

EDITORIAL

THE GILLETTE CASE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

DR. WALKER R. GILLETTE has just been convicted of perjury in the criminal branch of the Supreme Court in this city. At the investigation of the Mutual Life Insurance Company, Gillette, a vice-president of the concern, had falsely denied under oath the existence of a certain deposit, known as the Yellow Dog Fund, in the Dobbs Ferry Bank as a special account of the Mutual Life. The amount of the fund was only \$5,000.

Gillette is a prominent member of a prominent—prominent because wealthy—family of New York. The Gillettes are among the “elites” of the city, State and country. Their holdings are princely. In Europe they are “received” by the aristocracy. The mere fact of a man, so situated and connected, being guilty of a crime, which betrays at once the secret of capitalist “law and order,” and the essence of capitalist “religion,” is nothing startling to the well informed. The fact is too common to be even instructive. There is that, however, in the Gillette case which raises it from the commonly known, and renders it peculiarly helpful. It is the circumstance of the smallness of the cash involved in the perjury.

Superficial observers of the phenomena of capitalism can not choose but wonder at the frequent instances of chicanery on the part of leading “Captains of Industry.” When a Depew, as a Director of a financial institution, is discovered to have loaned \$20,000 to himself, people look up with amazement at the “nasty act.” An even stronger instance of the same thing is the light thrown upon Harriman by the Interstate Commerce Commission in the matter of the Alton Bonds, and the supplementary light thrown upon the “nasty” transaction by the *Wall Street Journal*. Harriman had bought the worthless Alton Road; upon that paper concern he issued bonds; in order to realize upon the bonds, he enlisted the services of the subsequent Governor of this State, Odell, who was then chairman of the Republican

State Committee; with the aid of Odell a bill was passed through the Legislature extending the permissible savings banks investments to the said Alton Bonds; last, not least, the then Governor of the State, Theodore Roosevelt, signed the bill. Through this nasty manoeuvre, in which so many leading capitalists, in and out of politics, were implicated, the worthless Alton Bonds, to the ruination of many, suctioned cash into the pockets of a number of “Captains of Industry.” The hugeness of the sums thus purloined concealed the important economic fact at bottom of the transaction. The smallness of the sum involved in the Gillette perjury helps uncover that important economic fact.

It is this:

Capitalism develops a special class of capitalists—the Plutocracy. The Plutocracy deals in money exclusively. Seeing that capitalist society requires metallic money for its existence, the class that handles that one central commodity acquires dominant power. Let the “Captain of Industry,” or capitalist proper—the owner of factory, mine, or railroad—be ever so “rich”, his “riches” need the quickening power of the Plutocrat. The rapid, untrammelled development of capitalism, from below upward, in the United States, for long rendered the capitalist amphibious, so to speak. He was at once “Captain of Industry” and “Plutocrat.” So long as this stage lasted, he was neither to perfection. That stage being passed we now have the “Captain of Industry” a separate thing from the “Plutocrat.” The present stage once reached there is no act of petty chicanery that the “Captain of Industry” will not stoop, or be driven to. It is the manifestation of his attempt to ESCAPE THE BLACKMAIL THAT CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT ENABLES THE PLUTOCRAT TO LEVY UPON HIM. Hence Depew manoeuvres; hence Alton Deals, with their wide swath of political corruption; hence perjury for the sake of a paltry \$5,000 by a “Captain of Industry” infinitely “richer” than the trifling amount for which he became a felon.

Socialism teaches that the capitalist class itself raises the recruits that will make its quietus—the Proletaire. It may be added that capitalism itself furnishes the proletaire with a priceless, however unwilling, ally—the Plutocrat. Ground between the upper millstone of the Plutocracy and the nether millstone of the Proletariat, the Captain of Industry will be triturated to dust. The Plutocracy being

but a parasite upon the Captain of Industry, the triumphant Proletariat will at one blow lay prostrate both its hereditary foe, the Captain of Industry, and its unconscious, unwilling ally, the Plutocrat.

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