

EDITORIAL

RECRUDESCENT MALTHUSIANISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A COPY of the *Boston News Bureau* has reached this office with a marked passage accompanied by the question, Can these things be?

The question leaves us in doubt. Does it mean whether the statement is true: "The high cost of living has always been with us; it is a blessing because it promotes human efficiency by killing so many"; or does it mean whether such a statement is too shocking to be printed?

The gist of the statement is a recrudescence of Malthusianism.

Malthus, a Protestant British minister put into a sentence sentiment that had been less tersely expressed about a hundred and odd years ago. He said: "At the banquet table of nature there is no place for him who is not provided with a plate, knife and fork. To him Nature says, Be gone!" The utterance was intended to give a color of unavoidableness, hence, of justice to the already increasing privations of increasing numbers. If numbers increase faster than it is possible to produce the necessities of life, then a sufficiency for all is impossible, with the consequence that all would suffer privation, and death would be the portion of many. Malthusianism was not a fool's utterance. Were it that, then it would not have deserved the attacks with which science smote it.

Malthusianism was a theory framed to order. It implies a good deal more than it says. It takes for granted the inevitableness of capitalism. Accordingly the Malthusian principle, fully expressed, and cleansed of all Jesuitic mental reservation should read:

"The private ownership of the tool of production is an institution of Nature. The widening area of poverty and death through poverty is the consequence, not of the institution of Nature, but of the improvidence of men themselves. They procreate too fast. Hence Nature says to the superfluous: 'You have no covers laid for you at

my banquet table; be gone!”

It is unnecessary at this late date to demonstrate the falsity of the theory. On all sides the facts turn the tables on Malthus. Wealth is to-day producible faster than the population increases. The continuance of poverty and incidental death is an evil, not due to man's incapacity to produce an abundance, or to his improvidence, it is due to a social system that limits production for the sake of profits, and that, as an incident, multiplies the number of those who are crowded off the banquet table.

A review of the Malthusian doctrine, coupled with the statement in the *Boston News Bureau*, suggests the conclusion that the efforts to narcotize the people into patient submission to suffering as a religious duty are proving ineffective; and that Mysticism is invoking Science to lend the reputation of its name as a cloak for the disrepute of Mysticism.

Can such a thing be? Why not? Humbug is being crowded to the edge of the precipice.

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