

The People.

VOL. IX, NO. 17.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, JULY 23, 1899.

PRICE 3 CENTS.

DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {297}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—What do you think I heard a Socialist speaker say the other day?

UNCLE SAM—If he WAS a Socialist speaker, you must have heard something sensible.

B.J.—Well, I didn't; he talked nonsense. What he said was downright treasonable to the Revolution of our Fathers!

U.S.—That's stiff. What did he say?

B.J.—Now, then, that Socialist said that we workingmen were nothing but merchandise, like shoes, stockings, pork or beef. If that is not insulting, I don't know what is; if that is not denying the Revolution, what is it?

U.S.—Well, I don't know what all you mean by that Revolution. I DO know, however, that a thing may have been done, and yet, after a while it is all un-done again. A Revolution, our fathers' Revolution, may have been successful in setting us free; but it don't follow from that that we may not have been subsequently re-enslaved and turned into merchandise. If this did happen, it would be no treason to say so; on the contrary, it would be folly, mischievous folly, to deny it.

B.J.—Well, that's true, too. But we have not been re-enslaved, or turned into merchandise.

U.S. (looks at him steadily.)

B.J.—Have we been re-enslaved?

U.S.—Let's reason together. You read the papers, don't you?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—I do.

U.S.—Did you ever come in their columns across the expression: “The millionaire market?”

B.J. (amused).—Why, no!

U.S.—Why are you amused?

B.J.—Because the “millionaire market” would mean a market in which millionaires are bought and sold; and that is nonsense; millionaires only buy and sell; they are not bought or sold.

U.S.—Just so; in other words, millionaires would be merchandise?

B.J.—Yes, and they aren’t.

U.S.—Or did you ever come across the terms: “The railroad magnate market”? Or “The mine baron market”? Or “The banker’s market”? Or “The corporation stockholders’ market?”

B.J.—No, and for the same reason; they are not bought and sold; they are not merchandise.

U.S.—Correct. Now, did you ever come across the term: “The beef market”?

B.J.—Lots of times. That’s all right. Beef is bought and sold; it is a merchandise.

U.S.—And did you ever come across the terms: “The pork market”? Or “the shoe market”? Or “the stocking market?”

B.J.—Why certainly; lots of times. And that’s very natural; pork, shoes, stockings, and so forth are all bought and sold; they are all merchandise.

U.S.—Now, my man, refresh your memory, and tell me whether you ever ran across in the papers the term: “The Labor Market”?

B.J. (starts back as tho’ he had been struck full in the chest.)

U.S.—Did you, or did you not?

B.J.—I did, by thunder!

U.S.—Your face brightens up; light seems to be going up in it. Was that Socialist right or was he wrong in saying that we were nothing but merchandise under this present, capitalist system?

B.J.—Right, by Jove!

U.S.—Yes, my man, let’s be sensible, and not allow our vanities to blind us to our own undoing. We ARE merchandise, just as pork and beef; we ARE sold in the market

just as shoes and stockings;—we ARE RE-ENSLAVED. Look as you may into the works of our Revolutionary Fathers, and never once will you come across the term, “Labor Market.” The workingman was not then merchandise. Opportunities—natural and social—were then open to all; each man could be, and was, the architect of his own fortune, or misfortune. In those days, had any one used the term “Labor Market,” he would have been understood as little as if he had used the word “kinetograph”; neither of the two was yet in existence. As the latter, so is the term “Labor Market” a subsequent development, and that development is indicated by the pregnant expression, “Labor Market.”—WE ARE ENSLAVED!

B.J.—Then, all that was gained is lost again?

U.S.—But not beyond recall. Our slavery a hundred and odd years ago arose from our political DEPENDENCE upon a foreign power; accordingly, our freedom at that time had to be gained by our asserting our INDEPENDENCE. Now, then, to-day, our slavery arises from the circumstance of our being merchandise lying on the shelves of the market—along with beef, and pork, and potatoes; accordingly, our freedom from this new bondage must be gained by our stripping ourselves from the disgraceful condition of merchandise; we must pull ourselves away from the economic companionship of pork and beef and shoes and leather, and all other merchandise; we must dare to stand erect; we must dare to claim our rights and perform our duties as MAN, as HUMAN BEINGS. To do that now, we must overthrow the present tyrant class—the Capitalist class,—the present tyrant system—, the Capitalist or Wage Slavery system, and set up the Socialist Republic where the instruments of production shall be owned by all; and thus all who work may be free. Fall to, Jonathan.

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Uploaded February 2009

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