

## Karl Marx

By FRANZ MEHRING

*Translator's Note.*

The following two chapters are from a new book by Franz Mehring entitled "Karl Marx, Geschichte seines Lebens," intended as a contribution to the hundredth anniversary of Marx's birthday (May 5, 1918). These two chapters are from the advance sheets, and are the only chapters that have thus far reached us. The publisher is the Leipziger Buchdruckerei A. G. (Verlag der Leipziger Volkszeitung) and the price is 8 marks paper and 10 marks bound. Pp. 544 plus XII. From the publisher's prospectus we take the following:

The book is written with both admiration and criticism for the great subject, and both qualities are needed in a good biography, as Mehring points out in his foreword. Comrade Rosa Luxemburg has contributed a masterly bit from her pen: the portion dealing with the second and third volumes of "Capital," which forms the third section of Chapter XII. Another brave woman who has fought in the front ranks of the proletariat, Comrade Clara Zetkin, "the heiress of the Marxian spirit," is she to whom the book is dedicated.

### 1. Genius and Society

Although it may be said that Marx found a second home in England, the term "home" must not here be understood with too wide a connotation. He was never in any way molested in England because of his revolutionary activity, and yet England was often the object of his attacks. The government of the "greedy and envious nation of shopkeepers" was inspired by a greater degree of self-respect and self-consciousness than those continental governments, which, terrified by their evil consciences, send the darts and javelins of the police after their opponents even when the latter are active only in the fields of discussion and propaganda.

In another, profounder sense, however, Marx found it impossible to regard any country as his home, once he had learnt to read in the very soul of bourgeois society, with his divining eyes. The lot of genius in that social system is a long story, and it has given rise to the most varied opinions: from the innocent faith in God, which is the Philistine's and which prom-

ises final victory to all true genius, to Faust's melancholy reflection:

Those few who ever had a trace of it,  
And in their folly hid it not;  
Revealed their souls, their visions to the rabble:  
The cross, the stake, have been their certain lot.

The historical method that owes its development to Marx permits us to see more deeply in this field too. The Philistine promises every genius a final victory, simply because he is a Philistine; but whenever a real genius has not been crucified or burnt at the stake, it has simply been because the genius finally consented to become a Philistine. Had they not been attached by their bourgeois wigs to the social system of their time, Goethe and Hegel would never have become recognized "great men" of bourgeois society.

Whatever may be the merits of bourgeois society, which, in this connection, must be regarded only as the most developed form of class system, and however numerous these merits may be, it certainly cannot be said that this society ever afforded a safe refuge for genius. And it would be impossible for bourgeois society to play this part, for the very nature of genius implies the opposition of the creative impulse of an unfettered human spirit, to established tradition, and colliding with the barriers that are necessary to the existence of class society. There is a little lonely churchyard on the island of Sylt, in the North Sea, and it harbors the unknown dead washed ashore by the waves, and the cross standing in the churchyard bears the inscription: "The cross of Golgatha is a home to the homeless." To be sure it was not intended in this inscription to indicate the lot of genius in a class-ruled society, yet the fact has been well-stated in these words: Genius is homeless in the class system; in such a system its home is only on the cross of Golgatha.

Of course, the case is altered if genius can come to some agreement with class society. Whenever it has placed its