

NOTES ON THE CLASS STRUGGLE

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Notes on the Class Struggle by Peter E. Burrowes

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- No. 1. **An Exposition of Socialism and Collectivism.** By a Churchman. 48 pages (25th thousand.) March, 1902.
- No. 2. **The Next Step: A Benevolent Feudalism.** By W. J. Ghent. 32 pages. (Out of print.) May, 1902.*
- No. 3. **Bulletin of the Collectivist Society.** 32 pages. January, 1903.
- No. 4. **The Socialism of Jesus.** By Discipulus. 40 pages. March, 1903.
- No. 5. **Notes on the Class Struggle.** By Peter E. Burrowes and others. 48 pages. July, 1904.

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BY
PETER E. BURROWES
AND OTHERS

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of the Collectivist Society

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NOTES ON
The Class Struggle.

The Alignment.

BY DISCIPULUS.

I.

Is there one impelling force back of all the wars and political struggles of mankind—one main cause below all the confusion of surface causes? Students of history in the large are asking themselves this question, and many of them are coming to answer it in the affirmative and to find this all-impelling force to be economic necessity working upon men in masses.

Take, for example, our own Civil War; many different motives influenced many individuals North and South. Some at the North were driven by the passion for national unity (one form of the tribal instinct), and some at the South by State patriotism (also a form of tribal instinct). Some at the North acted from hatred of slavery, some at the South from belief in slavery; some at the North from high philanthropy, some at the South from devotion

to home. All these motives were apparent, were flaunted with the flaunting flags, proclaimed in speech and sermon, editorial and song. But in cold fact we shall not be far from right if we say that the Civil War was the inevitable clash between two clans of farmers, the Northern and the Southern, backed by auxiliary interests, each clan needing and each determined to have the as yet untilled prairies of the West, and each forced to demand *exclusive* possession of them for one labor system as against the other, because the free labor system of farming and the slave labor system could not exist side by side.

In like manner we may find many motives today in the struggle which is now in its early stages—the struggle for and against socialism. In favor of socialism the sense of social justice works in many minds; in others, the sense of order, outraged by present chaotic methods of distribution; in others, the passion for democracy; in yet others, the devotion to humanity. Against socialism some sincere minds are rallied by the sense of the sacredness of property; others, by a fastidious dread of the coarsening of life which they fancy socialism will bring; others, by the fear lest civilization should break down under industrial democracy.

All these are motives for and against socialism, and they are motives which proclaim themselves from the housetops. But again, in

cold fact, we shall not be far wrong if we say that the issue would never be joined, and therefore the revolution would never come, if these were the only counters at stake. The one thing that makes the dawning struggle an "irrepressible conflict," which must deepen and widen and intensify until the political crash comes and the final event arrives, is *the inherent antagonism of class interests between the workers and the money-makers.*

The interpretation above presented of the many movements of mankind is called "the economic interpretation of history," a doctrine which, though put forth by Karl Marx and held by all militant socialists, is also coming to be held by most scholars whose minds are reaching toward new truth, even those who remain non-socialists or anti-socialists.* The latter deny that socialism is a corollary of the doctrine, though some of them admit that a class struggle for and against socialism is such a corollary.

The doctrine may be stated thus: That men think and feel and act in masses; that those men who make their incomes in like ways tend to think and feel alike—they tend to be in favor of those things which they feel will increase

* There are two recent books which are especially to be recommended for wide reading. One is Prof. E. R. A. Seligman's "The Economic Interpretation of History" and the other Prof. A. Labriola's "Essays on the Materialist Conception of History."

their incomes and against those things which they feel will decrease their incomes. This tendency operates unconsciously quite as often as consciously; and the bonds of this kind which tie men together are, in the large, much the strongest kind of bonds which exist, and they have the most to do with driving men to concerted action.

The best proof of the doctrine in its application to the socialist cause is that of all the various efforts to create socialist movements only one has succeeded, that one which made its appeal to the workers directly, with the watchword, "Workers of the world, unite!"

Having stated that the antagonism of class interests is inevitably aligning the workers on one side and the money-makers on the other side, we must go on to specify precisely what these two terms mean. By the "workers" we mean all those who are busy upon one kind of material or another, turning it into things which can be used; such as the farmers, busy upon the ground, bringing crops out of it; the mechanics, turning metal or stone or wood into tools, houses or the like; the teachers and preachers, busy upon human minds, making them more useful to themselves and others; the musicians, busy upon the air, turning it into vibrations which are of use to the listeners; all these, and others like them, are workers.