remarkable as a blow for justice and equally remarkable as a blow, or rather a shield, for crying injustice.

The justly indignant thesis of the Professor is that the conduct of the newspapers in the matter of Goriky and Madame Andreiva was a case of “moral mobbing,” a case of lynching. The argument in support of this position is unanswerable and brilliant. It weaves reason and facts into a cord with which thick welts are deservedly raised on the backs of these papers. Disposing well of the claim of alleged immorality in the relations of Goriky and Andreiva, by showing with a list of striking illustrations that no such thought of immorality haunts the minds of these identical journals in their attitude towards the Goethes, the John Stuart Mills, the George Eliots, the Richard Wagners, the Professor takes up the legal-ethic aspect of the occurrence. Upon that he says:

“In their lucid intervals, Americans commonly insist that the methods of ‘La Foule’—the hysterical crowd, the lynching mob—are unjustifiable, when directed against persons almost certainly guilty of monstrous crimes. We profess to believe in the excellence of deliberation, and in the principles of civil liberty. We hold that it is better to assume the innocence even of a prisoner at the bar, against whom a formal indictment has been found, until his guilt has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt to every one of a jury of twelve unprejudiced men”; and the

Professor shows how each of these principles was done violence to in the matter of Gorky and Andreiva. How “first came the unsupported accusation of wrong doing”; how a newspaper story “was published with sensational and question-begging headlines”; how the charges were made “but no proof was offered”; how “judgment of condemnation was immediately passed”; how “the whole pack of headline melodists took up the cry”; etc.; etc. Finally, from this array of indisputable facts and incontrovertible reasoning, the Professor concludes that the newspapers’ conduct towards Gorky and Andreiva was one of lynching, was one in which “fair play” was outraged. So far, so good. Finally, the Columbia University Professor alludes to the recent case of “a man of great wealth who controlled vast business interests and who had been a prominent figure in national politics,” dying “in one of the chief cities of America” under circumstances “of a taking off that would have made one of the most interesting stories ever committed to print”; he points to the fact that notwithstanding “within twenty-four hours every reporter, managing editor and editorial writer on the New York press” [the Professor will kindly exclude the *Daily People*, which is not admitted to such secrets of the moral capitalist class] “knew all the circumstances of a taking off that would have made one of the most interesting stories ever committed to print,” yet “not one newspaper in this city told that story”; he applauds such an act on the part of the capitalist press as an “act of decent self-restraint”; and then he inquires with suspicious ingenuousness, why do these same newspapers not “practice a similar restraint when opportunity opens to spare or to assassinate the private reputations of men and women who do not happen to be powerful or to be surrounded by powerful friends?” It is in this question, in its affectation of ingenuousness, of fair play, and of higher morality, that lie the dullness, the turpitude and the pharisaic injustice of the Columbia University Professor.

First—With regard to the incident of the wealthy capitalist and politician, the circumstances of whose thrilling taking off the newspapers carefully suppressed:

Is it supposable that if, instead of its having been a leading capitalist who was shot by an outraged capitalist husband, it had been a member of the Working Class shot for a similar offence by another member of his class,—is it to be supposed that these newspapers would then have displayed an equal degree of “decent self-

restraint”? and would the Professor have been equally full of applause for their “decency”?

Furthermore, it was not the newspapers alone that did the suppressing. If there is any credit therefor, the physicians also, who attended the patient, and who, in violation of their professional oath, gave the name of “appendicitis” to the “disease” inflicted by the fire-arm of the outraged capitalist husband—they also were heroes of an act of “decent self-restraint”; in other words, perjury becomes an act of “decent self-restraint” when practiced in behalf of a capitalist, and all the Professors who are privy to the deed and keep mum are also exalted beings.

Nor yet is this all, under this head. If it is an act of “decent self-restraint” for physicians to fill out a certificate of death, accounting with the name of “appendicitis” for a death that is deliberately inflicted by a capitalist husband upon a member of his capitalist class—if for the sake of the character of “society folks” a fire-arm wound may be translated into “appendicitis,” and the safeguard of a coroner’s inquest circumvented—if that is an act of “decent self-restraint,” what is to prevent a similar act of “decent self-restraint” from being practiced any time a capitalist, in one of their drunken debauches, should sportively shoot down some workingman present? What is to prevent the murder from being hushed up and the murderer from keeping his exalted social seat—“appendicitis” having been certified by the physicians as the cause of the workingman’s death? Will the Columbia University Professor answer?

Second—Every one of the charges that the Columbia University Professor justly makes against the newspapers of his class in their treatment of the Gorky matter applies with even greater force in their recent treatment of the three workingmen, Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone. These men were extradited in violation of the United States Constitution, in violation of the Statute, in violation of Supreme Court decisions. The very manner of their deportation to Idaho was enough to put one on guard against the charge on which they were arrested. That notwithstanding, upon “unsupported accusation of wrong doing,” “newspaper stories were published with sensational and question-begging headlines,” charges were made “but no proof was offered,” the “whole pack of headline melodists took up the cry,” and “judgment of condemnation was immediately passed”—all just as in the

Gorky-Andreiva affair, with only this difference that, for every stickful of calumny devoted to Gorky, whole columns of calumny were devoted to Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone with lurid headlines and pictures to match. Where was the Columbia University Professor then? Did he then raise his voice against the attempted triple assassination of both character and life? No! Why? FOR THE IDENTICAL REASON THAT THE CAPITALIST PRESS WAS ATTEMPTING THE DEED—for the identical reason that it now repeated the deed—the victims, Moyer, Haywood, Pettibone and now Gorky are all Socialists!

In the measure that he is sincere in his attitude on the Gorky matter, the attitude of the Columbia University Professor is foot-in-the-mouth. It is typical of the flightiness of bourgeois radicalism. His silence, when the infinitely graver offence was being committed upon the three Socialist workingmen, Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone, and committed along the identical lines of violating civic rights and fair play,—his silence then did its full share towards bringing on later the similar treatment dealt to Gorky, on account of which he now indignates. The “lynching” of Gorky and Andreiva might not have taken place had the Giddingses not joined, by their silent approval, in the attempted “lynching” of Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone. Having joined this lynching bee, the Giddingses made the second lynching bee certain.

We know that, personally pleased though Gorky and Andreiva must be at hearing a word of protest, from the capitalist camp itself, against the indecent treatment that they suffered, these apostles of the Russian Revolution are among the last who would tolerate such protest being used as a cleanser of the deeper-dyed indecency of the treatment practiced upon workingmen by the present protester among the rest.

At any rate, the protest of the Columbia University Professor is superb, as far as it goes. Small favors thankfully received. Larger ones the Working Class will itself have to confer upon itself, and have only itself to thank for.

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