

KARL MARX

A MODERN RISHI

"And Unto The Poor, The Gospel Is Preached."
(St. Matthew.)

In this short essay, I propose to tell young India the story of the life and work of a great European Rishi, a saint and sage, whose name is revered to-day by millions of men and women in all countries of the West. Such a study will show us that saintliness does not consist only in repeating religious formula and singing hymns, and that the hardest *tapas* can be performed out of a penance-grove and without sitting in the midst of four burning logs of wood under the burning sun. It will also lead us to the discussion of vital problems of human welfare and set us thinking. It will teach us not to confine ourselves to the writings of Kanda and Kapila, Sankaracharya and Ramanuja in our search for wisdom but to turn to the great modern thinkers for guidance in our social, moral, intellectual and political difficulties. Modern civilisation has been built up by the devoted labours of a group of heroes and heroines at the head of vast numbers of energetic people, and Marx is one of this coterie of thinkers and workers, whose names are household words in Europe.

KARL MARX

Modern India has personal tie too, that links Marx's name to her destiny, for Marx's favourite grandson, Mr. Jean Longuet, one of the most prominent French Journalists, is a staunch champion of India's rights and aspirations, and always supports new India's claims in his daily paper, *L' Humanite* of Paris. Monsieur Longuet is the son of Karl Marx's eldest daughter, and used to comfort the last days of the great Philosopher in the early eighties. Young India does not know the full value of Mr. Longuet's services to her cause, but time will reveal all. There is nothing hidden that shall not be made public.

We shall understand Karl Marx's life and doctrine better, if we try to put ourselves in a reflective mood first. We shall then be able to see the world as it appeared to him. Each of us views the world from his particular angle. To the preacher, the world is full of sinners; to the cobbler, it is full of shoes that require mending; to the king, it is full of subjects. And thus everyone lives in a world of his own. Karl Marx regarded the world from his own standpoint, and we must comprehend it before we can profit by his great work.

Karl Marx devoted his life to the solution of the problem of poverty. Poverty is an evil of the first magnitude all over the world. It is the curse of the race. It blights moral growth and dwarfs the intellect.

KARL MARX

It is the root of slavery and disease. It has been the enemy of progress and civilisation from the earliest times. Now poverty may be due to various circumstances. It may be the result of geographical and meteorological conditions as in Siberia, Greenland, and Arabia. It may be caused by over population as in China. It may be aggravated by ignorance of the principles of agriculture, as in India and Mexico. It may be the consequence of political disorder and chronic social unrest, as in the republics of South America. It may be the necessary outcome of political conditions, as in medieval France and some regions of Asia. Or it may be due to the economic conditions of production and distribution, as in modern Europe.

These causes of poverty are not mutually exclusive. A people may be tormented by drought and locusts, fleeced by money-lenders, plundered by feudal lords, and robbed by banditti in one and the same country. But scientific study requires a complete analysis of the different causes, which are not mutually connected by a tie of essential relationship, though they may exist simultaneously.

Karl Marx did not deal with all the causes of poverty that have been enumerated above. He confined himself to one phase of the question. He asked himself, "Why are the mass of the people in modern Europe so poor and miserable?" And he chiefly concentrat-

ed his attention on those countries in which the factory system had been established in the last quarter of the eighteenth century or later.

Thus Marx was not a philosopher in the sense that he attempted to find an answer to the everpresent question of whence and whither that has baffled the minds of men since they began to think. He was not a moral teacher or a religious enthusiast, nor was he prepared to offer a satisfactory synthesis of all the forces and phenomena of life for the guidance of humanity. He was a gleaner in one field. He chose a modest work and applied his all to its completion.

The problem of poverty has been before the world ever since the first monera sprang to life in the depths of the ocean. Does not Darwin inform us that nature does not produce sufficient food for all the creatures that are born? Thus our scientific commanders tell us that the commissariat arrangements of the world are woefully defective. Animals live in a state of chronic famine and consequent civil war.

Man too was in a similar condition in the primitive epochs of history. Hunting was his sole source of food, and he was the prey quite as often as he was the hunter. But with the advent of the pastoral stage, the conditions of things changed. And when the miracle of agriculture was wrought, giving man one-thousand grains in place of one and thus feeding multitudes with

a handful of corn long before the alleged feat of Jesus, man's poverty was a thing of the past. Plenty reigned everywhere.

But fate was mocking his hopes. For now we have to solve this great riddle; How is it that man has been in an object state of poverty even after the discovery of agriculture? Far back as we may go, we find the majority of men in the grip of vile poverty. Greece, Rome, China, Persia, and all other nations of antiquity, saw this horrid spectacle, and remained silent. The philosophers of India did not condescend to attend to it. They lived on the corn of the peasant, and then turned round and blamed him for his attachment to such gross material things as crops and cattle. They did not see that all philosophy is ultimately dependent on manure. So illogical a position surprises one who reflects on the severely rationalistic spirit of Hindu Philosophy. A system of philosophy that does not deal with economics is like a tower without foundations. For it is clear that a man must be born and then must eat and grow before he can attain *mukti*, *nirvan*, salvation, perfection or any other goal that religion may propose for him. Modern Europe recognises this truth, and Marx has put the whole world under a debt of gratitude by pointing out the fundamental importance of economics in human history.

Just as humanity was baffled by poverty even after

agriculture had filled her granaries, so she has eaten dry crusts and worn rags even after the remarkable inventions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have increased man's productive powers a hundred fold and made nature a humble vassal of his will. How is that while the world is rich, the people are so poor? This was the problem that Marx wished to solve for Modern Europe, where poverty had no right to exist, as science had improved agriculture and industry beyond the wildest dreams of the utopia builders of the past. But the people of Europe were in Marx's time sunk in wretched poverty and the same state of things exists now. For Marx is not so far removed from us. He was born in 1818 and died in 1883.

The educated classes of India have no idea of the horrible destitution of the mass of the people in Europe. The Moghul Emperors, in their pride of power, carved on the walls of the palace of Delhi the romantic legend:—"If there is a Heaven on earth it is here, it is here, it is here." And as I walked about the slum quarters of Paris and New York, the old reminiscences awoke in my mind with an altered refrain:—"If there is a hell on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here." Let the young men of India reply why one man like Andrew Carnegie can give away £ 36,000,000 in charity, while forty-four persons, who were arrested as vagrants the

other day in New-York, had only Rupees 5 among them for all their worldly belongings. How is it that England is the richest country in the world, but full one-third of the English people live on the verge of starvation year in and year out? How is it that while English exports and imports are increasing by leaps and bounds, many workmen have to cut their children's throats and commit suicide every winter, because they have nothing to eat? How does it come about that while the rich idlers are going so far afield as Biskra, Algiers, Khartoum for their holidays, the poor people are dying of consumption by thousands for lack of proper food and fresh air? How does it happen that while the sun never sets on England's vast Empire, he also does not set on her filthy slum? All these questions troubled young Marx's mind day and night, and he resolved to sacrifice his life and a brilliant career to help the working men of Europe of the soul-destroying disease-breeding poverty in which they dragged their wretched existence. It would be an error of language to say that they lived.

But that is not the whole of this great problem. Let us try to think why the idlest persons in the world are the richest. Why should a cooly who works all day earn only 3 annas, while a shareholder of a cotton mill earns an annual dividend of hundreds of rupees, though he may sleep away the whole time? How is it that

the farmer, who feeds the whole world, cannot feed himself? How is it that the peasant, who toils in rain and sun is always poor and in debt, while the village money-lender grows fat and rich by sitting cross-legged in his shop and writing something from time to time in his ledger? How do you explain the strange anomaly that the man who risks his life in getting a pearl from the bottom of the ocean in the Persian gulf never wears it himself and never becomes wealthy, while the merchant who sells that pearl in Bombay or Calcutta lives in a stately mansion and enjoys all comfort and social esteem? How can you account for the fact that the working-men, who bring all the coal out of the mine in England or India, will all remain the same dirty, poor despised beggars that they are now, while the shareholders of the companies that sell the coal will rise from millionaires to multi-millionaires and from multi-millionaires to billionaires as time passes by, while they have never seen the mine, and in many cases do not even know where it is? How is it that the hardest and the most dangerous kinds of labour are the worst-paid in all countries of the world? These awkward questions must be answered somehow or other.

In ancient times, people did not see the way out of the maze. So they preached charity to the rich and patience to the poor, with the consolation of Heaven thrown in as a reward of poverty in this world. Thus

Jesus saw clearly that David and Lazarus represented an unnatural state of things, but he could only threaten David with hell-fire and cheer Lazarus with the prospect of sitting in Abraham's bosom after death. At the same time, the ancient philosophers recommended cynical renunciation and self-starvation, 'Wealth' is fleeting: it cannot be equally and justly distributed; it cannot be kept safe against the avarice of Kings and the skill burglars. So they resorted to the heroic remedy of abolishing it altogether. But they could not carry out their precepts in practice, for the only logical outcome of their doctrine was suicide for all and everybody. They loudly condemned all economic activity but lived on the fruit of other peoples, economic exertions. They mistook an impossible and stupid retreat from the field for a great victory. Even the ascetic who ate only a grain of rice every day, did consume a certain quantity of rice in order to live and show his contempt for all rice-cultivators. Thus the ancient world only suggested foolish remedies and could not diagnose the disease. The problem of the inequality of material conditions bewildered it, and it ran away in haste. Some tried to ascribe these evils to the deeds of a former life. But the modern world seeks some less recondite explanation of the phenomenon. It takes the bull by the horns instead of fleeing before it. No saint or philosopher can live on ideas or divine

KARL MARX

grace. No amount of virtue will save a man from consumption or plague, if he is ill-fed and weak. Transcendental philosophy has feet of clay, like Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, for the natural needs of the bad afflict saint and sinner alike, and even the Vedanta cannot flourish without a certain modicum of protein, carbohydrates, and water within twenty-four hours. For shame! For shame! What vulgar wordiness it is to connect salvation and *mukti* with wheat and lentils! But facts are facts and I never read of a philosopher or religious idealists, who could live on air or legio. Thus the old solutions of the perennial problem of poverty were entirely inadequate and ridiculous. Let us see how the modern world grapples with it. And let us study Karl Marx's contribution to the intellectual treasures of the human race in this province.

Karl Marx was born on Tuesday, May 5th, 1818 in the German town of Treves. His father was a lawyer of repute, and had been converted from Judaism to Christianity early in his career. Karl was the brightest of his sons, and the fond father formed great hopes of future career. Karl was sent to the Universities of Bonn and Berlin to study philosophy and jurisprudence and qualify for a profession. The romantic lad wrote poetry and planned some novels, but found that poetry was not his vocation. He turned to philosophy and became a follower of Hegel, though he maintained

KARL MARX

a very critical attitude and finally rejected the idealistic element of the Hegelian system. He passed through a period of painful intellectual and spiritual unrest,—the storm after which all great spirits find the calm and settled convictions and purposes in life. But his idealism annoyed his father very much, and we find the old, Jew addressing grave remonstrances to the philosophically inclined son on his imprudence in neglecting his worldly prospects. The successful man of the world wished his son to be like himself. But Karl was born to other things. It is pathetic to read in one of his father's letters the following sermon on the importance of money:—

“Complete disorder, silly wandering through all branches of science, silly brooding at the burning on lamp; turned wild in your coat of learning and unkempt hair.....Only on one subject, I am still in the dark as to your views, and on that subject you are shrewd enough to keep silent. I mean that cursed gold, whose worth to a family man you do not seem to grasp at all....., though you unjustly claim that do not know, or do not understand you.”

Karl did not mend his ways, and even wrote a thesis that would certainly have lost him his doctor's degree, for which he had worked so many years. His revolutionary ideas had made him unpopular with the

authorities, and his chances of securing a professor's chair were very small indeed. His father's disappointment at seeing his son in wander away into the thorny paths of politics and philosophy can be better imagined than described. His mother too felt the loss keenly, as she had cherished the hope that her dear Karl would win wealth and rank by means of his rare intellectual gifts. Little did she dream that he would pass his life in exile and poverty, and that his remains would rest far from the family vault in a humble grave across the water. But the struggle between paternal solicitude and youthful idealism is not an uncommon occurrence. Every young philosopher was not blessed with a philosopher for his father. India too knows this domestic strife, which makes one home dark but spreads light over the land. Is not Buddha, the great exemplar of this eternal conflict? Karl too was born to wring his parent's hearts with sorrow, but to give to the world great tidings of joy. He who belongs to himself cannot belong to the family: he who dotes on the family cannot work whole-heartedly for the world. Some one must weep in order that all may laugh. This rule of vicarious suffering holds good under all circumstances.

In 1843, Karl married Johanna Bertha Julie Jenny Von Westphalen, a beautiful lady who had been the playmate of his childhood, and who fully reciprocated

his tender affection. It was a social sacrifice for her to marry Karl, as she came of a rich and noble family, while Karl was a penniless graduate. But love is stronger than the world. The marriage was a happy one, and Jenny stood by her husband in all his trials and troubles till death parted them 38 years later. Brave as Karl Marx ever was, his wife was braver still, and there is no doubt that her love and gentleness cheered and soothed him in his exile and bitter poverty. As we shall see, Jenny loved the cause of the working-classes as passionately as Karl, and sacrificed two children with as much heroism as any Abraham offering Isaac to God, or Agamemnon immolating Iphigenia for the public good.

In 1842, Karl Marx adopted political journalism to earn his livelihood, and disseminate his political ideas. Germany was at that time ruled by a wretched despotic bureaucracy, at the head of which stood the king of Prussia. There was no popular liberty. The constitutional movement of the early nineteenth century had left no permanent results behind. The numerous petty states were governed in the same manner, though sham constitutional assemblies existed in some of them. All the advanced thinkers of Germany were engaged in a campaign against this despotic and irresponsible system of government. Karl took his position in their ranks, and his brilliant contributions

to the "Rhenische Zeitung," (The Rhenish Gazette) attracted much attention. He was made editor-in-chief and conducted the paper with great courage and skill. His sledge hammer blows directed against the government soon drew down the wrath of the public on him. In April 1843, the paper was suppressed. Marx wrote to Ruge, his friend and collaborator:—"The cloak of radicalism has fallen, and the almighty despotism stands naked before the eyes of the entire world." Ruge Replied:—"The entire press of Germany could not on account of one or two officials, nor even the king, be suppressed.....If the opposition in the publishing world wished to open new battlefields, it must do so outside of Germany."

Marx saw that he could do nothing within the country. He had become interested in the French writers, who preached communism as a cure for the poverty of the working classes of Europe. He also grew discontented with the merely political Liberalism which did not include economic measures for the relief of the poor peasants and working classes in its programme. He resolved to study economics and the theories of the French communists. So he left Germany and went to Paris—that Mecca of all lovers of freedom, the centre of knowledge and art, liberty and achievement, the mighty moral workshop of the world. With his arrival in Paris began a new period in his life.

He became the editor of a new radical journal, *The Valwarts*, published in Paris to further the German political movement. He continued his trenchant attack on the Prussian Government. The Prussian bureaucracy took alarm and requested the French Government to suppress the paper. Tyrannical governments are always very obliging to one another, and France was at this time governed by a corrupt monarchy under Louis Philippe. In January, 1845, M. Guizot the French Minister, expelled Marx and the other contributors of the journal from Paris. Marx went to Brussels with his wife and child, and met other German political exiles who were living there. His three year's stay at Brussels brought him into touch with associations of German communists, and first gave him an opportunity of allaying himself with the forces of communism on the continent. He established a German workingman's club, and secured the editorial control of the *Deutsche Brusseier Zeitung*, a radical paper published by German exiles. He lectured to working men on the principles of political economy, and carried on an extensive correspondence with the radical leaders of France and Germany. He also tried to organise the various scattered communist societies in one great league. He entered into relations with the German communist club of London and induced its members to transfer their headquarters to Brussels, so

KARL MARX

that the movement might have the benefit of his personal guidance. He then established a "Communist League," and wrote a manifesto which is to this day famous as "The Communist Manifesto."

The "Communist Manifesto" was brought from the printer on February 24, 1843, and on the same day the world learned that a republican revolution had broken out in Paris and that the King of France Louis Philippe had fled from Paris in disguise. M. Guizot, the Minister who had expelled Marx from Paris in 1845, also sought safety in foreign parts. A Provisional Government was established, and a Republic was proclaimed.

Meanwhile, the Prussian Government had been trying to persuade the Belgian authorities to expel Marx from Belgium, but with no success. At last, in February 1848, the spread of communism among the working classes frightened the Belgian Government, and Marx was arrested and ordered to leave Belgian soil at once.

But fortune favoured him this time, for the revolution in France had left the way clear to Paris. In fact, the French government, through one of its members had begged "the brave and loyal Marx" to return to the country whence "Tyranny had banished him, and where he like all fighting in the sacred cause, the cause of the fraternity of all people;" would find welcome. Marx

KARL MARX

spent some months in Paris, and returned to Germany to start a democratic newspaper the *Neue Rhenische Zeitung* of Cologne (*New Rhenish Gazette*). The first issue of the paper was published on June 1, 1848. Marx's friend Engels wrote about his brief stay in Paris :—

"I saw Paris again, during the short fleeting weeks of the republican delirium, in March and April, when the workers ate during the day their dry bread and potatoes, and at night planted "trees of liberty" in the boulevards, had displays of fireworks, and sang the *Marseillaise*, and when the bourgeois hid themselves in their houses and sought to assuage the rage of the populace."

The *New Rhenish Gazette* was no more popular with the government of Germany than its predecessor, which had been suppressed in 1843. In the course of summer of 1848, a Democratic Congress was held at Cologne; Marx took an active part in its proceedings. Albert Brisbane, an American socialist, was also present at it, and left a pen-picture of Marx at the Congress from which we quote the following :—

"I found there Karl Marx, the leader of the popular movement. The writings of Marx on Labour and Capital and the social theories he then elaborated, have had more influence on the great socialistic movement of Europe than those of any other man.....He was

just then rising into prominence; a man of some thirty years, short, solidly built, with a fine face and bushy black hair. His expression was that of great energy, and behind his self-contained reserve of manner were visible the fire and passion of a resolute soul. Marx's supreme sentiment was hatred of the power of capital, with its spoliations, its selfishness, and its subjections of the labouring classes.....As I remember that young man uttering his first words of protest against our economic system, I reflect how little it was imagined then that his theories would one day agitate the world and become the important lever in the overthrow of time-honoured institutions. How little did the contemporaries of St. Paul imagine the influence which that simple mind would produce on the future of the world? Who could have supposed at that time that he was more of importance than the Roman senate or the reigning Emperor—more even than all the Emperors of Christendom to follow? In modern times, Karl Marx may have been as important in his way as was St. Paul in his."

The heavy arm of the German Government was not long in falling on the interpid journalist and political "agitator." On Feb. 7, 1849, Marx and other colleagues were tried on the charge of having libelled the public prosecutor and some constables in certain comments on their official actions. Marx conducted his

own defence and spoke for about an hour. His speech was really an indictment of the ministry. He concluded it with these memorable words:—

"Not only does the general situation in Germany, but also the state affairs in Prussia, impose upon us the duty to watch with the utmost distrust every movement of the Government and publicly to denounce to the people the slightest misdeeds of the system.....In the Month of July alone, we had to denounce three illegal arrests.....It is the duty of the press to step forward on behalf of the oppressed and their struggles. And then gentlemen, the edifice of slavery has its most effective supports in the subordinate political and social functionaries that immediately deal with private life—the person, the living individual. It is not sufficient to fight the general conditions and the superior powers. The press must make up its mind to oppose this constable, this attorney, this councillor. What has wrecked the March revolution? It reformed only the highest political class, but it left untouched all the supports of this class—the old bureaucracy, the old army, the old courts, the old judges, born, educated and worn out in the service of absolutism. The first duty of the press is now to undermine all the supports of the present political state."

The defendants were acquitted by the Jury. But two

KARL MARX

days latter, on Feb. 9, 1849, Marx and his associates were again tried for inciting to armed resistance to the King's authority. This was a much more serious affair. Marx made a brilliant speech in his defence, and the jury who again brought in a verdict of 'not guilty,' sent one of their number to thank him for the very instructive lecture that he had given them! In May 1849, there were risings in Dresden and other places in the Rhine provinces. The patience of the Prussian Government was now exhausted. Marx was ordered to leave Prussia and the *Gazette* was suppressed by administrative order. That last issue of the paper appeared on May 19, printed in red ink and containing a stirring "Farewell" poem.

Marx again left his native land, and went to Paris. What happened next can best be described in his wife's words. Her diary gives us a vivid record of the daily sufferings of the house-hold on account of their harrowing poverty. Here is one extract from it.

"We remained in Paris a month. Here, also, there was to be no resting place for us. One fine morning the familiar figure of the sergeant of police appeared with the announcement that Karl 'et sa dame' (and his wife) must leave Paris within twenty-four hoursI again gathered together my small belongings to seek a safe home in London. Karl had hastened thither before us".

KARL MARX

Mrs. Marx arrived in London towards the end of June, 1849, and in July her fourth-child, Henry, was born there. Speaking of this event, Mr. J. Sparge, the learned biographer of Marx, says that the child, was, "Cursed from birth by the black monster of poverty and doomed to the early death which is the fate of so many thousands of poor children."

This boy died early in 1852, a victim, or rather a martyr of poverty. Mr. Sparge rightly says:—

"It was the first time that death had visited the humble home, and the blow fell upon the parents the more heavily because they knew that their little one, who had sucked blood from his famished mother's breasts, was literally slain by poverty."

The family were reduced to the most gnawing poverty, almost to destitution, during their first few years in London. Bread was often the only food they had, and Marx had to forego his share of it to let the children eat a full meal. He would go and study in the British Museum, faint from hunger and cold. He learned a little by writing ill-paid articles for reviews. The struggle was bitter indeed. Once he applied in a railway office for the position of clerk, but was rejected on account of his bad handwriting! It will be remembered by posterity that one of the greatest German philosophers and writers could not become even a railway clerk! Later he was appointed London

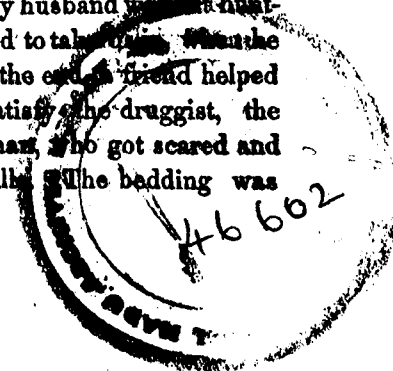
KARL MARX

correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, and was for months the only income of the family. Indian readers who have visited England, can imagine how a family, could live on this pittance. Even the technical scholars of the Government of India get £ 3 a week (of course including college fees.) The couple lived in two rooms, one of which was the sleeping room, while the other served as kitchen, study and drawing-room. Illustrious visitors found Marx in these humble lodgings, as they came to pay their respects to him, or ask his advice on important questions of politics and social organisation. We shall quote from Mrs. Marx's letters some extracts describing their life in London :—

"Nobody can say of us that we ever made a noise about what we for years, have sacrificed and had to endure ; very little, or never have our personal affairs or difficulties been noised abroad...to save the political honour of the paper (*New-Rhenish Gazette*) and the civic honour of his friends, he allowed the whole burden to be unloaded on his shoulders, all the income he sacrificed, and in the moment of his departure he paid back the salaries of the editors and other bills, and he was expelled by force from the country. You know that we did not keep for ourselves anything: I went to Frankfort to pawn my silverware, the last we had ; at Cologne I sold my furniture.....you know London and its conditions well enough. Three

KARL MARX

children and the birth of a fourth. For rent alone we paid 42 thalers a month...our small resources were soon exhausted...The keeping of a wet nurse for my baby was out of the question, so I resolved to nurse the child myself, in spite of the constant terrible pains in the breast and the back. But the poor little angel drank so much silent worry from me that he was sickly from the first day of his life, lying in pain day and night. So I was sitting one day, when unexpectedly our landlady stepped in, to whom we had paid 250 thalers during the winter, and with whom we had a contract to pay after that the rent to the owner of the house. She denied the contract and demanded £ 5, the sum we owed for rent and because we were unable to pay at once, two constables stepped in and attached my small belongings, beds, linens, clothes, all even the cradle of my poor baby and the toys of the two girls, who stood by crying bitterly. In two hours, they threatened they would take all and every-thing away. I was lying there on the bare hard floor with my freezing children.... The next day we had to get out of the house. It was cold, raining, and gloomy. My husband was out hunting for rooms. Nobody wanted to take us. When he talked of four children. In the end a friend helped us. I sold my bedding to satisfy the druggist, the baker, butcher and the milkman, who got scared and all at once presented their bills. The bedding was



brought to the sidewalk, and was loaded on a cart. We were able, after the selling of everything we possessed, to pay every cent. I moved with my little ones into our present two small rooms in the German Hotel, 1, Leicester Street, Leicester Square... Do not believe that these petty sufferings have bent us. I know only too well that we are not the only ones who suffer, and I rejoice that I even belong to the chosen privileged lucky ones, because my dear husband, the support of my life, yet stands at my side."

It would be sacrilege to add any comments on this story of a wife's heroism told by herself.

In the spring of 1852, the afflicted couple lost their infant girl Francisca, who was born the year before. The mother's diary records the terrible destitution of the family at this time. Here is an extract, which shall surely one day figure in the acts of the Apostles of the Bible of emancipated Labour in time to come:—

"On Easter of the same year—1852—our poor little Francisca died of severe bronchitis. For three days the poor little child wrestled with death. Her little dead body lay in the small back room; we all of us went into the front room, and when night came, we made our beds on the floor, the three living children lying by us..... The death of the dear child came in the time of our bitterest poverty. Our German friends could not help us..... In the anguish of my heart, I

went to a French refugee who lived near and who had sometimes visited us. I told him our sore need. At once with the friendliest kindness, he gave me £ 2. With that we paid for the little coffin in which the poor child sleeps, peacefully."

At this time, too, occurred the amusing incident which has immortalised a pawn-broker who was too zealous for the rights of the property. It happened that Marx wanted to pawn some old silver spoons, which his wife had inherited as heirlooms from her aristocratic ancestors and which bore the crest of the house of Argyll. The pawn-broker's suspicions were roused, when he saw his ragged German client in possession of such precious wares, and he wanted to have him arrested by the police. It was with some difficulty that Marx escaped arrest after offering the necessary explanations to the police. We know that pawn-brokers figure in the biography of Mazzini too. Evidently Europe owes much to these despised custodians of their people's goods for the movement of freedom was helped out by them at the most critical periods of the lives of its heroes! Marx also used to borrow small sums at the exorbitant rate of 20 to 50 per cent., for interest! This shows how capitalism, represented by its meanest hirelings, unconsciously wreaked its vengeance on its bitterest enemy, who was labouring to abolish rent, interest and profit from the face of the

earth. Once or twice Marx even thought of going into business, as he could not see the suffering of the little children. But the brave wife dissuaded him from this step, which would have been a severe blow to the movement. She encouraged him to adhere to his literary work, and thus saved him from the grievous error that he wanted to commit. In a letter to Mrs. Wedemeyer, dated March 11, 1861, Mrs. Marx wrote:—

“The first years of our life here were bitter ones, but I will not dwell on those sad memories to-day, on the losses we suffered, nor the dear, sweet, departed children, whose pictures are engraved in our hearts with such deep sorrow.....Then the first American crisis came, and our income was cut in half (from the *New York Tribune*.) Our living expenses had to be screwed down once more and we had even to incur debts.....And now I come to the brightest part of our life, from which the only light and happiness was shed on our existence—our dear children. The girls are a constant pleasure to us, owing to their affectionate and unselfish dispositions. Their little sister, however, is the idol of the whole house.....A most terrible fever attacked me and we had to send for a doctor. On the 20th of November he came, examined me carefully, and after keeping silent a long time broke out into the words:—“My dear Mrs. Marx, I am sorry to say you have got the smallpox the

children must leave the house immediately.” You can imagine the distress and grief of the entire household at this verdict...I had scarcely recovered sufficiently to be able to leave my bed, when my dearly beloved Karl took sick. Excessive fear, anxiety and vexation of every sort and description threw him upon his sickbed. But thanks to heaven, he recovered after an illness of four weeks. In the meantime, the *Tribune* had placed us at half-pay again.....To you, my dear friend, I send my warmest regards. May you, remain brave and unshaken in these days of trial. The world belongs to the courageous. Continue to be the strong faithful support of your dear husband, and remain elastic in mind and body.....Yours in sincere friendship. Jenny Marx.”

In these simple notes, we see the whole situation at a glance—the little household, racked by poverty and sickness, haunted by worry and care, but lit up with the light of love and resounding with the laughter of lovely children. All that the heart could give to take the sting out of misfortune and daily privations was vouchsafed in the most abundant measure. And they were happy, the great thinker and his devoted wife, who knew her duty so well, and discharged it with such constancy. Often they would walk up and down the room, hand in hand, singing German love-songs as they used to do when they were young—far

away in the old country, beneath the summer trees in bloom.

"O woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou."

In spite of such hardships, Marx always refused to accept any remuneration for his lectures on political economy to the workingmen of London. He was resolved to take nothing from the poor labouring class, whose servant he had made himself. It was during these years of strenuous struggle against adverse circumstances that Bismarck, the German Chancellor, tried to offer Marx an indirect bribe in order to wean him from the people's cause and undermine his influence in the movement. It was a clever move, but it failed. Bismarck employed Marx's old comrade, Bucher, who had gone over to the side of the Government and now enjoyed Bismarck's entire confidence. Bucher had kept up friendly relations with Marx even after accepting his official appointment. He wrote a carefully-worded letter to Marx, dated October 8th, 1865, in the course of which he said:—

"The Staats Anzeiger" ('The State Intelligencer') desires to obtain regular monthly reports concerning the movements of the money market. No limitations

are set regarding the length of articles...Kindly write whether you agree to undertake this, and what compensation you desire.....*Progress will have changed many times before it dies; therefore he who wishes to serve the nation during his life-time must rally round the Government.*" (The italics are ours.)

The sting of the letter is in its tail. The concluding sentence discloses the real object of this bid for Marx's literary work. But Marx saw through the scheme. He knew that dependence on the Government even as an independent contributor to an official organ would place him in a very equivocal position before his followers. He did not desire to have anything to do with a Government newspaper, even as a reporter, of the movements of the money market. He therefore refused the offer though he was in such pressing need of financial relief. But he would not earn money at the sacrifice of even the slightest interests of the movement. He put even the shadow of principle before his personal necessities. For in this case, he was conscientious to a very nice degree indeed. Bismarck's round-about plan of bribing the leader of the people's party thus fell through.

In 1864, Marx, in conjunction with other comrades, established the "International Workingmen's Association," which wielded much influence in the politics of Europe for six or seven years. Mazzini was a

delegate of the Italian Workingmen, but he withdrew from the society after some time, as he did not agree with all its principles and methods. This remarkable association has had the good fortune to be known in history simply as "The International,"—a word which acts like a charm even now on the ardent spirits of France, Italy and Switzerland. It held annual congresses in various towns and formulated resolutions and programmes. But its greatest value lay in its effect in promoting the unity and solidarity of the working-classes in different countries. Marx's battle-cry "working-men of all countries unite" reverberated throughout Europe. *The Times* said of the movement that "since the time of the establishment of Christianity and the destruction of the ancient world, one had seen nothing like this awakening of labour." The leaders of the associations were persecuted by several governments, but its power grew greater every year. At last the Franco-German war of 1870-71 and the disturbances of the Commune of Paris destroyed its usefulness of depriving it of its most active members and frightening its other supporters. There was also a split between the pacific and constitutional section represented by Marx and the violent revolutionary wing led by the Russian Philosopher, Michael Bakunin. The upshot was that the association languished, and was finally dissolved in 1876.

Marx's literary activity was immense. He wrote articles, pamphlets, letters, treatises, and manifestoes to further the movement. Some of these productions were mere polemical pamphlets against various opponents, and were not worthy of Marx. Others, like his small book on "Price, Value and Profit," and his larger work, "A critique of Political Economy" are of permanent value. But the great work on which his fame chiefly rests is "Das Kapital" (capital), which has been called the "Bible of Socialism." The first volume was published by Marx in his lifetime. The second and third volumes were completed from Marx's notes by his friend, colleague and disciple, Friedrich Engels, after his death. Friedrich Engels's devotion to Marx forms one of the brightest episodes in the story of socialism. His generosity relieved Marx of the petty cares that had embettered the early years of the philosopher's sojourn in England. Engels's name is inseparably associated with that of his great friend. And no one thinks of Marx without thinking of Engels too. The book "Das Kapital" is a bulky volume, it is quite a Shastra in itself. It has been the intellectual armoury of the Socialist campaign in all countries. Marx was very sad that he could not finish it before his death.

In 1881, Marx lost his beloved wife. On March 14th, 1883; he too passed away, sitting in his armchair

with a smile on his lips. He had suffered much from illness during the last thirteen years of his life. Overwork, bad food, worry and mental strain had shattered his constitution. Liver troubles and insomnia, the inevitable companions of all thinkers on their journey through life, had undermined his health for many years. Ill-health is the penalty of intellect. Rousseau, Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Comte, and so many other philosophers have had to fight against it every day of their life. Marx could not evade this law. He was buried in Highgate cemetery, where his wife already reposed in peace. A few years ago, it was proposed to erect a monument to his memory over his grave. One of his disciples wrote at the time:—"Marx's monument exists already—not in hammered brass or sculptured stone, but in human hearts. The whole international socialist movement is his monument, and each new victory of the socialist forces, raises it higher."

Let us now turn to the ideas and theories that Marx gave to the world, besides his own personality and that of his heroic wife. I am one of those who do not attach much importance to these theories, and regard them as one-sided and defective. Their usefulness consists in supplying the justifiable aspirations of the labouring-classes with a nominal theoretical basis. Rousseau's theory of a social contract was historically

and logically untenable, but it served to establish the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, which was the crying need of the times. Even so Marx's theory of the class-struggle and his theory of value are not very accurate or convincing, but they represent the present practical ideal of the working classes and harmonise with it. Hence they must enjoy great popularity. As Prof. William James said, a theory is only a tool to work with.

I shall speak of Marx's three chief ideas before passing on to a brief exposition of the practical aspect of communism. Marx holds that economic conditions exercise an *almost* absolute influence on man-kind, moulding its political institutions, and even its religious and literary life. Methods of production lead to great changes in the entire social structure and in ideas and ideals. This view is called the "*Materialistic conception of history*." It is only a half-truth, but Marx put it forward almost as the whole truth. It follows that society obeys certain laws of evolution, which depend on Industrial conditions. Social evolution is therefore analogous in many respects to biological and physical evolution: it is governed by immanent laws, which must be discovered. We should work in harmony with these irresistible tendencies that are inherent in society and push it forward. This conception of social evolution is

fataalistic, and in this respect resembles that advanced by Herbert Spencer. I only state this view in order to disagree with it. Society is not an agglomeration of molecules, and man is not a machine. Social evolution is not a continuous process. There is no law of social progress visible anywhere. Human history is moulded by natural environments and by man's will. Carlyle's theory of civilisation as a product of personal influences is much nearer the truth than that of mechanical scientific evolution advanced by Marx and Spencer. Marx admitted the potency of social choice in evolution, but he regarded the "laws" of progress as predominant and gave a secondary position to human volition. This interpretation of history is vicious and misleading. History reveals no law or process or even a tendency. Change is the only law discernible there. The rest is chaos, which great men try to turn into cosmos.

The second doctrine with which Marx's name is connected is *the theory of class-struggle*. History is record of class-struggles, and these struggles have been the great evolutionary force in the past. The Communist manifesto says:—

"Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeymen, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition, to one another, carried on an uninterupted, now

hidden now open fight.—Our epoch of the bourgeoisie (*i.e.*, the middle classes), possesses, however this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonism. Society, as a whole, is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other Bourgeoisie and Proletariat."

Thus Marx elevated one phase of historical evolution to the rank of a universal law. There have been classes and class wars but that is not the essence of history, nor indeed its mainspring. Class-struggle is only one part of the whole drama. And I repudiate the idea that society is divided into classes by any hard and fast line of demarcation. It is not class-selfishness but social co-operation based on the appreciation of a higher ideal, that has been the motive force of progress at all epochs. Marx himself changed his tone later, when he attempted to secure the co-operation of the middle classes in the "International" This theory of classes was a dangerous boomerang indeed for many working men, argued that Marx should be expelled from the movement as he was not of their class: he was a "bourgeois" (middle class man)! Thus do false theories come home to roost.

Marx's third achievement in the field of social philosophy is *his analysis of surplus value*. Marx saw that the capitalist grows rich, because he pays the

workingmen less than the full value of the product that they manufacture. His profits represent the surplus value of which he robs the workingman. Marx has displayed much ingenuity in developing this idea, which seems to be the soundest part of his work in the province of pure theory. But I am not much interested in the stupid Economics of a stupid system. And Marx's exposition of Value is open to grave objections from the standpoint of orthodox political economy. *There can be no scientific theory of Value under the present absurd regime.* On this point, I cannot speak with much certitude for I do not like to wallow in all the filth and, mire of the present predatory economic system. I know that the workingmen and peasants are sweated and deprived of their dues: I know that the manufacturers and landowners fatten at their expense: I know that society suffers enormously by leaving production to selfish greedy capitalists.

Indian Readers will now ask, "But what is this communism, which Marx loved so much?" Communism is a very simple affair. It declares in the first place, that land should not belong to any one man, family, or corporation, but to the whole community collectively. For land is the source of food, clothing, fuel and medicine. The earth is really our mother. If some men take possession of it to the exclusion of others,

these latter must become the slaves of the landowners for bread. The landowners may also use the land for selfish purposes; they may make parks for their pleasure; they may cultivate beetroot for their profit while the community wants wheat; they may leave it to their sheep and cattle, while men are perishing of hunger. Thus private property in land leads to slavery, poverty and social strife. Land is no man's property. This natural law was understood by all communities in the early stages of their history. But strong and wily men arose, and appropriated large tracts for their own use. Then they compelled others to work for them and called them "tenants". Communism aims at making land the property of the whole community, held and administered by a universal republican state for the benefit of all. The welfare of all is the highest law.

Further, communism lays down that private capital shall be abolished and money-power along with it. If you think for a moment, you will see that money is a great magician indeed. If a man accumulates Rs. 50,000, his children, grand-children, and great-grand-children to the fortieth generation can live comfortably on the interest of the money without doing any work at all, and the original sum will remain intact all the time. Is this not some juggler's feat? Again, take a merchant who has Rs. 10,000. He buys

many maunds of *ghee* (clarified butter) from all the village producers, and sells it in town, thus making a profit of say Rs. 2,000. He repeats the process several times, and at the end of some years, he is a lakhpati (owner of Rs. 100,000). Now consider that this man has done absolutely no work of any kind. He simply paid the villagers who produced the *ghee*, and then sold the *ghee* to the retail dealers of the town; he remained sitting in his shop all the time.

All his good fortune is due to his possession of Rs. 10,000 to start with. Now what is the secret of this strange power of money? How do interest and profit spring from money so suddenly and spontaneously? Again take the case of a manufacturer, who buys certain shares in a factory: he never goes to see the factory: he may be ignorant of its whereabouts. He may go on a tour round the world. But his shares bring him a handsome income all the same at the end of the year. How do you explain this curious fact? And side by side with these advantages for the possessors of money go many disadvantages for those who do not possess it. For the labourers, who work in the factory, the villagers who produce the *ghee*, the small shopkeepers who sell it to the people, the engineers who keep the machinery going,—all these men, who do the whole work, always remain poor and hungry, and what is worse, depen-

dent on the good will of the employers and the wholesale merchants. How is this? It is simply the wonder-working power of money. Money is the goose that lays the golden eggs. The more we think, the more the conviction is forced on us that money has been one of the most disastrous inventions of the human mind. Humanity has committed suicide with this weapon. The first man who issued a coin was guilty of treason to the race. When a poor man jingles a coin in his pocket, he is like a prisoner playing with his fetters. For it is this devise of gold, silver, leather, or nickel currency that has made the rich richer and the poor poorer. It is the coin that enables a thrifty or crafty man to command the labour of others, and make them his servants. Communism therefore first communalises land; but that is only half the solution of the problem. It next proceeds to abolish private capital, and money, which is the policeman of capitalism. Capital is always represented by money—so many rupees or pounds sterling. No man can accumulate fish or bread or fruits in order to enslave others afterwards, for all articles of food are fortunately perishable. That is a very beneficent provision of Nature indeed. But the invention of currency enables one man to lay up a store of coins which are like so many catridges to be used in his war against others. Later, the coins gave place to paper.

But the essential principle is the same. Private property in land leads to exchange—exchange requires money; money in its turn becomes an article of private property, and thus can be used to exploit others. So the process goes on. St. Paul said: "Love of money is the root of all evil." He made a little mistake. He should have said: "Money is the root of all evil." For money is the cause; love of money is largely an effect so long as money exists most men will love it in spite of all sermons and warnings. When despotic monarchy existed, men were bound to intrigue for power. Its abolition has also cured mankind of the love of intrigue, for an appetite feeds on its object. In countries where titles of nobility exist, love of rank is widespread. In America and France no one thinks of rank now, because there is no rank to be had. Thus money itself intensifies that passion for its possession, which has been so much deplored by all religious preachers. So long as proper food, clean lodgings, recreation and even medicine are to be got only with money, men will hanker for it, for poverty is not merely a misfortune under the present system; it is equivalent to a sentence of death. When men had to defend themselves against the assaults of the violent and every man had therefore to carry a gun on his shoulder or a sword in his belt, it was impossible to

persuade society that the love of weapons was a sin. For the love of weapons was the result of the love of life and health. And no religion will, or should, eradicate the natural healthy instincts of joy in life and physical well-being. Instead of suppressing the love of life and health, we should destroy the enemies of life and health—germs, dirt, poverty, mutual violence and other similar pests. The ancient religious teachers fought back-ward in the search of social welfare: we fight forward. They said, "Don't love money. As life and health depend on money don't love life and health." We say; "Abolish money, and make the best of life and health, which no longer depend on money." Thus communism is an important and indispensable factor in the moral progress of mankind. Religious teachers who neglect economics build on sand. Economic arrangements exercise a profound influence on moral life—and Marx is entitled to our gratitude, not because he explained the relation of economics to ethics, but because he concentrated his attention on economics and vastly exaggerated its importance. Then idealists began to examine his theories and found that there was a substratum of truth in them. Thus Marx has indirectly helped the art of ethics too by his fanaticism for economics.

I have contented myself with mentioning only the central principle of communism, so as to show how it

KARL MARX

attacks the great evil of private property in land and capital, with its brood of money, rent, taxes, interest and profit. Production and distribution are to be carried on by a universal republican State; and the products divided justly and equally among all citizens. This ideal was preached by Marx: of course he had his own pet notions about details, like every other communist thinker. But the fundamental doctrine is the same. Minor differences are not important.

Karl Marx's greatest work was not the publication of his treatise on capital, or the composition of numerous pamphlets, or even the establishment of the various associations which he founded and dissolved in his life time. He may have thought that his activity was his chief claim on the gratitude of the world. But we can estimate the value of his work better. Few great men know themselves. Marx was a benefactor of humanity, because he was the first thinker of modern Europe who had faith in the working-classes. Socialists before him fancied that communism was a boon to be conferred by the refined and educated philanthropists on the poor ignorant labourers. They thought it would come from above. This idea is still found among such bodies as the Fabian Society of England or "Christian Socialists" associations. Marx was the first man to lay down the formula that the emancipation of the working-classes must be achieved by

KARL MARX

themselves. "He who would be free, himself must strike the blow." His Great appeal was addressed to the hearts of the working-men, to the latent manhood in them, of which they themselves were not conscious:—"Working-men of all countries, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to gain." Years have passed by: men have come and gone, but this passionate cry of the leader who believed in the ignorant and dirty labourers still raises them to the full level of manhood. Such insight is given only to men who have suffered for a cause: it does not come to arm-chair reformers or learned professors preaching from the snug comfort of the study. Marx had to pass through poverty and want, himself before he could learn that the highest moral impulses lie buried beneath the ragged clothes and the dirt-begrimed countenance of "the man in the street." In all epochs of social change, this is the great service that a leader renders to the people. He teaches them to believe in themselves by telling them that he believes in them. They think they are weak: he tells them they are strong, for he puts his trust in them. This is the secret of all moral reform. When Jesus healed a man of disease, he asked him, "Dost thou believe in me?" But when he healed a man of moral weakness, he said: "I believe in thee." He did not say these words, but his actions spoke louder

KARL MARX

than words. Buddha said to the barber: "Yes, you can come with me." And the barber's heart at once rose to the height of the call, merely because the master thought him worthy. Rousseau told the oppressed, ignorant and timid serfs of eighteenth-century France that they were worthy of sovereignty. It sounded like mockery. But lo! the words awakened all the sleeping manhood within them, and these rough unlettered half-starved slaves of the nobles became valiant, self-respecting citizens within one generation. Muhammad said to the Arabs: "You can conquer the world" And so they did. The great man, who perceives that all men, even the rudest and the poorest, are capable of the highest moral growth, is the saviour of society. He knows the essence of human nature. He evokes power in those who are apparently weak: he makes heroes out of the scum of the earth. And therefore was Jesus a friend of publicans and sinners, a leader of fishermen and outcasts and erring sisters. Therefore Buddha preached in the vulgar tongue, and drew to himself those who were despised by the philosophers as ordinary men and women. Therefore were those great words uttered: "The stone which the builders rejected became the head of the corner":—"For God has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, and God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and

KARL MARX

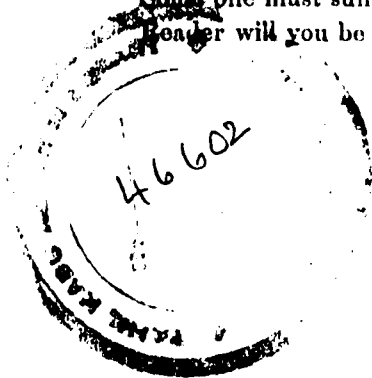
things that are nought to confound the things, that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence:—"The first shall be last, and the last first."

What Rousseau did for the people of Europe in the eighteenth century, Marx and others did for them in the nineteenth. His insight reveals his moral grandeur for he was a very learned man, born and bred up among the rich; he might have despised the brutish stupid labourers and fancied that reform would come from above, from the cultured and intelligent classes, who could understand history and philosophy. But he was a moral giant, and saw that the common men always understand love, equality and heroism much better than the sophisticated ease-loving educated classes. Social and political progress is born of love and devotion, not of pedantry and oratory. Marx first inspired the downtrodden and despised labourers with a great hope and a mighty purpose. Thus was real modern Social Democracy born. Thus "was the gospel preached unto the poor."

In criticising Marx's views and actions, we must bear in mind Dr. Johnson's tribute to Goldsmith:—"Let not his faults be remembered. He was a very great man." Marx's name will be cherished by generations yet unborn. And his wife and children will share his glory. When poverty and slavery are no more, and the last shreds of private capitalism are

KARL MARX

consigned to the scrap-heap of the past, humanity will remember that they who brought it out of the wilderness were often faint from lack of food. Mothers will tell the story of that mother, who offered her children on the altar of the cause so that little children should play and laugh, in the golden age to come. Some one must suffer that the world may be helped. Reader will you be that one?



Printed by
Padma & Co., 17, Santharama Chetty Street, Madras