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EDITORIAL

“NATIONAL GAMES.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

NOT a paper like the *New York Sun*, which enjoys devilry for devilry's sake; nor a paper like the *World* or the *American*, which are purely yellow; nor yet a paper like the *Times*, or *Tribune* which are dull trampers on a dull, beaten road;—it is none of these, but no less dignified and conscientious a capitalist paper than the *Evening Post* that quotes high tariff dignitaries in Washington as placidly saying: “It won't matter what kind of a tariff bill we pass. The people won't remember. Why, if there is a tight, close finish for the baseball championship, a lot of people will forget there ever was an extra session to revise the tariff.”

The gladiatorial contests in the Roman circus were not gotten up simply to bribe the people with free shows. That was part of the purpose; it was, however, the smaller part. The actual purpose was to turn the radiation of the public mind away from the vital conflicts of State into channels that absorbed the radiation with trifles. So, likewise, the tactics of the Spanish autocracy towards its American colonies. Intense partisan feeling was systematically engendered in favor of and against prominent “matadores.” The people's pulse spent its heat in the trifling contests—and the tyrant's iron hand crept in unhampered, unobserved.

What difference is there between the mental poise of Roman and Spanish despotism, on the other hand, and the mental poise of the High Tariff despots, who now proceed upon the principle that if there is a tight, close finish for the baseball championship there will be no thought left to dissect and find fault with any tariff bill however oppressively meant? None.

From identical premises identical steps will flow. For the same reason that the Roman patriciate incited partisan activity in gladiatorial combats, for the identical reason that the Macchiavels, who directed the tactics of the Spanish Crown,

promoted popular rivalries centered in the bull-ring,—for that identical reason, and proceeding from the identical premises we may yet see—if we are not already seeing—“tight, close finishes for the baseball championship” systematically and artificially engineered.

Despotism needs a doped mass to flourish upon. “National Games” have proven themselves even better dope than liquor.

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Uploaded by Donna Bills, September 2010

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