

# THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRAT.

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## ELEANOR MARX.



LEANOR MARX, long known by another name — which we shall try to forget—now and in future known by her own, by her father's name, a name through the weight of which one less strong would have been crushed, but which she bore, increasing its weight and its lustre.

She was the daughter of her father, not her father's daughter with only those rays of light that fell upon her from

the sun of his fame, but throwing out rays of light herself, herself a centre of light. And if Eleanor Marx will never be forgotten as long as the memory of the great struggle for the emancipation of labour and of humanity will last, it will not be because she is the daughter of Karl Marx, but because she is Eleanor Marx.

When the news arrived three weeks ago, on Tuesday, August 2, that Dr. Aveling had died from the effect of a wound which he had received half a year ago by a surgical operation, thousands were thinking that, if he had died five months sooner it would have been better for him—and one, better than he, would most likely be living to-day.

Had this man ended his career before the last day of March, we should have been spared a terrible tragedy, and a woman, not only better, but stronger and more gifted than this man would be living still, and fighting still in the front ranks of International Socialism. Yes, that strong woman,

possessed of the working and fighting power of the strongest of men—prophetess, teacher, champion, comrade, whom we all knew, whom we all admired and loved—Eleanor Marx, she would still be living, working and fighting. For living and life to her was working and fighting.

The daughter of Karl Marx, and born in London, where her father lived in exile after the suppression of the Revolutionary movement of 1848 and 1849—that tells us, from what stock she came, and in what surroundings she grew up. In exile—that is, as Dante says, who knew it, in misery—or misery to grand and proud souls, unable to take alms under whatever flattering form—misery and want. And the surroundings—the *milieu*, as the fashionable term is now—the surroundings: Karl Marx, the father—Jenny Marx, born von Westphalen, of an old noble family, the mother, worthy wife of that man—two elder sisters, Jenny, more the father's, and Laura, more the mother's, image—no boys in the family, all male children having died at an early age, died in exile, and from exile. Eleanor was the last of Marx's children born in London, and as all others had died, her arrival was a source of anxiety and care to her mother and to the father, who loved his children with a mother's love. Happily little Eleanor, as she was called after one of the Scotch ancestors—the Westphalen family had blood of the Campbells in their veins—was healthy and grew up, without any of the so-called children's diseases. Healthy in body and mind, restless, curious, wanting to know everything, and constantly widening the horizon of her mind. Never tired of playing, never tired of asking question. And it was not an easy thing to stand her questions, which often puzzled me. And how fond she was of stories! For hours and hours I had to tell her stories, and as she was, by six and seven years, younger than her two elder sisters I had often a rather difficult task, when we were strolling about on Primrose Hill and on Hampstead Heath all four together, and when I had to satisfy the craving for knowledge of these three lively girls and keep them in good humour with their different minds and characters and ages. It is ten times easier to amuse and to occupy—which is the same thing—30 children of nearly equal ages, than three children of different ages. Well—I did my best, and was rewarded by the children's love, which those three girls have through all their life had for me, whom, for reasons never discovered, they called "Library."

When I left England in the autumn of 1862 to return to Germany after fourteen years of exile, Eleanor—or "Tussy" as she was—also for reasons never discovered—called her whole life long by all those who were intimate with her, was six years old. And I did not see her for twelve years, not till the autumn of 1874, when she visited us in Leipzig with her father, who had been seeking health and recreation at Karlsbad. I had two years of imprisonment for "high treason," that is for some dozens of sharp newspaper articles, behind me, and enjoyed my newly gained liberty, while Bebel, who had entered prison (it was named "fortress") later than I, and who had besides earned a condemnation for *lèse majesté*, was still detained in the Saxon state prison of Zwickau.

The child Tussy was now a woman, with a healthy, graceful, high-minded, and deep-souled woman's character. She was the International Working Men's Association personified. If we had festivals of the Social Revolution as the French *Tiers Etat* had of the political revolution, she would have made a splendid Goddess of International Socialism.

She had reached the age of nine years when the International Working Men's Association was founded in St. Martin's Hall, and her father's house was the cradle, the headquarters, the centre of International Socialism, and in this centre the girl was at home with open eyes and an open mind, growing with the growing movement, growing into one with it, so that the movement was embodied in her. And a more perfect embodiment no movement ever had. No thought but for the cause, no feeling but for the cause, or rather, no thought and no feeling, that did not come from the cause and go to the cause. For she was a woman, and woman cannot be without love. But her woman's love was inseparable from the love of the cause.

In her father's house there met the banished victims of Napoleon the Little, Bismarck's teacher and fellow criminal. Young Flourens, after having fought on the Island of Crete for the ideal Hellenes, that he could not find in reality, had sought a refuge in London, and was, of course, a guest in Marx's cottage. Young, beautiful, spiritual, this romantic knight-errant of revolution made a deep impression on the eldest and on the youngest of the three daughters. Then suddenly there burst on us the war between Bismarckian Germany and Napoleonic France. The rogues had fallen out, and the honest people did not at once come to their own, they had to suffer terribly, so terribly that to-day yet we have to suffer from the wounds.

At Sedan the French Empire fell and the German Empire was born. The French refugees hurried home from London to help in the national defence against Bismarck's armies. The national defence and the national war with the *levée en masse* were traditions of the past. The modern bourgeoisie is afraid of the masses, does not dare to arm them. The national defence was not carried out, and ended in national betrayal. The only patriots, real patriots, were the men *sans patrie*, without a fatherland—the proletarians—who by natural instinct defend the country in which they are born, just as the animal defends its nest or den—because they have no other place of abode, and are not in the happy situation of the bourgeois, who, if they do not earn, or rob money enough in one country are ready to exchange their fatherland for another country, in which they can earn, or rob more. The *sans patries*, the men without a fatherland, were the only ones in France that fought for the fatherland, and when, after the surrender of the Provisional Government they hoped against hope, and proclaimed the Commune, Flourens and his friends had their battle, and Flourens was one of the first of those whose slashed and hacked bodies covered the battle-field.

The Commune succumbed, and hundreds of the vanquished who succeeded in escaping the bloodhounds of Thiers and his bourgeois Republic,

fled for shelter to London; and to most of them the house of Marx was the principal point of attraction. No wonder that the heroes of the Commune occupied the minds of Marx's daughters. The two elder ones were soon betrothed with two refugees—Longuet and Lafargue. And Eleanor thought for some time that Lissagaray, the historian of the Commune, would be for her the fittest companion for life. She was again disappointed; the betrothal had to be broken off. Like all strong characters, she found solace in redoubled work. And redoubled work in her case—that was work for ten. I never knew a more indefatigable worker than Eleanor Marx. She had inherited this faculty of intense and incessant work from her father. She never grew tired. When others would have been crushed under the burden of work, she was as fresh and as merry as if work had been play. And, in fact, work was play to her.

From her sixteenth year, already she had made herself independent by her work. She gave lessons, and soon had connections with newspapers. Her articles on questions of art (theatres, &c.) were highly praised. The critics compared her to Georges Sand and George Elliot. And there is no doubt Eleanor Marx would rank amongst the best writers, if the political movement had not absorbed by far the greater part of her powers, and an ever-increasing part, so that, when she was at the height of her strength and activity, almost nothing was left for other pursuits and aims.

As long as her parents lived Eleanor was not prominent in the working-class movement, though she was deeply interested in it, and lived in it body and soul. She had duties to fulfil—duties to her parent whose health began to fail in the second half of the decade between 1870 and 1880. She nursed her parents and accompanied them, when they had to journey in search of health. But when Death had done its grim work, and swept away almost the whole family—first the mother, then the eldest daughter, and then, on March 14th, 1883, the father, whose life springs had been destroyed by the death of his brave and high-souled companion and of his pet daughter—then Eleanor Marx had nothing left to her except the cause to which she had dedicated her life.

She was strong and conscious of her strength. Yet the strongest on entering the battle wants a comrade and helpmate, who shares the dangers, the cares, the excitements of the battle. At this time she met Dr. Aveling—a man of splendid gifts, a brilliant orator and agitator, who, after having fought against religious bigotry, embraced the cause of Socialism, and began the fight against social wrong—the fight of international Socialism for the emancipation of the working classes. His reputation was not good; shocking things were told of him. But what had not been told of Karl Marx the kindest and the best of men? The worse the reputation, the brighter the merit; and it is not saying too much, that just the badness of Dr. Aveling's reputation helped to gain him Eleanor's sympathy. They met and they united. They united and co-operated. Both were powerful workers, and it is astonishing how much work they did. We must not be unjust. He, too, did much work, and good work. Not, certainly, as much and as good

as she. The charm of her person, which spread over her work, hallowed it, and made the effect irresistible. There is something in personality. And Eleanor Marx was a personality—one of those beings who throw all their strength, all their earnestness, all their power of soul and body into every word, into every act.

I will not write the history of her life—I should have to write the history of the International Working Class Movement. Born in England, of German parents, the daughter of the author of the "Communitic Manifesto," with its tremendous battle-cry, *Proletarians of all countries, unite!* she was by birth international. By her international education, by her miraculous mastery of the three great languages of civilisation, she was the predestined *mediatrix* between the proletarians of the different countries. We know how she was the soul and interpreter of the International Congresses, the era of which began—1889—with the centenary of the Great French Revolution.

Up to the day of her death she was in the midst of the fight—no, in the *front* of the fight. The dock labourers and the engineers can tell a tale of it. For the engineers last year she moved heaven and earth to get assistance and help. And when momentary defeat was inevitable, she thought already of the future victory, and did her utmost to organise victory.

At the beginning of March, this year, she invited me to come over to London, as we had arranged last year already. She invited me in terms so pressing that I was almost frightened. I was in prison then, and she could not speak quite openly. The thrilling description of the terrible and horrible operation Aveling had had to undergo ("much worse than a capital execution," she wrote), and the expressions of despair—a state of mind which I had never observed in her—filled me with uneasiness. I resolved to come over as soon as I was free.

Before I had time to carry out my resolution the news burst upon me that she was *dead—dead by her own will and hand*. I will not remove the veil which she threw herself over the end. To defend her there is no need. To throw stones at the condemned guilty is not to my taste. And when the guilty are dead execution is senseless. Truly, we owe *truth* to the memory of Eleanor Marx, but to be true truth must be the *whole* truth. And the letters, burst from an agonised woman's heart, that have been published lately tell only a *part* of the truth. Letters which I have throw light on other parts, and perhaps the time is not far off when the whole truth, so far as it belongs to publicity, may be published.

No doubt Aveling is guilty. If he had done his duty to her, who allied her life to his, she would still live, and he would still live. He paid his guilt with his life. But guilt is not monstrosity. There are no monsters. And Aveling was no monster. To represent him as a monster is not only a sin against psychology, nature, and common sense—it is also a wrong done to her who died through his weakness and morbid bohemian habits. If there were monsters in the world and Aveling had been a monster, what would

Eleanor Marx be? To love a monster, is that not *being* a monster? And did the bear, who crushed his master's skull in the attempt to drive the flies off his face—did he *serve* his master's interests?

It was a *tragedy*, and tragedy has its Rights.

Weimar, August 25, 1898.

W. LIEBKNECHT.

IN turning over piles of cherished old letters—which, with my files of defunct labour organs, qualify me for the title of *paperasser*—I noted a passage in the handwriting of our dead comrade, written in December, 1895 :—“What devil was it who invented all the horrors of a modern ‘moving’? If I could only believe in a god I should be inclined to thank him, because this is our final move. Final, at least, as far as we are concerned. The last move of all only inconveniences other people.” What a tragic scrap of correspondence! “Inconvenience” is not the right word in this case; her calamitous death made that poignant impression only a half of which can be expressed in words at all. At such moments hosts of hackneyed phrases acquire a rational significance for us, while the introspection of poets and philosophers reflects our own questionings and sorrows for the first time. After the first shock of such a catastrophe, we understand the meaning of the bard she loved best of all :—

The idea of thy life shall sweetly creep  
 Into my study of imagination,  
 And every lovely organ of thy life  
 Shall come apparelled in more precious habit,  
 More moving, delicate, and full of life,  
 Into the eye and prospect of my soul,  
 Than when thou liv’st indeed.

The daring Elizabethan iteration of “life” has a meaning of its own. Is it not absolutely true that Eleanor Marx Aveling is actually more vital to us now than when our consideration of her could be adjourned to another minute or day? “The idea of thy life shall sweetly creep into my study of imagination.” She was brave, but gentle; pertinacious and full of will, yet amiability itself. She is now before us for the first time as a complete life; this is our first chance to appreciate her. Never when she “lived indeed” had we such an opportunity of seeing how worthy she was.

To the young men and women in our movement I say that the value of her life-work is to be measured by its inspiration of others. If a life of such devotion can call forth no devotion, if such self-abnegation can induce no service at a personal cost in gratitude and recognition, then that life will have failed of its consummation. Now, no life service is enough; those who “regret the sad ending of a life too soon” can give expression to their regret in one way—let them put by the cynical laxity of growing years, or the feeble relinquishment of baffling and tangled combats, and let them gird themselves once more. The whole populace has howled at you? Harken to the criticism of those who exhibit any signs of sanity, but do not yield to the pressure of fools. You have butted your head against the world, and the world has felt it less than you? Then confess you cannot do all you would; but submit to nothing other than your limitations. When submission will nullify the value of your life and stultify your unaltered convictions, your duty is not submission, but dignified resistance. From two points of view Eleanor Marx Aveling’s life urges us to this course: first, in gratitude, that she could devote her energy and means to the furtherance of the interests of her race; secondly, in sympathy and compassion. That she could, for all her energy and unselfishness, effect so little for the main object of her life, and that she should die in harness, should make us only the more ready and anxious to help her out with her unfinished task.

As the Revolutionary Socialist that she was, she naturally had nothing but contempt for the "Practical Socialism" which ends in the quagmire of Liberalism. On the other hand, she heartily advocated the only immediately practicable effort of any socialistic value—to wit, political agitation for industrial reforms. She felt that these transferred the fighting masses to a higher vantage-ground, and once convinced of this she ignored every antagonism and every difficulty in her effort to secure this kind of legislation. Parallel with this work was her effort to secure a direct and separate representation of the workers in Parliament. Its aim would have been the legislation referred to, but its effect on the workers would have been the rallying of Socialists under a more powerful organising medium than heretofore available, and the preaching of the Social Revolution with more authority and a wider audience. Well could she have said with Browning:—

Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,  
 Our time so brief, 'tis clear if we refuse  
 The means so limited, the tools so rude,  
 To execute our purpose, life will flee,  
 And we shall fade and leave our task undone.  
 We will be wise in time—what though our work  
 Be fashioned in despite of their ill service,  
 Be crippled every way? 'Twere little praise  
 Did full resources wait on our good will  
 At every turn!

It is one of our chiefest regrets that we have no worthy photograph or other portrait of Mrs. Aveling. She was among those people—too numerous, still, from the photographer's point of view—who object to sitting for a portrait. This may arise from a desire to be asked twice, or from nervousness, or from a fear of appearing vain. Frequently these people will readily agree to appear in a group of friends and fellow-conspirators, but will not sit alone. In that case you may put them down in the third category, among those who shun anything smacking of vanity. I feel sure this was the origin of Mrs. Aveling's objections. After the manner peculiar to the artistic tribe, I had insinuated myself into her good graces to the extent of getting the twentieth part of a promise from her for a sitting. I argued long and eloquently that I had made an excellent portrait of Karl Marx, another of Dr. Aveling, was sooner or later to copy the fascinating painting of her mother, and now absolutely must have her own portrait to complete the collection. She once wrote:—"Why do you talk of doing a 'beautiful' photograph of us both? We're both too old to want 'beauty' pictures." Armed with this half-consent and with the connivance of the Doctor, I arrived at The Den with my instruments of torture. The assent vanished into thin air. Mrs. Aveling was adamant! How often I have regretted this since, for I know only of very imperfect and tiny pictures, in groups, incapable of enlargement without losing every vestige of resemblance to the original.

Nevertheless, there may be some heretofore unknown presentment in other hands, and perhaps this writing may be the means of inducing such persons to send to the Editor of this magazine, for careful reproduction and safe return, any photographs or pictures whatever of Mrs. Aveling, at any period of her life, either alone or with other figures included. By this means we may yet publish a worthy "likeness" of our well-beloved comrade.

ARTHUR FIELD.