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EDITORIAL

BELLE GUNNESS'S SOLILOQUY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN view of the gruesome discoveries that are being made at the Belle Gunness farm in Laporte, Ind.—dead and murdered bodies of men, women and children; luring matrimonial advertisements, etc., etc., besides biographical points regarding Mrs. Gunness herself—it is not unlikely, considering the ability of the woman, that there will also be unearthed a soliloquy by the lady, conveyed by her to paper, some night, as she tucked away in her purse her latest loot taken from the corpse or corpses that lay still unburied at her feet. The soliloquy will run somewhat in this vein:

[Looking at herself in a glass that hangs on the wall and holding a lamp over her head.]

{“}Good evening, Belle Paulsen—you are not much the worse for wear since the days of your girlhood in your Trondhjem Norwegian home, when you were an attractive country lass—but, Oh! how changed in wealth and views.

“Then, you were hard-working, an industrious peasant maid, who thought that by migrating to America your ways of living could yield you greater ease and comfort, without sacrifice of character. America was portrayed as the home of the industrious, free, good, religious—

“Well I remember your picture—physical and moral—when, at the age of twenty-two, with thick flaxen hair, sea-blue eyes, a pure virgin front, cheeks red with the health of toil, hands not soft with idleness, you stepped upon the soil of America—the promised land of freedom through industry, and happiness through purity—

“The steamboat agents had lied—you soon found out that. The full realization of the Bible story, that labor is a punishment decreed upon man, you met only here. Hard as work was around the crags of your old Trondhjem home in far away

Norway, it had its measure of dignity—and then—and then—there was no triumphantly wealthy crime around to contrast your poverty with, to sneer at, and to rebuke it. It was all otherwise here. Here you found labor an unqualified punishment; idleness a reward. Here you saw wealth, the fruit of crime, and the crime flaunted, and exalted. Here you saw the sanctity of the family worshiped on the lips and butchered in the heart. Here you saw life held sacred in Fourth of July orations, and sacrificed by the scores, the hundreds, the thousands as a hecatomb for the ruling class. Here you saw a new motto—written nowhere, but visible everywhere in the hundred—monuments erected to its glory—‘Commit any crime, provided you are not caught. Get money, money, money. In that sign you will conquer; without it you will be conquered!’

“You decided not to be conquered—you decided to conquer—you decided to emulate the pace set by the Pillars of Society—

“They outrage the home—why should not you, if that brought MONEY?

“Immorality was their code—why should it not be yours, if that brought MONEY?

“They butchered life by the scores, the hundreds, the thousands, in factories, mines, railroads {sic} yards and mills; only recently the capitalist owners of the powder mills, in this very vicinity of Lapore, caused, through their money-saving negligence of human safety, the death of over a hundred workers—and they went on an automobile wedding trip on the strength of that—why should not you cause the death of a few half-dozens, if that will bring in MONEY?

“They, through their financiers, inveigle thousands of people into the parlor of their spider’s web, and there ruin them, wrecking their homes, causing many of them to commit suicide, their wives to go crazy, their children to grow up paupers—you decided to weave a financier’s web of your own, lure your own victims, and dispatch them in your own way; and why should you not, if that brought in MONEY?

“You looked around and saw that, although they toiled not, neither did they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them, nor half so much respected as a pillar of Law, of Order, of the Family, of Patriotism, of Religion—why should not you also become a Law, an Order, a Family, a Patriotism, a Religion all

to yourself, if that brought MONEY?

“And you did—

“To the new code you lived ever true—

“You married Sorenson; had him insure his life; killed him—husbands are as dirt cheap as proletarians;—and collected the \$8,000 insurance—

“You then married Gunness; had him insure his life; killed him; and collected the \$4,000 insurance—

“You had by that time quite a neat little ‘original accumulation’—or, what is that other name they give the thing?—Oh! yes—‘wages of abstinence’—

“You had \$12,000 ‘wages of abstinence’ on which to start business—

“You did—burned down three times—not as often as Barnum—but, like Barnum, collected your insurance—

“Then you hastened your pace—you bought this farm—improved it—they always ‘improve’ things—your good looks stuck to you—your matrimonial advertisements brought in rich victims [kicking with the tip of her shoe the one that lay dead on the floor]—there is one of them—

“Were these any better than you?—they were after a rich wife—you were after a rich prospective husband, kept the money and struck off the husband—

“You are what the times have made you—‘money-mad?’—They all are.

“Are you satisfied, Belle Paulsen?”—

“Not yet—”

“What more does your heart crave?”—

“A national reputation for my virtues.—The next haul I make I shall devote to purchasing an interest in some News Agency, and, through that channel, cause my name to be blazoned in all the papers of the land as a paragon of ‘Desirable Citizenship!’”

[And the original in front of the glass smiled approvingly at the reflex within.]

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

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