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EDITORIAL

MILITARISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

AN exhibition worth being remembered was made at the Albany strike inquest on the 17th instant by the gentleman who appeared for the Twenty-third Regiment of Brooklyn, Lieut. John A. Wilson.

E. Le Roy Smith, a merchant of Albany, was shot dead by a bullet, fired by the Regiment, while he was peacefully standing at the door of his shop one day during the late trolley strike. Being examined Lieutenant Wilson said:

“I gave the command, which was executed. We all fired.”

Further questioned, these answers came with promptness:

“Q.—Did you fire at the ground or in the air?”

“A.—We shot to kill.”

“Q.—Did you aim at anybody?”

“A.—We did.”

Taking these statements together and for true, the following appears:

A platoon of soldiers of the Twenty-third Regiment are ordered to fire: ALL, including the officer who gave the command, execute the order; they ALL take aim, “shooting to kill”; net results, one man in a dense crowd hit!

Whichever way the picture, thus drawn by Lieut. Wilson himself of himself and his nasty pets, is looked upon it places them in no enviable light.

If indeed they shot to kill, taking deliberate aim, and yet managed to hit just one man, their marksmanship is nothing to brag about.

If, on the other hand, they were not the ruffianly crew that would really “shoot to kill” inoffensive men; if the language of their Lieutenant is simply bluster, what must one think of the moral and mental make-up of a set of men who are willing to go on record as animated with a “shoot to kill” spirit exercised against inoffensive men!

Much is being written in Europe, where militarism is an extensive profession, against the evil thereof. But neither articles, books nor speeches touch our American militiaism. Militarism is bad enough; but militiaism is infinitely worse. There is between militarism and militiaism the difference there is between feudal honor and bourgeois dishonor. With all its defects, there are features of decency in feudalism; the features of capitalism are one leprous blotch. Some rectitude, some character, some chivalry is, accordingly, detected in that offshoot of feudal rule, the trade of the soldier; in that off-shoot of bourgeoisdom, the militia, all the base instincts of the parent stock come to the surface: the instinct of the capitalist sander of sugar, waterer of stock, adulterator of breadstuffs, expert manager of fraudulent fires and fraudulent failures,—all of these crop up in concentrated form, and the coward-bully and the bully-coward is rampant,—just as depicted on the canvass by Lieut. John A. Wilson of the Twenty-third Regiment of Brooklyn.

No wonder that all along the line of the betrayers of the workers—from the Republican party, across the regular Democratic, down to the Social Democratic party—the hearts of these worthies beat as one for armories of the most sanitary nature, for militias of the most sanitary training.

No wonder either that, around the blazing pennon of the Fighting S.L.P., the morally and mentally healthy element of the nation is gathering to mop the earth with both capitalism and its piebald supporters of many names but one purpose.

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

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