

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 11, NO. 275.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, APRIL 1, 1911.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

RACE PREJUDICE AS A GOAD.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT surely is the irony of fate that just as the magazines are full of praise for Frank B. Gilbreth's marvellous discoveries in the art of speeding labor up through "motion study," Gilbreth himself has a bricklayers' strike on his hands at Glens Falls, N.Y., where he tried to put his system in operation.

Important as Gilbreth's "motion study" is for the workers to be posted on and wary of, there is another string to his bow. The first method consists in playing man against a picture. Photographs are taken of exceptionally trained men at work, and all others are forced, by study of the pictures, to come up to their speed, on penalty of dismissal. The second method—equally vicious in that whatever increase of pay may come is foredoomed to be merely temporary, leaving the worker in the end turning out more work at a reduced rate of remuneration—consists in playing race against race.

In his "Mutiny of the Mavericks" Kipling tells how, to hold it in line in an English army under fire, a murmuring Irish regiment is permitted by its English officers, nay, egged on, to sing a violently anti-English, anti-Protestant war ballad:

"St. Mary in heaven has written the
vow
That the land shall not rest till the
heretic blood
From the babe at the breast to the hand
at the plough
Has rolled to the ocean like Shannon
in flood"!

Touched in their twin prides of race and religion, the hitherto wavering soldiery became transformed into furies, sweeping all before them—in the interest of that very England whose destruction they sang.

Far less innocently is the same race and religious pride played upon by Gilbreth in his new labor-speeding methods. It is even a subject of boast with him. In an extract in the *Literary Digest* of March 25, he recounts that, on a certain bridge-building job, he promised to fly over the works the flag of the nationality doing the greatest amount of work each day. The cunningly anticipated outcome was as follows:

“The Swedes put forth their best efforts and soon their pride of country was gratified by the flying of the Swedish flag above the workers. The Russians then bent to the work and soon their flag displaced that of the Swedes. For some time the record of the Irishmen was low, but, with dogged determination, they set to work to raise it, and finally did so; and when their big green banner, with its harp emblem, floated high above the bridge their foreman swelled out his chest and broke forth in this piece of Irish sunbuistry:

“‘Ah, me b’ys! There’s the flag of Erin. Keep up yer licks and don’t let any dommed Protestant pull it down!’

“And they didn’t.”

No defense of loafing is here intended. But the self-protection of the workman against the intense methods of production which today make him “too old at 40” is a vastly different thing. Against that the workers should and must stand as a unit. “Efficiency” in the mouth of the capitalist is a false cry. What he really means is “Added profits for me”! Race prejudice is only one of his goads to drive the workers on to that end.

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Uploaded February 2012

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