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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM AND BROTHER JONATHAN. {375}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN is intensely reading an article in a magazine.

UNCLE SAM—What have you got there?

B.J.—I'm reading an article that appears in the February issue of *Success*. The article, it seems to me, has much truth in it. And thereby it knocks out much of what Socialists say.

U.S.—Read the passage.

B.J. (reading)—“The Universal Cry: Wanted a Man. Never did the world call more loudly for young men with force, energy and purpose, young men trained to do some one thing, than to-day. Though hundreds of thousands are out of employment, yet never before was it so hard to get a good employee for almost any position as to-day.

“Everywhere people are asking where to find a good servant, a polite and efficient clerk, an honest cashier, a good stenographer who can spell and punctuate, and is generally well informed.

“Managers and superintendents of {at?} great institutions everywhere are hunting for good people to fill all sorts of positions. They tell us that it is almost impossible to find efficient help for any department. There are hundreds of applicants for every vacant place, but they either show signs of dissipation, are rude or gruff in manner, are slouchy or slip-shod in dress, are afraid of hard work, lack education or training, or have some fatal defects which bar them out. The head of one large commercial establishment says that the blunders and mistakes of its



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employees cost \$25,000 a year to correct, notwithstanding his utmost vigilance.”—Don’t you think there is a good deal in that?

U.S.—If by “there being a good deal in it” you mean that, as a simple statement of fact there is not a little truth in that statement, you are right.

B.J.—I thought so.

U.S.—No doubt hundreds of thousands of people are out of work; no doubt the employers are anxious to get men of “force,” “energy,” “skill,” “education,” “politeness,” etc.; and no doubt these are hard to get. But if by “there being a good deal in it” you mean that the charge is just, then you are wrong.

B.J.—In what way?

U.S.—The charge is doubly unjust in that it doubly insinuates a falsehood.

The first falsehood it insinuates is that the shortcomings of these applicants for work is their own fault. It is the fault of the capitalist class. The breadwinners of the working class are paid such low wages that they can not afford to give their children much polish and education, and their homes are so cramped that the children can acquire no refinement there, and are forced upon the streets.

The second falsehood is that people possessed of all these good qualities would get good wages. The wages that the capitalists have for such desirable people are so poor as to make it impossible for them to raise a family; and if they do raise a family, the fathers’ incomes are so small that the children are deprived of all opportunities.

B.J.—That IS so!

U.S.—But that’s not all. Under this capitalist system, which *Success* tries to whitewash by slandering the workingmen, it is an established fact that knowledge, skill, etc., does not accrue to the employee. The more knowledge and skill the employee has, all the more does his employer get out of him; he does not himself profit by it. It follows from that, that people become shiftless and all that. There is no spur to acquire desirable qualities because they do you no good. The capitalist system breeds all the ills *Success* complains of and then it kicks. This is one of the many instances in which capitalism gets hoisted by its own petard.

B.J.—I see.

U.S.—So that, so far from *Success* having knocked a hole into Socialism, it has

given itself a kick, and has convicted itself of holding language intended to deceive people with the notion that if they acquire all the good qualities that *Success* mentions they will secure good jobs. Whereas, if they had all those qualities it is the capitalist class alone that would profit thereby, and the poor workers would have to grind themselves all the more.

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