

# The People.

VOL. IV, NO. 31.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1894.

PRICE 3 CENTS.

DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {87}

By DANIEL DE LEON

**B**ROTHER JONATHAN—I am sorry to see you so enthusiastic about the elections.

UNCLE SAM—Why sorry?

B.J.—Because you will be disappointed.

U.S.—Disappointed!

B.J.—I know you are no rainbow chaser, so in a way you won't be disappointed; but in another you will. This Socialist movement is of very slow growth. Poverty has always been—always will be. You will never live to see it changed.

U.S.—O, ho! That's it? Now, see you here, Brother Jonathan. Somewhere about the end of the Summer of 1861 you and I were walking one afternoon on Pennsylvania avenue in Washington. A negro woman walked just ahead of us. She carried a negro baby on her arm, and two negro lads, one about 4 and the other about 6, dragged beside her, holding on to her cheap calico skirt. Do you remember the circumstances?

B.J.—It is so long ago, I don't quite recall it—

U.S.—She was mumbling quite audibly. We could hear her. This was what she was saying in a semi-whine: "Nigger has always been slave and nigger will always be slave; it's no use."

B.J.—Yes, I recollect!

U.S.—And do you recollect how I pulled you by the sleeve, and when—

B.J.—Yes, yes; at the other end of the avenue just then resounded the fife and drum corps that headed the first regiment that came to the front.



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U.S.—Exactly. The hopeless words of that wretched woman had hardly escaped her lips when her ears were struck by the martial music that heralded her deliverance.

B.J.—Just so!

U.S.—And so it is to-day. As mistaken as that negro woman was that “Negro had always been slave” are you now that poverty always has been. The negro ancestor of that woman had been a free man in his wilds of Africa; the poverty-smitten wage slave of to-day was not a wage slave a hundred years ago. He has been reduced to that condition, and the poverty he now experiences—starvation, not through dearth, but in sight of plenty produced by himself; nakedness, not through conflagration, but in sight of abundance of clothing woven and sewn by himself; shelterlessness, not because of earthquakes, but in sight of innumerable houses built by himself—such poverty, such shocking wrong, is a spick and span new brand of poverty, which the capitalist system has produced and introduced.

B.J.—My statement was rash, I admit.

U.S.—And rash like that negro woman’s view that slavery would always be, is yours that poverty would last. Upon my ear sounds now, like in 1861, the notes of the drum and fife corps of the advancing columns that are to emancipate the wage slave. Stir yourself; be up and doing.

Tears are liars!  
Perhaps, in yon smoke concealed,  
Our comrades chase e’en now the flyers,  
And, but for you, possess the field!<sup>1</sup>

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

Uploaded October 2007

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<sup>1</sup> [After Arthur Hugh Clough’s, “Say not the struggle not availeth.”]