

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 5, NO. 321.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 1905.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

SOME SOURCES OF BUSINESS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the State of Mississippi is a county called Carroll. In Carroll county are two towns—one Carrollton, the other Vaiden. The two towns are competing for the privilege of hanging a certain negro named Henry Brown. The *Record*, a paper published in Vaiden, states the argument forcibly and plainly gives the reason why Vaiden insists on her rights. It says:

“It is not the life of Henry Brown that our people crave so much; neither does the world care a baubee whether the insignificant negro starts to perdition from Vaiden or Carrollton, so long as the law is upheld; but because of the fact that the crime was committed in the Second district of Carroll county, the negro indicted, tried and sentenced at this point, common justice demands that the hanging should be done here, and the concerted action on the part of Carrollton to force the hanging there is a flagrant display of bad taste and a direct violation of common courtesy. LIKE ALL OTHER HANGINGS, THE EXECUTION OF HENRY BROWN WILL ATTRACT THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE, AND TO PERMIT CARROLLTON TO PLUCK THE PLUM WOULD MEAN A HEAVY LOSS TO OUR BUSINESS MEN.”

That is Mississippi. From the north, from holy, Puritanic New England, comes this story, told by a New Haven minister, who has undertaken the thankless task of holding by the tail the runaway horse of modern corruption. In a Connecticut village, whose name he suppresses, he and others organized a committee to prevent corruption on election day. The committee was driven out of the village; the leader of the assailants was the village groceryman; and he voiced his own and his fellow business-men’s reasons for their indignation at the “fresh committee” by saying: “What do them fellows propose? Do they want to kill the business of the place? If they carry out their new-fangled notions money will cease to circulate, and we might as well shut up shop!”

Although it is not possible to ascertain the “social tone” of this village, its name not being given, it must be a very exceptional Connecticut village if it at all falls behind Vaiden, with its four churches and a seminary. It is safe to proceed upon the theory that the Connecticut village is at a par with the Mississippi village—both of equally good “social and religious tone”; and thus they contribute equal shares of light to illumine the sources of business.

If the loss of a hanging implies a loss of business, then hanging{s} must be sources of business prosperity; and, mounting to the headspring, the crime that feeds the source, murder, is one of the elements from which business draws its sap. Similarly in Connecticut: If corruption at the polls is the water that turns the wheels of business, and sets money in circulation, then political impunity is another element from which business derives its nourishment.

Of course, these two places are but as atoms in the nation’s organism. But, no atom, no organism; the only difference between the two villages on the one hand, and larger towns, on the other is one of degree and not of kind. Capitalism would have to “shut up shop” if corruption and crime of all nature were suppressed. No corruption, no crime—no capitalism.

What Vaiden and the Connecticut village have done, distinct from large towns, is to betray the truth. Larger gatherings of capitalist society are more hypocritical.

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Uploaded January 2008

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