

# The New York Times

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## PESSIMISTIC ECONOMICS.

**CAPITAL. A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production.** By CARL MARX. Translated from the Third German Edition by SAMUEL MOORE and EDWARD ARCLING. Edited by FRANKLIN ENGLER. New-York: SCRIBNER & WELFORD.

A famous fable, reputed *Æsopian* and not quoted as often as it deserves, is the one in which the lion takes to task the sculptor for making man invariably triumph over the king of beasts. "If," said Leo, "we only held the chisels, it is quite a different state of things we would represent." These volumes, with others written by Marx, have been called by his followers the "Bible of the Working Classes." Before Marx wrote, they insist, it was only the capitalist's side which was extolled. Now at last justice is done to the workingman.

If political economy be for the best of us a science by no means easy to understand, "capital," to appreciate it properly, requires, in many parts, the closest attention. As in Laplace's "*Mécanique Céleste*," so in one page of Marx there is material enough for a cogitation of hours. At once the vast erudition of the author is discernible. There are apparently very few things in this world he has not read and absorbed. Whether he digested them properly may be doubted. From Honoré de Balzac he jumps to Jeremy Bentham; from Condillac to Cherborillier; from Greg to Gladstone; and Liebig and Luther, Malthus and Macaulay, Mill, Mirabeau, Thomas Moore, Nasmyth and Niebuhr are all found personified in the text.

The life history of Marx was one of personal trouble. Driven from post to pillar, hounded, harassed, harried, is there any wonder that he lost his temper? There was, too, the temperament of his race. Through long oppression in Germany he returned to his original Oriental vindictiveness. Carl Marx had no friendly feeling toward the world in general, and, seeking about for something to smite, he took capital as a subject and lived only to belabor it. All that his learning could do—for he had a vast and complicated erudition—was to twist with ingenuity that rope of sophistry by which he believed he could strangle capital. What, then, might become arguments in favor of his doctrines, or at least incline toward the discussion of them, have been distasteful by the personal acridity of the man himself. Conspicuous above all is his contempt for Germany, at least bureaucratic Germany. Carl Marx may in one hand hold a bludgeon and belabor his opponents with it, but it must be remembered that he was a finished and a precise writer when he wanted to be, and could wield a very sharp and brilliant rapier. If "to give work to the unemployed" was that to which Marx devoted his life, he preached rebellion to the laws which have heretofore governed civilized man.

In the preface to the second edition the author rails at the ignorance then existing in Germany in regard to political economy. "It had to be imported from England and France as a ready-made article. Its German Professors remained schoolboys. The theoretical expression of a foreign reality was turned in their hands into a collection of dogmas, interpreted by them in terms of the petty trading world among them, and therefore misinterpreted." This was written in 1873. Before 1848 Marx seemed to think that what he calls "capitalist production" had but little existence in Germany, but after that came "the full bloom of speculation and swindling." Marx must have been singularly sensitive to criticism, for he writes of "the mealy-mouthed babblers of German vulgar economy who fell foul of the style of my book." If he was not understood at home, he says the reason for it was that "Germans remained mere schoolboys, imitators and followers, petty retailers and hawkers in the service of the great foreign wholesale concern." "Have at you."

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cries Carl Marx, and listen you shall, "you mushroom upstarts of the new holy Prusso-German Empire." It is very bad language this very wonderful man uses, but then he quotes many a chapter and verse of Martin Luther, where he shows that the great reformer could screech and scold with any German of his day, past or present.

The fault of a special kind advanced against Marx of his using a symbolism to prove economic abstractions we think no crime. To appreciate him, to understand him, these symbols must be mastered. From them he deduces some of the most important of his theories. In Marx is not to be found the solemn dignity of a Mill nor the placidity of a Wayland nor the accurate uniformity of a Ricardo. If he is anything, Carl Marx is a man in a towering rage. His paragraphs are replete with kicks and cuffs. He wants to slap your face if you are a bourgeois; to smash your skull if you are a capitalist. He is a militant political economist. He may not encourage the spilling of blood to effect the ends he desires; but the means he proposes point to that inevitable conclusion. "Capital is that dead labor that, vampire like, only lives by sucking living labor, and lives the more the more labor it sucks." That to squelch the bloodsucker you must kill it is implied.

What are the deductions which must arise from the careful study of Carl Marx's work? (1) That capital is the curse of the world. (2) That the great enemy of the workingman is a machine. What, then, are the remedies? That for the bettering of mankind there are but two things to do—to destroy capital and machinery. Carl Marx is the Schopenhauer of the science of political economy. He would pull to pieces all the methods of labor, and can offer no substitute, no method for ameliorating the condition of the workingman. What is the worst is that popular agitators mouth and expatiate on his text, taking those portions which appeal to human passions. What might be the better in Carl Marx, with all his abstract theories, are far beyond popular comprehension. If much is bad in this new remarkable book we have commented upon, it is most powerful in the brilliant manner in which the actual wrongs of the laboring classes are exposed. To understand the whole working of the factory acts in England, its entire progress cannot be better studied than in this work. Marx has mastered the whole subject in its most minute details. That horrible system of serfdom which wrecked human lives, that made beasts of men, brutes of women, that kept thousands in a condition worse tenfold than slaves, is ruthlessly exposed. Here Carl Marx rises to his highest pitch. He does not indulge in sarcasm. He is conscious that no word of his could make the picture he draws so clearly more hideous. Carl Marx's fault in his studies of political economy is impulse toward one refinement which amounts at times to hair splitting. His ingenuity of analysis makes nothing but a plausible theory with no practical application. His was an embittered soul, and the books he wrote were productive of that swell of bad feeling, which, threatening a social wreckage, is the result of pure psychological spleen.

It may, however, be easy enough for a man earning food and clothing from his work, and contented with his lot, to differ from Carl Marx, but bitter are the experiences and acrid the temperament of others equally laborious and industrious, who, willing to toil, men who would dig, or women who would sew, who find no work to do because there are too many who would turn up the soil or drive their needles through the stuff. There is that cry for self-preservation which is natural to us all. God help us in this era of human wastage, a wastage more apparent in the great centres of population than elsewhere. We do not suggest remedies. Those are the most difficult of all the problems humanity has to deal with. Such amelioration of human affairs was never further from solution than by the methods Carl Marx proposes. To follow them is to plunge us into chaos. But there are advocates of chaos.