

*The Revival of Marxism.* By J. SHIELD NICHOLSON, Sc.D., LL.D., Professor of Political Economy in the University of Edinburgh. (London: Murray. 1920. Pp. 145.)

*Karl Marx.* By ACHILLE LORIA. Authorised translation from the Italian with a foreword by EDEN and CEDAR PAUL. (London: Allen and Unwin. 1920. Pp. 92.)

WE have much sympathy with those who hold that the theories of Marx are beneath the notice of a scientific writer. However, the refutation of prevailing fallacies has always been recognised as part of the economist's province. It is indeed a peculiarity of our science that its investigations generally start from a point which is, so to speak, behind the zero of ignorance. It is necessary to escape from error before reaching positive truth: "*Sapientia prima stultitiâ caruisse.*" Accordingly, gratitude is due to Professor Nicholson for having performed the heavy task of re-examining *Das Kapital* and other writings of Marx. The judgment which many of us have been content to base on samples of this literature is now confirmed by a more thorough examination. Professor Nicholson entered on the task prepared to find, as in the writings of Robert Owen and many other Socialists, some ideas that might be of service under present conditions. "But the more I read of Marx," reports the critic, "the more hopeless and depressing was the effect." "The theory of value as expounded by Marx, instead of being an advance, is a retrogression." He neglected the influence of Demand which contemporary economists were bringing into light. Another novelty which the same writers favoured, the use of mathematical conceptions in economics, might seem at first sight to have been adopted by Marx. But we agree with Professor Nicholson in thinking that the mathematical apparatus in *Das Kapital* "is on par with the maps and charts and ciphers put into the novels about the treasures hidden by pirates. The algebra of Marx compared with the algebra of Cournot . . . is as the charts of the pirate romance compared with the charts of the Admiralty." Professor Nicholson's searching criticism of Marx's theories on wages, profits and the accumulation of capital fully justifies his verdict that "what was original in Marx was wrong." No less searching and severe criticism is bestowed on the writings of Marx's most important disciple, Lenin. The divergence between Lenin and other disciples in their interpretations of the master's

teaching is strikingly exhibited. It should seem that even the humble merit of consistency was wanting to Marx.

Any shred of authority that Professor Nicholson may have left to the author of *Das Kapital* disappears in Professor Loria's treatment of the subject. With respect to two leading tenets of the Marxian system, Professor Loria thus expresses himself: "Marx's thesis of the progressive concentration of wealth into the hands of an ever-diminishing number of owners . . . has not been confirmed. It has indeed been confuted by the most authoritative statistics collected since the publication of the book." As for the theory of surplus value stated in the first volume of *Das Kapital*, it is "peremptorily refuted or is reduced to absurdity." It was announced by Engels, and it was confidently anticipated by faithful Marxists, that the explanation of the enigma, left unsolved in the first volume, would be found in the long-expected third volume. But of the explanation there offered Professor Loria observes: "It soon becomes apparent that this so-called solution is little more than a play upon words, or, better expressed, little more than a solemn mystification. . . . Thus, far from effecting the salvation of the then threatened doctrine, this alleged solution administers a death-blow and implies the categorical negation of what it professes to support. For what meaning can there possibly be in this reduction of value to labour, the doctrine dogmatically affirmed in the first volume, to one who already knows that the author is himself calmly prepared to jettison it? . . . His fundamental economic theory is essentially vitiated and sophistical." If we knew nothing about Marx but what we are here told, we should infer that he failed in two prime tests of scientific worth, prediction of the unknown and explanation of the known. The serenity of the scientific character was not among his qualities. Thus, of "the savage booklet entitled *Herr Vogt*," we read: "The style of this polemic writing is intolerably vulgar." A character "naturally acerb" became, under the pressure of adversity, "far from amiable." "Mingled sentiments of grief and anger fill our minds when in Marx's private letters to Engels we trace the manifestation of this harshness, which left him unmoved by the misfortunes of his dearest friends, which led him to make any use he could of those friends and then to overwhelm them with reproaches and accusations, which showed itself (and this is the worst of all) in a jealous hatred of comrades less unfortunate than himself." Particularly deplorable was his ungrateful conduct towards Lassalle, who had shown him great kindness, assisting him financially and in other ways. This

adverse testimony obtains additional weight when it is observed that the witness is an enthusiastic admirer of the man whose defects he candidly admits. The countervailing merits attributed to Marx are extolled in encomiums of almost lyrical profusion, the beauty of which has been preserved by the translators as well as the English language permits. *Das Kapital* is described as "the marvellous work which, whatever judgment we may feel it necessary to pass upon the value of the doctrines it enunciates, will remain for all time one of the loftiest summits ever climbed by human thought, one of the imperishable monuments of the creative powers of the human mind. . . . The most austere criticism must bow reverently before such gigantic mental attainments as have few counterparts in the history of scientific thought." Space fails us to transcribe all the eloquent eulogies of the "sage" and "martyr" "who struggled and suffered and died for the Supreme Redemption."

It is a psychological question, of some practical importance, how the same mind could hold at the same time with respect to the same person judgments so different as those which we have cited. The contradictory utterances recall the character of *Dipsychus* as described by the poet Clough. The history of religious rationalism presents few such examples of fervid faith combined with critical reason. The nearest parallels are perhaps to be found among the worshippers at the shrine of Marx. Thus Professor Sombart, along with profuse eulogy of Marx, makes the admission that he contributed nothing to the technique of the science (*cp. ECONOMIC JOURNAL*, Vol. XIX, p. 239). The importance of Marx's theories, is indeed, as Professor Nicholson shows, wholly *emotional*.