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EDITORIAL

MONSTROSITY MILES.

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THE bona fide Socialist Movement does not allow itself to be turned from its own path by any of the more or less dramatic, more or less blood-curdling issues that bubble periodically up from the witches' caldron of capitalism. There is no "first step" for the Socialist Labor Party except the step that drills and marshals the working class to move towards the capture of the public powers. But this does not take away the historic significance of many of these issues, or the duty of the Socialist Movement to ascertain exactly what they mean. By ascertaining their significance much information is gathered on the development, sometimes, decomposition, other times, that these issues in the capitalist camp are the symptoms of. Such information is always valuable. In this sense the S.L.P. has treated the "inhuman war" now waged against the Filipinos; the "governmental perfidy" that has marked the Administration's Cuban policy; the "shocking revelations of municipal government" that make the stock in trade of reform capitalism; etc., etc. The General Miles incident in the Schley-Sampson incident is of this nature.

Upon the publication of the findings of the Naval Court of Inquiry, Lieutenant-General Nelson A. Miles allowed himself to be interviewed by the Associated Press, and expressed himself frankly and freely taking the side of Schley. Promptly he is called upon to explain by his official superior, the Secretary of War, upon instructions from the President. General Miles' "explanation," boiled down, is the right of a citizen to free speech. Whereupon Miles has a censure administered to him by the President, through the Secretary of War, said to be "the severest ever sent to an officer." General Miles is now mum, but, like Paddy's owl, he must be doing a lot of thinking, and is surely greatly puzzled. Why should he be? That is the point.

This Miles is the identical gentleman, who, not only was in command of the Federal troops, sent to Chicago to break the Pullman strike, but GLORIED IN HIS MISSION. "I broke the backbone of the strike!" was his exultant remark. Now, the act of introducing Federal troops into a State contrary to the explicit formalities provided by the Constitution, especially for the purpose of direct intervention by the Federal powers in a dispute between Capital and Labor, belongs to a social era that is much later, in the order of social development, than that in which a soldier is a citizen, clothed with the citizen's attribute of free speech. In the capitalist frame of society, that social stage, when every blow of the proletariat is felt by the ruling class to be a blow at the capitalist Government and is, accordingly, answered with a counterblow by the Government itself, is a stage of ripened development, while the stage in which a soldier has citizen attributes is an early stage of immature development. General Miles' mind did not develop evenly. One compartment of his head kept step with the capitalist social order; as a limb of the Government himself, he struck at the workingmen on strike at Chicago with all the animus of one who "strikes back." Another compartment of his head did not keep step with his own capitalist social order; that compartment is in a state of arrested development: he fails to realize that the soldier has no right to free speech. Undoubtedly he feels puzzled; as puzzled as a monstrosity, half chicken, half goose, would feel in sight of a mill-pond.

The mental monstrosity presented by the (for free speech) severely censored, and (for lustily "breaking the backbone of a strike") highly praised Lieutenant General Miles is a gauge by which to measure the social-political distance traveled by the ruling class of America since the days of the Massachusetts "Minute Men."

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

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