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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {103}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I am drawing up a series of amendments to the Federal Constitution. This Constitution has too many defects. It won't do any longer.

UNCLE SAM smiles.

B.J.—Do you think it is perfect?

U.S.—Far from it.

B.J.—Isn't our President a Presidential disgrace?

U.S.—Quite extensively.

B.J.—Isn't our Senate a worthless collection of pirates?

U.S.—Unquestionably.

B.J.—Isn't the House of Representatives composed of a lot of abominable misrepresenters?

U.S.—If it represents anything it represents abomination.

B.J.—Are our laws what they ought to be?

U.S.—Just the reverse.

B.J.—That's all I need you to admit. Having admitted all that, you won't object to carry my petition to Washington and work for it.

U.S.—Don't know about that. What are your amendments?

B.J.—In the first place, I propose to have the Senate elected by the people.

U.S.—And you expect that such a change will change the Senate from the "worthless collection of pirates" that you justly declare it to be?

B.J.—Certainly. Just look at the way they now debauch the Legislatures of the States



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to secure an election. If they were elected by the people all that would end.

U.S.—And they would cease to be pirates?

B.J.—Of course.

U.S.—What did you a minute ago call the members of the House of Representatives?

B.J.—A lot of abominable misrepresenters.

U.S.—Are they elected by the Legislatures or by the people?

B.J. Damn it! That's so. (He takes a pencil and strikes out that amendment.)

U.S.—Next?

B.J. takes out his pencil again and strikes out some more.

U.S.—What are you doing?

B.J.—I was simply striking out, also, my proposed amendment upon how to elect the President. I wanted him, too, to be elected by the people. But that plan falls through with the plan to elect the Senate by the people.

U.S.—Clever boy! Next?

B.J.—But this last amendment will stand. You admitted the laws are not what they should be.

U.S.—Admitted.

B.J.—I propose to have all the laws referred back to the people for approval or rejection.

U.S.—For the people to approve or reject?

B.J.—Exactly.

U.S.—And you expect that the simple fact of the people having to vote directly upon the laws is a sufficient guarantee that bad laws will be rejected?

B.J.—Of course.

U.S.—You were in New York last November?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—You remember the constitutional amendments were submitted to the people?

B.J. (his jaw beginning to drop)—Yes.

U.S.—Were those amendments good or bad?

B.J.—Bad! Why, the principle of no taxation without representation was knocked

down by them. Besides, there were a whole lot of other abominations.

U.S.—And all that was submitted to the people?

B.J. (visibly caving in)—Yes.

U.S.—And did they reject those bad amendments?

B.J.—Why roast me over a slow fire in that way? No; they did not reject them.

U.S.—They even approved of them?

B.J.—They did.

U.S.—What good will your referendum do in sight of that fact?

B.J.—None. Here she goes. (He strikes it out; tears the paper up; and throws away the bits.) There; there it goes. And here I am feeling wretched. I never felt worse in all my born days.

U.S.—Why?

B.J.—I feel hopeless. It seems nothing can be done. Whatever one thinks will do some good turns out on closer inspection to be no good.

U.S.—Not at all! Cheer up, old boy! The trouble with all such propositions as you have just now brought up is that they proceed from the notion that the trouble lies in the form of things, whereas the trouble lies in the essence. Drop your reform propositions, all of which leave untouched the root of the evil, and give your thought to the revolutionary programme which goes at the root of things. It is as easy, nay, it is a good deal easier to teach people the necessity of overthrowing the capitalist system than to convince them of the efficacy of reforms. When they have learned to understand that the capitalist system must go, then, referendum or no referendum, they will vote right and take the right steps. Educate. But education is not humbug. And all matters of the form of government are humbug.

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