

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 7, NO. 125.

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1906.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

CRUEL, YET RETRIBUTION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ALMOST at the same time two American heiresses—Consuelo Vanderbilt and Anna Gould—whose ill-gotten gains purchased, for the former, the title of Duchess of Marlborough, for the latter, the title of Countess of Castellane, have been constrained to take legal measures in order “to save their homes from the desolation of their husbands.” In the case of the Vanderbilt heiress the step was taken in such manner as to avert a “public scandal.” In the case of the Gould heiress the public scandal was braved. Whether averted or braved, the facts, made public in the one, are substantially the facts in the other case. These facts are not of the category of “scandals”; they are historic events of socio-economic pith, and of such magnitude that they rise to the dignity of lofty moral lessons.

The facts in the case—it really is only one case—are that the American workers on railroads and telegraphs especially, on many minor industries as well, after being figuratively and literally bled, mutilated and slaughtered for more than a generation, yielded to the Gould and Vanderbilt interests a vast hoard of transmuted human bone, flesh and marrow. The “homes” raised, furnished and kept up by these vast hoards were called “palatial residences”; in point of fact they were whitened sepulchres. They housed putrefaction only. The putrefaction attracted the pest microbe, and that presented itself in the shape of foreign noblemen bridegrooms. Like all deadly microbes, the “nobleman” microbe kills that on which it thrives. It squandered the substance of its brides, lacerated their hearts, aye, even SMOTE THEIR BODIES.

Retribution is no hollow word. The Gould and Vanderbilt “Houses” were raised to the plummet of workingmen’s, workingwomen’s and working children’s sorrows. No capitalist “House” can be raised to any other plummet-line. Moral blows that make the proletarian’s heart ache, physical blows that cause his body to run blood—such is the treatment that capital, incarnated in the idle Capitalist Class, bestows upon the laborer—such was and is the treatment bestowed by the Gould

and Vanderbilt “interests” upon their wealth producers—by such means the stream of the hoard was set and is kept aflowing in which the Vanderbilts and Goulds riot. Such were the pulleys with which Jay Gould and the Old Vanderbilt raised the roof-trees of their “palatial residences.” Such were the methods by which George Gould followed suit when he shook his fist under the nose of the Sheriff of Erie County, to compel him to apply to the Governor for the militia to aid the railroad magnates defy the ten-hour law and crush the switchmen’s strike of 1892. Such were the methods which Helen Gould applauded when she presented Gen. Sherman Bell with “the most exquisite silver tea service” in reward for his bayoneting the miners of Cripple Creek into the Colorado bull-pens. Retribution dogs the steps of the felon. Grim is the Retribution that causes the identical millions, gathered by such practices, to be turned into the very purchase money for “noble” bridegrooms to administer to scions of these “Houses” a dose of their own medicine—to exploit their heiress-wives by appropriating the millions they bring, and returning to them the pittance of \$80 pin moneys; to go further, to wound their hearts by sexual humiliation; to go even further and physically smite them to the point of drawing blood!

Not to revenge, not even to avenge does the Socialist Movement step upon the stage of history. The “desolation of the homes” of the Vanderbilt and the Gould, or of any, or all “heiresses,” together with their stock, is too vulgar an aim for Socialism to stoop to. Nevertheless, until the Working Class of the land shall have been organized to snatch society from the claws of the bandit Capitalist Class—until the Working Class shall have stamped out the social system that desolates their homes—until that day, Retribution will repeat in redoubling instances the “desolation of the homes” of the Consuelos and the Annas. Until that day, thanks to an unavoidable chain of cause and effect, Retribution will produce with redoubling frequency the typical spectacle of an Anna Gould, the daughter of a Jay, the sister of a George and a Helen, robbed, insulted with a pittance, wounded in her tenderest feelings, and physically knocked down bleeding by the brutal fist of the blackguard whom wealth, extorted from the Working Class, purchased for her husband.

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

Uploaded May 2009

slpns@slp.org