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FIRST EDITORIAL

SMASH THAT TREATY, AND THE CLASS THAT IS WRANGLING ABOUT IT.

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The Senate is convulsed by the question whether the Treaty of Peace should be ratified or not, and the ostensible issue between the two sets of disputants is whether the annexation of the Philippines will redound to our national glory or not; whether or not it is our national duty to “carry civilization to the Filipinos” or to leave them in their benighted condition.

Whether or not the Filipinos are in a benighted condition is little to the purpose; the only question that concerns the intelligent American is whether the floods of material wealth and the floods of that greater wealth, the health and life of thousands of our proletariat, is not needed right here at home; whether we have reached that point that we have a surplus of material and human wealth to squander abroad, or whether all the material and human wealth we can raise is not required right here, with nothing yet to spare, in order to blot out the social iniquities we ourselves are cursed with, and that render our external splendor, not a thing to be admired but a thing to be condemned as {a} whitened sepulchre.

This question is answered by the recent discovery of the existence of chattel slavery in its most iniquitous form, as a punishment, even to women, old women at that, for the capitalist imposed “crime” of poverty. The following story tells its own tale.

Elmira Quick, aged seventy-five, is going to try to live on sixteen cents a day. Elmira Quick is a Pike County, Pa., pauper, living near Baaba. She lost her son, who was her sole support, in the Civil War, and ever since had just managed to eke out an existence. How the old woman will manage to keep alive from now on is best told in her own words:

“I have figured it all out, and I can get along very nicely. It is the first time anything of the kind has been tried in Pike County. You know the law here

provides that once a year all persons supported by the town be sold to the lowest bidder, the bidder to supply food and clothing, while the town provides medical attendance and funeral expenses in case of death.

“I had some trouble with one of the Overseers of the Poor, and this led to my being advertised for sale last December. The bids were to be sent to W.K. Rutan, in Rowllins. I sent a bid of \$5 per month to Overseer Rosencrans and also to Auditor Brown. This was the lowest bid, and the authorities had to accept it.

“They allow me to remain here, and instead of paying the \$5 in cash, as they would to other bidders, they give it to me in groceries. This is just the same as cash to me.

“This house I live in is owned by Ira Simonson, and he lets me stay here for helping his wife occasionally. My meat bill for the last five months was only \$1.43, and on this saving I get enough to buy coal. Then in the spring I get a pig for little or nothing and have one of the neighbors fat it on shares. This gives me a good deal of meat to last through the winter.

“There is a little patch of ground adjoining the cottage and this I work on shares. It furnishes enough vegetables to last me nearly a year. Then in the summer time I make a little extra money picking huckleberries.

“I used to get something for weaving carpets until my shoulder gave out. I have applied for a pension on the death of my son. I always said I would never accept a cent of the money brought me by his death, but things have reached a pass where it is necessary. If I get the pension I can get along nicely, but if I don't I will manage to exist without going into slavery.

“I may be sold again next spring when the annual sale of the poor occurs. But, I don't think so. I have enlisted the aid of friends who will fight the matter for me. They say that this law is unconstitutional, that slavery was abolished with the war of the rebellion, and that the authorities can be prosecuted for slave dealing if they attempt to auction me off. The case has never been tested, but it will next March if the attempt is made on me.”

Thus we here find an old woman, whose son, her only support, died in the Civil War to preserve the Union a pauper and slave in the land where the Money Bags stayed behind, let others fight, bleed and die, and themselves now derive all the profit of such sacrifice. Thus we find an aged matron, who wove her life tissue into carpets for a pittance, and now after “her shoulder gave out” has only slavery as her portion while the robber class of capitalists, whose shoulders never gave out in work, are lolling in idle luxury. Thus, finally, we see before us a venerable woman, entitled to the repose of her age and the dignity of her sex; she—an heir to all the splendid achievements of the human efforts of past generations; she—a member of the nation whose ruling class

would carry civilization across the oceans; she—brought down by long privations to the point that she can “get along nicely” with the Chinese condition of 16 cents a day, and to enjoy such a boon of capitalist civilization has to undergo the humiliation of being sold at auction!

And the class, whose social system can thus blight our own people and nation{,} propose to civilize others?

Preposterous insult to the human understanding!

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

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