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EDITORIAL

ACTIONS THAT A MAN MAY PLAY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

FROM several well-meaning sources, and in a kindly way, the remonstrance has reached this office, at THE PEOPLE'S not appearing in mourning, like the other papers, for Mr. McKinley's assassination. Had the remonstrants as much as remotely hinted that THE PEOPLE'S indignation at the wanton deed, sense of moral revolt at the perfidy that accompanied it, and sorrow at the occurrence could be questioned, no notice would have been taken of them. As, however, they all do THE PEOPLE justice in these respects, the error our remonstrants labor under can be taken up without loss of dignity, and to advantage withal.

It is no uncommon thing to find in the ranks of what is broadly called the "reform ranks" an inclination to offend public decency. The straw-riff-raff element that revolutionary movements, like great storms, attract in their vortex, being unbalanced and not super-moral, takes a delight in appearing "out of the usual run." Not unlikely, to that is due the several instances where men, and women too, are reported to have indulged in expressions of joy at the Buffalo tragedy. They meant to be eccentric. Their radicalism consisted in offending public decency. It goes without saying that no such motive animates THE PEOPLE in not putting on the trappings and the suits of woe.

In the first place, the conduct of the capitalist press in this instance itself bears the broad earmarks of indecency. The whole nation was shocked. But the attitude of the capitalist press belied its external suits of woe. He who is truly afflicted, he who is truly shocked at a catastrophe does not hold language intended to produce catastrophes at wholesale. To seek to profit by affliction is the surest sign of affectation of sorrow. Already have we pointed out how the capitalist press, with hardly an exception, is seeking to exploit the assassination of McKinley to cover up its own felonious career, and thereby prolong the reign of capitalism. The lying assaults on Socialism, the frantic efforts to suppress Socialist Labor Party meetings,

the ghoulish fabrication of reports purporting to represent S.L.P. meetings “broken up by indignant citizens”—these and other suggestions to crime, made calmly, coolly and deliberately—, peeping between the black bars of mourning that the capitalist press appears rigged in, all belie the claim of affliction on their part; are all themselves an insult to public decency. If for no other reason THE PEOPLE would be amply justified to decline to join what the conduct of the capitalist press has turned into a masquerade.

But there is further reason. THE PEOPLE is in perpetual mourning. Not a day passes but scores upon scores of workingmen, and women and children are slaughtered and maimed by the capitalist system of production. Not a day passes without scores of bread-winners,—the producers of all wealth,—being felled to death by some negligence of the idle capitalist class, and thereby mourning deep and wide being thrust into the homes of the workers, already amply afflicted. And this state of things is in permanency, and cannot be altered until the political Party, whose cause is that of the Working Class and whose mouthpiece is THE PEOPLE, shall have come to power and uprooted Capitalism as the Abolitionists uprooted Slaverholderism. How pale and trivial, under such circumstances, are not the customary suits of solemn black!

’Tis not alone the inky cloak, good friends,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Together with all the forms, modes, shows of grief,
That can denote us truly; these indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play:
But we have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.¹

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

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¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 2.]