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DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM AND BROTHER JONATHAN. {365}

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**B**ROTHER JONATHAN.—Great is Bryan!

UNCLE SAM.—To judge by the previous stupidities of his that have provoked cheers from you, he must have committed some new and egregious blunder.

B.J.—Do you call that salutatory in his new paper, *The Commoner*, a blunder?

U.S.—To tell you truth I have been too busy to read it.

B.J.—Oh, you ought to read it; it is good!

U.S.—Give me some of its grand points.

B.J.—It is grand all the way through.

U.S.—It surely can't be such a procession of grand points that you would be at loss which to pick out?

B.J.—It is a grand procession of grand points. But, yet, I'll pick out one—

U.S.—Good!

B.J.—He says: The middle class is the common people; the common people are called "the middle class" because paupers and criminals are excluded on the one hand, while on the other hand some exclude themselves because of wealth, or position or pride of birth.

U.S.—Is that what Bryan actually says?

B.J.—Yes, isn't it grand?

U.S.—And is that the way he divides the classes?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S. puts his arms akimbo and roars.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—Is that division of the classes so wrong?

U.S.—You know something about horses, don't you?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—Suppose I were to classify horses this way: Horses are divided into mares, mustangs, ponies and swift runners.

B.J. (a smile suffusing his face.)—That would be a most idiotic classification.

U.S.—And so is Bryan's division of the classes.

B.J.—How would you divide the classes? How would you define the "common people?"

U.S.—The term "common people" is not a scientific term in sociology, any more than "the good people" or "the nation's favorites," or "the yeomanry of America" or so many other such terms. They are figures of speech, strophes in declamation,—

B.J.—Even so. Why couldn't such expressions be turned into scientific terms?

U.S.—For the very simple reason that none of such terms defines a fact; they are all conclusions depending upon the taste, notion or fancy of him who uses them. A scientific term depends upon none of these. It covers a concrete fact, neither more nor less, and conveys the identical idea to all who understand the subject. Those other terms convey as many ideas as there are moods and fancies. The "good people" of the Prohibitionist surely are not the "good people{" of Tammany Hall.

B.J. (ponders a while)—I grant that. But Bryan called "the common people" the "middle class." This term is a scientific one. How about that?

U.S.—The term is all right but the application he makes of it is rhetorical, not scientific.

B.J.—In what way?

U.S.—When one speaks of social classes, those people only are in contemplation upon whom the system of production, distribution and exchange depends, because when an informed man speaks of social classes he has in mind the system of production, distribution and exchange—production virtually covers all three—in force at the time spoken of.

B.J.—Very well.

U.S.—Consequently there can be no question of "criminals" or "paupers," meaning criminals, nor of "position" or of "birth." All these terms and categories drop.

B.J.—Then what remains?

U.S.—The people upon whom the system of production depends.

B.J.—Are they all of one class?

U.S.—No. In feudal society they fell into two classes: landlord and tenant.

B.J.—And now?

U.S.—They fall into three: Capitalist class, middle class and working class or proletariat.

B.J. (scratches his head).—And what distinguishes the one from the other?

U.S.—The capitalist is he who lives by virtue of his ownership of a sufficient amount of capital to enable him to defy competition and to skin the working class.

B.J.—Hang him!

U.S.—The working class is made up of people who have no capital to live on, who, therefore, can not exercise their labor-power and earn a living without they sell themselves in wage slavery to the man or concern that has capital. The workingman, accordingly, must submit to be robbed of his product. Under this system he gets but a small fraction of what he produces as wages, the rest is stolen from him as profits. That's the mark of the working class.

B.J.—And what about the middle class?

U.S.—The middle class is a class that has some capital enough to enable it to skin the members of the working class, but not enough to enable it to prevent being ground down by the capitalist through competition.

B.J.—And is that the class that Bryan stands for?

U.S.—In so far as he makes “the common people” his protégés, he is but a wind-jamming rhetorician; in so far, however, as he sets up as the paladin of the “middle class,” a class that must and will vanish, being a transition class that has its future behind it, your Bryan is a crack-brained Don Quixote.

B.J. scratches his head hard.

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