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EDITORIAL

PANTOMIME IN THE SENATE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

LAST Wednesday there took place in the federal Senate what the papers call a “dramatic rebuke to Senator Tillman.” The performance may or may not have been a “rebuke,” and if it was, it surely was as much of a self-inflicted rebuke as one administered to Tillman. As to its “dramatic” feature, however, that was not there. There was pantomime, clown-pantomime, such as became the cause that the rebukers were safeguarding.

The discussion was on the barbarities committed by the officers of the American Army in the Philippines. Tillman rose to defend them. His line of defence was the justification of the South to treat the negroes in the barbarous way they are treated. Tillman was true to himself. His speech was characteristic. It might even be called bold and brave, were it not that “bravery” and “boldness” are terms that should be reserved for noble acts, instead of brigandage. At any rate, Tillman was outspoken. He defended the lynching and the shooting of the negro. He defended the stripping them of the ballot. He defended the hounding and keeping them in subjection. He defended all that on the ground of the “right of the Anglo-Saxon race to dominate inferior races.”

It was in the course of this address that the pantomime took place. By ones, and by twos, and by threes, the Southern Senators and the Northern brethren of the Democratic persuasion picked themselves up, left the Senate hall, and stayed away until Tillman had finished. They then, in pantomime demonstration, all walked in again.

What was it that these Southrons and their Democratic brethren of the North objected to? Was it to the brazen preaching of rapine and murder, on the floor of a legislative body that opens its seances with prayers to the “Prince of Peace”? Was it to the justification of robbing men of the ballot, and then rubbing in the offence by “representing” them against their will? Was it, in short, to the promulgation of theories

that fly in the face of social and political progress? No, and yet again, no. The Southrons or their Democratic brethren of the North objected to none of these. How could they? Which of them all does not practise, and abet, and profit by all these crimes? Which of them has not directly or indirectly imbrued his hands in the blood of workingmen? Which of them has not taken a hand in the scores of schemes afloat in the land to disfranchise the working class? And which of them has not sought to cloak his felony under the identical pretence of the “right and duty of the Anglo-Saxon race to maintain ‘Law and Order,’” another way for saying to trample upon all rights, human and divine, that interfere with their pockets? None! They are all of a piece with Tillman in practice. What, then, was the “rebuke” about? Was it a mere comedy in hypocrisy? Indeed not. The Senators in question have explained their conduct. One of them, speaking for the set, said:

“We did so simply because we deprecate the dragging in of the race question by a Democrat.”

In other words, not morality, not political integrity was the moving spring of the pantomime. It was a political manoeuvre. Democrats know that Republicans are “in it” as deep as themselves, and they notice with sorrow, with double sorrow, that while the Republicans are lucky enough in not having a blabbing boy among them, they, the Democrats, have to carry the burden of a Tillman, who places on their exclusively Democratic shoulders the blame which they share with their Republican compeers.

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