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Prophets of Modern Times

"Karl Marx, the Father of Scientific Socialism 1818-1883"

By HORACE WESTWOOD, D.D.

Wherever Socialism unfurls its banner to the breeze the name of Karl Marx is heard. His life, message, philosophy and system of political economy are inseparable from the Socialist movement.

Methodism has had many prophets, but only one John Wesley. Calvinism has produced many great and stalwart souls, but only one John Calvin. Presbyterianism has given many brave and noble men to the world, but only one John Knox. Puritanism gave birth to its Hampdens, Fynes and Brynnes, but only one Oliver Cromwell. These men have cast their shadow over the history and fortunes of their movements, and to a large extent justified that famous saying of Emerson's to the effect that institutions are but lengthened shadows of men. So with Socialism. It has had its St. Simons, Fouriers and Owens, but only one Karl Marx.

Truth presents itself in glaring paradoxes. Strange indeed it seems, that he who himself was not a proletarian should furnish the proletariat of all the world the ground-work of their philosophy; that he who was the chief exponent of economic determinism should in his own life fulfil his own prophecy—"The Reformation was the work of a monk, the revolution will be the work of a philosopher."

Karl Marx was the Philosopher of Socialism

Born in 1818 of Jewish parents he early gave evidence of that genius which characterized his later life. His father who was a lawyer, a man of strong intellectual power, early detected Karl's genius and with deep wisdom made him companion and friend, discussing with him even in his tender years the problems of metaphysics, philosophy and religion and bringing him into contact with his favorite authors; Leibnitz, Voltaire and Racine. Next to his father's influence must be placed that of Baron von Westphalen, his father's friend. It was through him Marx obtained his life-long appreciation of the finer and aesthetic side of life, his love of Shakespeare, Goethe, Lessing, Cervantes, Dante and Homer. It was also in this family he met little Jenny, four years his senior, who was to become not only his playmate, but later, his wife.

At the age of sixteen he entered the University of Bonn, "studying romantic literature and philosophy for my own sake" and jurisprudence mainly to please his father, who cherished fond ambitions for his son in the Prussian State. But his early university days were no source of joy either to himself or his father. The headstrong, impetuous youth had fallen in love with his former playmate Jenny, which so unsettled him, that after one year he returned home to plead his suit. He succeeded!

With light heart he entered the University of Berlin the following year, but only to be the more miserable; for since the engagement was clandestine, Jenny refused to correspond with him and the youth pined with loneliness. We find him burning the midnight oil writing poetry which he dedicated to his future bride. In fact, during his first three months he wrote three volumes of poetry and planned several novels, hoping some day to blossom into a poet and dramatist.

His university days were days of great spiritual struggle and intellectual upheaval, and made tragic by the fact that he knew his father would not lie in the direction his father had planned. His father dreamed of Prussian officialdom which Marx hated. Pathetic indeed is the correspondence between father and son. The father pleads admonishes, threatens and cajoles. The son pleads also. The father did not live to see his cherished hopes defeated in the chequered and rebellious life of the son.

Marx obtained his degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the age of twenty-three. In 1842 Marx's career opened as a

journalist, when for a year he edited "The Journal on the Rhine," till it was suppressed by order of the Prussian Government for its radical utterances and Marx had to flee. We next find him in Paris where he met and made the friendship of Heine, Proudhon, Bakounin, and above all of Engels, who became his life-long friend.



Karl Marx

Here again busy with his pen and writing in the "German French Annals" and "The Advance" he once more brought upon himself the displeasure of the Prussian Government who requested his expulsion from Paris. He went from there to Brussels. It was while here he issued together with Engels "The Communist Manifesto."

There are moments in history which create epochs. Scraps of paper have determined the destinies of whole peoples and shaped the future for generations yet unborn. The signing of the Magna Charta was the birth of British liberty; Luther's article nailed to the doors of the cathedral at Wormsburg evoked the Protestant Reformation; the Declaration of Independence in 1776 gave birth to the American nation. So indeed we might say that the publication of the Communist Manifesto by the Communist League in 1847 was the birth-cry of Modern Socialism. It was the work of Engels and Marx. When some future historian five hundred years from now writes the history of this period with its industrial struggles and social unrest, he will assign to the Communist Manifesto, the honor of being the Magna Charta of the working classes. It is one of the great documents of all time and a masterpiece of polemic and historical analysis. Here we find for the first time history interpreted in the light of economic changes in industry and the methods of production, and the thesis proved that social relations change with changing industrial methods.

"The hand mill creates a society with the feudal lord; the steam mill a society with the industrial capitalist. The same men who establish social relations in conformity with material production, also create principles, ideas and categories in conformity with the social relations."

In this terse paragraph you have the cornerstone of Socialist philosophy.

A Fugitive to London

The year of great European upheaval, 1848, finds Marx once more a fugitive. Banished from Brussels he seeks refuge in Paris only to be denied admission. Thence he travels to Cologne only to be expelled by Prussian orders. Where then can he turn? Whither shall he flee? There was only one place under the sun where he might be free from political persecution, and that is in the "Dear little Isle of Britain," the home of political liberty, the refuge for political exiles from every quarter of the globe. We do well to remember that but for the democracy of British institutions, Marx could never have given his work to the world.

It was no easy life in London however. The wolf was often at the door. What pathos there is in that incident which relates that the only cradle one child had was its coffin, and the coffin was purchased with "two pounds borrowed from a fellow exile, a Frenchman." For several years his only source of income was a pound a week earned as correspondent for the New York Tribune. Yet they were fruitful years, rich in friendship and activity. Poor himself, yet his home kept open doors for fellow exiles and we read stories of great privation and hardship, which wring the heart with their pathos and yet stimulate the soul with their inspiring heroism.

It was in London he did his great work. Day after day in patient toil laboring in the British Museum he collected material for his masterpiece "Capital." It was here also, in company with others he launched the "International Working-men's Organization" in 1863. While as an organization it came to an end in the seventies, yet the real fruit of Marx's

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