

# The Death of a Social System

By S. Macaulay

In his book, "The Economic Consequences of the Peace," J. M. Keynes, at one time a representative of the British Treasury at the Paris Peace Conference, has the following passage:—

"In continental Europe the earth heaves and no one but is aware of the rumblings. There it is not just a matter of extravagance or "labor troubles"; but of life and death, of starvation and existence, and of the fearful convulsions of a dying civilization...."

There is a pessimistic note in Mr. Keynes' writing which is perhaps natural to one who has not experienced the keen pleasure of arriving at the solution of the riddles and paradoxes presented by the economic chaos of Europe.

Mr. Keynes may have heard of Marx, but he says nothing in his book to indicate that he has considered the application of Marx's theories. The remedies he proposes are of the usual type put forward by the bourgeoisie, and futile.

In one point, however, Mr. Keynes is in agreement with Marx; he speaks of the death of a civilization. Socialists have pointed out, have been pointing out for the last half century, that social systems have no permanency, that they rise and fall with the changes produced by the improvement in the methods of production. The case in point is hardly the death of a Civilization; it is the demise of a social system, and the demise is closely connected with the birth of a new system.

I propose, therefore, to substitute the expression "social system" for the world Civilization.

## The History Of Class Struggles.

The history of the human race has been a history of class struggles, the manifestations of which have been different in different countries, and under different economic conditions. But there has (since the institution of chattel slavery) always been the conflict of interests upon which the class struggle is based.

Assyrian, Chaldean, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Aztec economic history all present the same spectacle of rise and fall. What is the canker that lay at the root of them all, that lies at the root of the present system? What is the common factor of unsoundness?

It is SLAVERY. The enslavement of one class by another.

But why, it will be asked, should slavery be a disintegrating force? Is it not true that thousands of slaves were not only contented, but happy as slaves? It is perfectly true. The position of the chattel slave of the old days was infinitely better than that of the industrial slave of today; his master was also his owner, he had a personal interest in keeping him in good repair, the slave was an investment of so much money, and so must be looked after. But the slavery of the wage-worker is a different type; it is a concealed slavery; it has the appearance of freedom; the slave is not bound to one master, he is the slave of a CLASS, he belongs to a slave CLASS.

The industrial slave of today is driven at a rate unknown in the days of chattel slavery; the cut-throat competition for markets compels an intensification of exploitation which makes the life of the chattel slave appear a holiday in comparison.

It is this very intensification which is at the root of the "industrial unrest" which is making itself manifest in all capitalistically developed countries. Consciously or unconsciously, the slaves are beginning to feel the gall-sores. They are becoming class-conscious. In most cases they are in utter darkness as to both the disease and the remedy, and it was not until Marx exposed the disease that the remedy was also made plain.

## "Concessions" To The Workers.

During recent years the various Governments have been frantically making concessions to the workers. Unemployed insurance, old age pensions, profit sharing, etc. etc., have been the sopps thrown to the "animals" to pacify them. But they refuse to be pacified. Distrust of Government and Parliaments, National Assemblies and Cabinets is openly expressed, and in some cases they have been overthrown. Disgust at the futility of "parliamentary action" is plainly manifested in the strikes and resorts to industrial mass action which are prevalent.

These expressions of discontent on the part