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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {220}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—Has prosperity struck you?

UNCLE SAM—No; has it you?

B.J. (despondently)—No, indeed!

U.S.—What is your despondency about; are you despondent because so many of our fellow wage slaves succeeded in getting themselves fooled into voting for the capitalist tickets?

B.J.—No. That's not it. I feel sad because I am not prosperous. I read about the farmer's prospering with their \$1 a bushel wheat; I read about the stockholders prospering with the rise in stocks; but the divel a bit of that prosperity comes my way.

U.S.—You seem to be surprised.

B.J.—Of course I am; why am I, and you and all other workingmen left out, while these other fellows—

U.S.— —the capitalists—

B.J.—Yes, the capitalists are prospering?

U.S.—Quite natural. Because you and most other workingmen (I and my fellow Socialist proletarians, who voted the S.L.P. ticket and tried to get possession of the Government, were not of your company) were silly enough to vote for tickets that stand on the capitalist platform—a platform, that acts like a pipe leading all prosperity into the pockets of the capitalists and away from the pockets of the workingmen.

B.J. (snappishly)—It simply sets me hopping to see how dogmatic you Socialists



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are. You don't see any good in anything else. It must be just your way or not at all.

U.S. (with mock solemnity)—Let us weep!

B.J.—Yes, weep indeed; you Socialists are abominably dogmatic!

U.S.—How sad! On this subject, however, you and I will quarrel. Let's talk on more pleasant things. Have you any cigars to regale me with?

B.J.—Not one; I am sorry.

U.S.—What, a cigarmaker, and no cigars for his friends? Shame!

B.J.—Don't I tell you that I am on my uppers? I have had no work for three months; and, before that, only occasionally.

U.S.—Let's put our heads together and see if we can't force prosperity our way.

B.J. (brightening up)—How?

U.S.—You are a cigarmaker, but you have nothing to make cigars with, have you?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—I am no cigarmaker, but I have a lot of things that can be turned into cigars—to sell; we would not care to smoke them ourselves. Let's go into a partnership. I furnish the stuff, you the skill; we turn out cigars by the shiploads; and we, too, become prosperous (swings his leg over B.J.'s head knocking his hat sideways). Hoopla, what a prosperous time there is in prospect for us! Is it a bargain?

B.J. (looking delighted)—Why, of course!

U.S.—When shall we start?

B.J.—Right away. Where have you got the stuff?

U.S.—Home in the cellar.

B.J. (falling back disconcerted)—But your cellar has been under water these six months, and you told me the rats swim up and down it. The stuff must be all rotten by this time.

U.S.—Not at all.

B.J. (becoming impatient and out of humor)—I tell you, it must be. It is all rotten {rotted?} away by this time.

U.S. (with increased calm and confidence)—Not at all. Only this morning I happened to go down there; and, poking around with a stick, I picked out one—

B.J. (amazed and with eyes dilated)—One what?!

U.S. (with the innocent look of a cherub, and the coolness of an iceberg)—One shoe, and to it was still tied by the string a large boot. (Pretending not to notice B.J.’s dejected look.) That was only one, or two of them; but I know there are hundreds, I should think thousands more right there. It seems an old shoemaker lived in the house for many years before me, and the collection he made of old shoes and left behind is our mine. And “rotten”? No “rotten” about them! I fired the shoe I had fished out, at a rat that I just spied up against the wall. It smashed his head flat. (With aggravating coolness)—You may be sure of that, they are not rotten.

B.J. looks dumbfounded.

U.S. (unperturbed)—I have lots of tables, glue, etc. We’ll set to work; roll off cigars; and roll into prosperity.

B.J. (angrily)—Do you take me for an ass?

U.S.—No.

B.J.—How come you to make such a stupid proposition to me?

U.S.—“Stupid”? Why “stupid”?

B.J. (sneeringly)—One can see you are no cigarmaker. Why, man, leather is so stiff that you could not bend or ply it. At best, it might serve for filler, but how about the binders, and, above all the wrappers. Pshaw!

U.S. (affecting to be in a towering passion)—Hang your dogmatism! Here I am offering you a chance to get into prosperity and you say: “Pshaw!” You go into dogmatisms about “binders” and “wrappers”; you want to have it just your way; you won’t see any good in anything else but your view; it must be your way or not at all. Go away, you abominably dogmatic fellow. (Turns on his heels and walks away snapping his eyes at B.J.)

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

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