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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {157}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—How wonderfully better is our free country to those European prison pens!

UNCLE SAM—Do you mean that the prisons in Europe are better than the prisons here? Guess that's so.

B.J.—No; I didn't mean that. I meant that the European countries are in themselves prison pens, while here the country is free.

U.S.—That's putting it strong. What have you on your mind?

B.J.—I have the military system on my mind. I have just been reading an article on the military barracks of Europe. Over a million men are there permanently under the stern military thumb. I don't see how the people can breathe in such countries.

U.S.—And here we have no such barracks?

B.J.—No, here we have absolute freedom.

U.S.—Did you ever visit a factory in this country of ours?

B.J.—Often.

U.S.—And our mines?

B.J.—Also.

U.S.—And our shops?

B.J.—Why{,} yes.

U.S.—Are the people who work there not held down to a strict military discipline?

B.J. looks skyward.



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U.S.—Are they not there placed in rank and file, made to move at command, kept silent under penalty of fines, ordered about?

B.J.—They are.

U.S.—Will you tell me what difference you see between these factories and those barracks; are not these factories essentially barracks?

B.J. remains pensive.

U.S.—They are six of the one, half a dozen of the other, eh?

B.J.—Coming to think of it, 'tis so.

U.S.—Well, coming to think of it, 'tis not so!

B.J.—How?

U.S.—These factories, shops, mines, etc., in which our workers in America have to spend their days are WORSE than those European barracks that oppress you.

B.J.—Worse yet?

U.S.—I'll let you answer the question yourself. You have been reading up on those European barracks, haven't you?

B.J.—I have.

U.S.—Did you ever read of women huddled in them?

B.J.—Women?! Why, no!

U.S.—Did you ever read of young girls kept there?

B.J.—Never!

U.S.—Did you ever read of children, little tots, put there to do work?

B.J.—Why, no!

U.S.—Now turn to the right about and look at OUR barracks; we call them here “factories,” “shops,” “mills,” “mines,” and what not. Are you looking at them closely?

B.J. has a distant look.

U.S.—Don't you find women there; lots of them, some doing hard man's work?

B.J. remains mum.

U.S.—Look close; don't you find there young girls at unseemly work?

B.J. gives no answer.

U.S.—Look closer yet; don't you see little tots, who ought to be at school or at play, toiling?

B.J. begins to show nervousness.

U.S.—Your silence implies consent. Women, girls, and children are a feature of OUR barracks. Now answer if these factories are not worse than military barracks?

B.J.—I must admit that those European military establishments are free from such features.

U.S.—But that's not all.

B.J.—Is there worse coming?

U.S.—Infinitely worse. Stand at the exits of any of these capitalist barracks of ours. Watch the people when they come out. How do they look?

B.J.—I have seen them. They do not look very happy.

U.S.—I should stutter! They look sallow, hollow of chest, round-shouldered. Did you read that the soldiers in the European barracks look like that?

B.J.—No. Coming to think of it, the descriptions are that the soldiers look healthy, strong, hale.

U.S.—Now, Jonathan, take a duster and dust off your mind a bit. The jingo dust is sitting thick there. The European military barracks are bad enough. But OUR barracks, called factories, throw those “prison pens” of Europe into the shade. Capitalism is a jailor. The fuller grown the jailor, the more brutal. In Europe he is nowhere as completely developed as here; consequently, he is here at his brutalest. While a million or two are there in the barracks, 17 millions of our workers are here in worse holes, holes in which mind and body decay. If you think you could not breathe in Europe, I do not know how you could breathe here. But do not despair, pull in your breath well and work with might and main to overthrow this international jailor and free our people who are sorely in need of the breath of freedom.

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