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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {196}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I'm going to quit voting. I'm going out of the Socialist Labor party. I'm going to retire into some corner. Let things go as they will. Voting will do no good.

UNCLE SAM—And what may be the cause of all this string of resolves?

B.J.—The experience made by ex-Governor Waite, of Colorado, and which he has published.

U.S.—Didn't read it. What is that experience?

B.J.—He tells us that bribery and intimidation were used against him. That a million dollars were spent to defeat him, and succeeded in defeating him.

U.S.—And what of that?

B.J.—What of that? The capitalists have the money; they beat Waite with money. What they did to Waite they can do to us.

U.S.—Have you imagination enough to imagine an East River oyster smack trying to cross the Atlantic?

B.J.—I can imagine its trying, but I can't imagine its succeeding.

U.S.—What would happen if it tried?

B.J.—It would go to pieces and sink.

U.S.—What would you say of the man who, hearing that such an oyster smack went to pieces in trying to cross the Atlantic, were to say: "What has happened to that oyster smack must happen to all other ships that try to cross the Atlantic. It is no use trying to go to Europe."



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—I would think that man was off.

U.S.—Why?

B.J.—Because it was natural that a weak ship should go down; and it is not inevitable that a strong one should also.

U.S.—In other words, the oyster smack is not fit to navigate the Atlantic, and therefore sinks. A ship so constructed that it can breast the peculiar dangers of the Atlantic need not sink.

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—And so with the waters of politics. The Populist party is to political navigation what an oyster smack would be to Atlantic navigation.

B.J.—But a party is a party.

U.S.—No, sir; no more than a ship is a ship. The Populist party of Waite scuttled itself. It stood upon the basis of capitalism. No one can plant himself on that without submitting to the results. It is a feature of capitalism that private property in capital shall be maintained; where such private property is recognized a scamper is started “to get there,” and he who has the largest “barrel” is bound to get the best of him whose “barrel” is smaller. The “barrel” of the silver mine barons is much smaller than that of their fellow capitalist enemies; consequently, Waite went down—

B.J.—But can the Socialists resist the “barrel?”

U.S.—On the other hand, the political ship of the Socialists is built upon the principle that there shall be common property in capital. Those who once get hold of this idea recognize that the private or individual scampering to get there is folly. As a result, the “barrels” can have no effect upon them. Every speech that the Populist or any capitalist party makes promotes the instinct of individual scampering for success, and beats the smaller “barrel;” on the other hand, every Socialist argument eliminates the influence of the “barrel.” Waite’s experience does not show that voting is useless anymore than the wreckage of an oyster smack on the Atlantic shows that Atlantic navigation is impossible. Waite’s experience shows that Populist tactics are absurd. And that is shown all the clearer when one contrasts his fate with the steady growth of the Socialist vote.

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