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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM AND BROTHER JONATHAN. {379}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I have with me that clipping from the *North American Review*, by James Logan.

Are there any more blunders in it?

UNCLE SAM—From my recollection it is a string of blunders. Read it again.

B.J. (reads):

“There must always be competition. To stamp it out, were such a thing possible, would mean stagnation and death. It would mean that there was to be no further progress. If there were to be no prizes obtained, men would cease to put forth the effort which makes for progress and growth. If there were no larger prizes ahead for a young man than simply a day laborer’s wages, the likelihood is that a good many would not put forth the effort to become anything more than a day laborer. We need competition if we would grow, but it ought to be honest and intelligent competition. Men need the stimulus of competition to do their best.”

U.S.—I showed you that it is false to say that capitalism promotes competition;—

B.J.—Yes; you showed that capitalism stamps out competition.

U.S.—And I next showed you that it is false to say capitalism furnishes a stimulus for the best efforts;—

B.J.—Yes; you went further and proved that what capitalism did was to rob the workingman of all stimulus to exert himself, and that such stimulus could only



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come with Socialism.

U.S.—You will notice that through the whole passage that you read the effort peeps clearly to sing the praises of competition. The impression is to be left on the reader's mind that competition is the pivot on which progress revolves; the spring that sets progress in motion; the breath in the nostrils; the animating spirit of progress.

B.J.—Why, certainly. The passage means just that, and is meant to be a warning against doing anything that might interfere with that pivot, that spring, that breath or that animating spirit.

U.S.—Now, look closely; turn your eyes on the last sentence but one.

B.J. (reads):

“We need competition if we would grow, but it ought to be honest and intelligent competition.”

U.S.—Do you catch on?

B.J.—Not quite.

U.S.—This precious Logan himself takes no stock in his praises of competition. He knows what thing it is. It won't do for him to say so. If he did, he would miss his “prize,” the wages of his intellectual prostitution in whooping it up for capitalism. But he knows also that it is no longer safe to lie wholesale, as it formerly was. To praise competition without any qualification would certainly render him ridiculous. How does he manage himself in the dilemma?

B.J.—How?

U.S.—As all such people do. They try to play scuttle-fish and thereby incur still greater ridicule. The sentence you just read is supremely ridiculous. There is neither intelligence nor honesty in competition. The word excludes intelligence and honesty. Competition implies a blind rushing forward and to seek leadership by cheating on the competitive field. To talk about “intelligent competition,” or “honest competition” is like saying “sweet vinegar” or “wholesome arsenic.”

B.J.—That fellow put his foot into it squarely; didn't he?

U.S.—Now you may tear up the squib. Or rather save it. Paste it on a board.

Write over it the inscription: "Self-impaled." And hang it up in your room. If you were to analyze, as closely as we did this one, every utterance made in favor of capitalism, you would find that a carriage-and-four can be driven through all.

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