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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {108}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I have been reading up on the class struggle.

UNCLE SAM—That's good.

B.J.—But I find it is too narrow.

U.S.—How would you broaden it?

B.J.—The strict class struggle draws the line between wage earners and capitalists.

U.S.—Correct.

B.J.—I don't think that's right or sound. The line should be drawn between the toilers and the non-toilers.

U.S.—For instance?

B.J.—The clerk of a groceryman is a toiler, but the groceryman himself toils also. Under the strict principle of the class struggle, the line is drawn between the two, placing the clerk on one side with other workers, and the toiling groceryman on the other, and together with the Depews, Vanderbilts, Goulds, Counts Castellane, etc. Now that is all wrong—

U.S.—How would you fix it?

B.J.—I would place the toiling groceryman on the same side of the line with all other toilers, whether wage earners or not, and on the other side the idlers and spongers.

U.S.—If you did so you would pretty soon get all mixed up; just as mixed as if you placed the strawberry and the daisy in the same botanical family. The two grow close to the ground, etc., yet they belong to two wholly distinct families. Again, the strawberry



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grows on a lowly bush, the apple on a stately tree; upon your principle of classifying the toiling groceryman separately from the Vanderbilts, you would put the strawberry and the apple in different families; fact is, that they are of one and the same family.

B.J.—You don't say so!

U.S.—Yes. The mouse is a little animal, the elephant a big one; you would classify them separately; yet the fact is that the elephant and the mouse are of one family.

B.J. (with increased astonishment)—Yes?

U.S.—Yes. What determines the kinship between plants and animals is, not appearance, but some fundamental fact that typifies them. Now, the fundamental fact that typifies the toiling small groceryman is not his toiling; other people toil with whom you would not rank the toiling groceryman: pickpockets toil and toil hard; pirates toil and toil hard; stock brokers toil and toil hard. The fundamental fact that typifies the toiling groceryman is that he is in possession of property, whereby he can and does, just as the big capitalist, squeeze labor out of another human being; and the typifying feature of the groceryman's clerk is that, being stripped of all property whereby to earn his own living, he is bound to sell himself to the man who has such property. It is upon those lines that the economic classes are separated. To blur that line is to open the doors for all sorts of false steps; hence, so many "reform" parties that flash up and collapse.

B.J.—Yes, yes; and yet it seems to me that the groceryman has a hard time of it.

U.S.—No doubt; and yet no harder than many a pirate who, being caught, was hanged to the yardarms of his own ship. If the groceryman has sense—and what is said of him is said of the whole middle class—he would simply throw in his lot with the proletariat, but to do that he must accept proletarian economics, instead of doing what the middle class now try to do, to join the proletariat by forcing upon it middle-class economics—money questions, for instance, mortgage questions, etc. Only then is there help for the sinking middle class.

B.J.—Hm! I now see it in another light. This middle class want to lie together with the proletariat, provided the proletariat is willing to lie inside of the stomach of the middle class.

U.S.—You got it now.

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