

Karl Marx on the Isle of Wight

A.E. Laurence

Karl Marx visited the Isle of Wight on three separate occasions: summer 1874, winter 1881-82, and winter 1882-83. At the time of these visits the Isle of Wight had already become a popular tourist resort, principally as a result of the decision of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert to use Osborne House as a summer retreat from the affairs of state. The island, and in particular the Undercliff, had been recommended in 1829 by the famous specialist Sir James Clark as a convalescent area for sufferers from lung diseases, especially consumptives. Its virtue in this respect was its climate, particularly the mild winters. Within a few decades villas, hotels, and boarding houses had sprung up to house the visitors, and in 1868 the large Royal National Hospital for Diseases of the Chest was built at St. Lawrence. Marx came to the island to recover from bouts of illness. It seems likely that he never fully realized how serious his lung condition was or that the island and its medical practitioners were specifically appropriate for that condition.

Marx first visited the Isle of Wight in July 1874 with his wife Jenny. They appear to have spent some very gay and healthy weeks at 11 Nelson Street, Ryde. In 1873 he had been suffering most severely; his collapse at that time, in spite of a stay at Harrogate, had caused his Manchester physician, Dr. Gumpert, to forbid him any kind of work, even the reading of newspapers. Dr. Gumpert's sentence did not altogether stop Marx from reading while at Ryde. He studied all the numerous island newspapers available at that time as well as their landlord's books. He also spent some time in the small library at the public bathhouse at Sandown where he took a hot bath. He commented ironically on the coincidence of religious fervor and alcoholism, the simultaneous popularity of Anglicanism and the Baptist "miracle preacher" Spurgeon whose tracts he discovered on the bookshelves. An ever attentive political observer and sociologist, he commented on the local electioneering. Above all he reported their enjoyable long and numerous country walks. In a long letter to Engels dated July 15, 1874, he described how systematically they had explored the island's beauty after first circumnavigating it in an excursion boat. Marx fell in love with the island at this time. In the same letter to Engels, with whom he

normally did not correspond about regional attractions, he wrote, "This Island is a little paradise." The exertions of walking around the island do not seem to have affected his health for, though he informed his friend Engels that his "head" still did not appear to have fully recovered, he never had to consult a doctor or to worry about prescriptions.

During this trip Marx's second daughter Laura paid a weekend visit to her parents. In complete opposition to psychographic and other biased reports concerning the marital harmony of the spouses, the recollections by the children of their parents and their lifelong loving care and regard for each other appear memorable. Eleanor commented on this later, stressing most particularly her parents' keen sense of humor:

Assuredly two people never enjoyed a joke more than these two. Again and again—especially if the occasion were one demanding decorum and sedateness, have I seen them laugh till tears ran down their cheeks, and even those inclined to be shocked at such awful levity could not choose but laugh with them. And how often have I seen them not daring to look at one another, each knowing that once a glance was exchanged uncontrollable laughter would result . . . like two school children, suffocating with suppressed laughter that at last despite all efforts would well forth.

This pleasant stay on the island ended abruptly when Marx's grandson Henry Longuet died in the first year of his life in London. On receiving the news Marx and his wife immediately traveled back to London. Marx was not to return to the island for seven years. His wife Jenny, together with Engels's second wife Lydia Burns, came to stay for a few weeks in Shanklin in 1875. Jenny is known not to have been overly friendly with Engels's first wife Mary, the daughter of an Irish laborer, who totally lacked formal education. It is therefore strange that she became a most intimate friend of Mary's sister Lydia, who was also unable to read or write. Mrs. Marx reported that "we get on so well together." When Engels married Lydia after

Mary's death, it was Jenny Marx who found and prearranged a home for the couple when they moved from Manchester to London. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the two friends should travel together in May 1875 to Shanklin where they were to stay with intimate friends of Engels.

Karl Marx's second visit to the island began in December 1881, shortly after his wife's death. On this occasion he traveled with his daughter Eleanor and decided to stay at Ventnor, which he knew from his previous visit. They took lodgings at 1 St. Boniface Gardens, which a Miss McLaren rented out in the 1880s. The large solid house had originally been built by a rich family from Scotland from the profits of the well-known Brown and Polson food products. It stands at a medium elevation between the shore and St. Boniface Down and enjoys beautiful sea views from all its southern windows. In Marx's time the garden was probably much larger than it is today. Because of its situation at the eastern end of the resort, the house stands in a quiet spot, yet not too far from the few stores in the center of the town where Marx and Eleanor did their shopping. Marx obviously felt most comfortable in this house for he was to return to it during his second stay at Ventnor.

Unfortunately the January weeks with Eleanor were not happy and relaxing. This was particularly so for Eleanor; she was at that time possibly suffering more than her father because of her run-down nerves, lack of appetite, and sleeplessness. Marx reported to Engels about her, "my comrade," with much concern. His worries about her health were further increased during the Ventnor visit of her girlfriend "Dolly" Maitland. He wrote to Engels of his concern about the possible hysterical nature of Eleanor's illness, but he also insisted that she must have complete freedom to make her own decisions: "Under no earthly circumstances do I want the child to imagine that she is sacrificed upon the family altar in the role of an oldster's nurse." The pleasant weather at first permitted daily strolls, but as early as January 16 the days "grew progressively colder . . . so that trips back and forth become unnecessary for Tussy [Eleanor]." This remark in his letter of January 15, 1882, indicates how much his concern about Eleanor disturbed his second island stay. Under these circumstances Marx gladly agreed to his daughter's request for an early return to London. On January 16 Eleanor returned to London with her father who was not too well and obviously preferred to make the journey in her company.

During the last decade of his life, Marx's health declined. He was affected by neuralgia and liver problems, conditions which were aggravated by insomnia. While his wife was dying of cancer, he contracted pneumonia and pleurisy. At the time of his last visit to Ventnor, Marx was the patient of Dr. Donkin in London. Donkin was no specialist but the general practitioner looking after all members of the Marx family. He was, for example, attending Jenny Longuet in September 1882 when her daughter Jenny was born at Maitland Park. Originally

Donkin was also expected to be solely responsible for Karl Marx's health while he was in Ventnor during the winter of 1882-83.

Marx came down to the island again on the last day of October 1882. On this occasion he traveled alone and was obviously quite well. At this time Engels reported to Marx's second daughter Laura: "Yesterday Mohr [Marx] dined here, in the evening we all had supper at his place, we stayed together drinking rum till one o'clock and today he has left for Ventnor." Once again he stayed with Miss McLaren at 1 St. Boniface Gardens. He was obviously not expecting a deterioration in his condition, but during the

The expense of the doctor's visits worried Marx. He had to request money from Engels.

night of November 6 Marx suffered a relapse. The next day he asked Miss McLaren for her recommendation of a local physician, and she suggested Dr. J.M. Williamson, who had previously visited patients at her house.

Dr. Williamson was the son of a physician and had been born at South Shields in 1848. At the age of twenty-two he came to Ventnor and served for three years as an intern in the Royal National Hospital for Diseases of the Chest at St. Lawrence before gaining further experience at a St. Marylebone infirmary at London. In 1876 he returned to Ventnor where he took up private practice. He was so successful that he moved in 1878 into a large house called Southcliff, in Belgrave Road, where he practiced until his death in 1901. A small volume entitled *Ventnor and the Undercliff* written by Dr. Williamson and published in 1884 shows that he could expertly assess lung diseases. The book contains, in addition to statistical data on the local climate personally collected by the author, detailed medical reports on the various stages of lung diseases and their treatment at Ventnor. The resort's houses are situated at widely differing heights above the shore. During their stay patients normally would change their residence several times, and the opinion prevailed that they should move closer to the beach as their disease advanced. Exact analyses confirmed this routine treatment of the majority of the patients who arrived at Ventnor basically without any chance of survival, their only remaining wish being that they might spend the remainder of their days with a minimum of trouble and pain. Dr. Williamson's tables and reports could help and encourage them in this regard—just as the young practitioner managed to sustain Karl Marx's courage and optimism.

In addition to being a good physician, J.M. Williamson was evidently well-read and a man of wider intellectual

interests. For example a book by him entitled *The Life and Times of St. Boniface* was published posthumously in 1904. Using evidence that he had gathered both in Britain and on the Continent, he destroyed the legend that St. Boniface had lived on the Isle of Wight before departing on his mission to convert the Germans to Christianity. The doctor's own ideals emerge from the final paragraph of the book when he praises the saint: "A saint . . . a missionary with a heart on civilising . . . he may have been a strict disciplinarian, but the world needed it . . . kindly and gentle by nature, firmness and unflinching resolution were born to him out of his overwhelming earnestness: the good of others run above the thought of self; all thought of personal interest or advantage perished before his consuming desire that the truth should prevail." It can be imagined that, while writing these sentences about the legendary saint, Dr. Williamson remembered the famous patient whom he had met by accident several years before.

Marx mentioned Dr. Williamson's name for the first time in a letter to Engels dated November 8, 1882. He wrote that the day before he had "reluctantly" asked the doctor to call and described him as "a nice young fellow, nothing priestly about him." Engels agreed in his reply of November 11: "I am glad that you have found a suitable doctor." Marx informed Engels on the same day that the physician was possessed of "une manière autoritaire" when drawing his attention to the necessity that "in spite of everything he'd better swallow his medicines." Meanwhile the ever suspicious patient had written to his daughter Eleanor about the young doctor on November 10:

Au fond I am glad that because of the muscular rheumatism I reported to Dr. Williamson before (today) the prescription of Dr. Donkin could reach me from London. My rheumatism sits so close to the old location of my iterated pleuresy that Dr. Williamson could convince me by percussion and auscultation that all was still well—since my last examination by Donkin my cough has diminished but Williamson has persuaded me during his (second) visit today to take another medication . . .

As he wrote to Engels on November 8, 1882, during his first call the doctor had obviously been less concerned: "In fact, he had to prescribe just a liniment for exterior application—otherwise he apologises for the poor weather." A further mention of the doctor in Marx's published correspondence also relates to the weather. He told Eleanor on January 8, 1882, that Dr. Williamson sent him a few lines and enclosed with them a letter of his colleague Dr. F. Bayshawe of St. Leonard-on-Sea where the weather was then equally bad. Marx's later correspondence contained some further brief references to the "house arrest" imposed upon him by Dr. Williamson, which he apparently accepted without resistance.

The new documents indicate that doctor and patient got on extremely well together and that Marx felt respect, possibly even personal friendship, for the young physician

and his wife. He was impressed by the firm manner of the doctor, rather than resenting it, probably because this man succeeded in overcoming Marx's long-standing general lack of confidence in all medical practitioners and discussed his condition with him without causing either fear or depression. As a lung specialist, Dr. Williamson probably recognized Marx's hopeless condition when he first examined him. Although he at first only prescribed a liniment, he returned the very next day giving him this time, as Marx wrote to Engels on November 11, 1882, "a brew—its main ingredient is quinine disulphuricum, the remainder: morphia, chloroform etc was never missing in the brews handed down to me in the past." The day before, he had written to Eleanor regarding the doctor's "persuasion": "he stated it (the medicine) would shorten the transition period up to the point where I could expect complete recovery simply from the fresh air and much activity outdoors."

Dr. Williamson understood very well how he had to treat Marx—by encouraging him while at the same time providing him with powerful drugs that he needed badly. We can assume that the doctor recognized Marx's fatal condition since he was frequently confronted with similar cases. Yet Marx obviously did not discern Williamson's diagnosis when he mentioned the possibility of a complete recovery. For just this reason he was probably not at all dismayed or critical of the doctor when his dosage did not suffice during his nightly misery.

In spite of his condition Marx took advantage of favorable weather by walking, except when strictly forbidden by the doctor to leave the house. He took some precautionary measures. In a letter to Engels he wrote: "In order not to depend too much on wind and changes of temperature when strolling out-of-doors I find it necessary to carry the respirator for eventual needs." (Marx had first mentioned this respirator in a letter to Engels dated January 5, 1882, during his first visit to Ventnor.) Clearly, he was quite pleased with Ventnor and its winter climate. In the same letter to Engels he elaborated:

the mornings are mostly rainy or at least gloomy; during the day there are always good periods one must catch, but with them also unpredictable, tricky weather. Last Sunday f.i. I went up the Downs at 4 o'clock and walked there along a footpath to Bonchurch: its highest house standing on terraced plots (the lowest are quite near the shore) follow the path uphill. This carries on, leading now up, now down between the top of the Downs and their decline to the beach. (When I was here with Tussy [Eleanor] the last time I did not dare to climb up this path.) One can stroll here for hours, enjoying both sea-and mountain air at the same time. It was as warm as in Summer; the sky of a clear blue, with just some transparent white clouds.

Marx's description could be used by the Isle of Wight Tourist Board today.

Soon after his arrival at Ventnor in November, Eleanor

and his six-year-old grandson Jean ("Johnny") Longuet visited him. On November 20, Marx wrote to Engels: "Tussy and Johnny left me today at 3 o'clock, the weather being decent." By that time he had already consulted Dr. Williamson and was coughing so much that the doctor had insisted that he take drugs. He continued to go for walks whenever the weather permitted, reporting to Engels on November 22, 1882: "As just now the sun begins to shine, i.e. the time for my walk has arrived, I will not continue to deal with mathematics pro nunc but rather get back to the various methods in detail later on." From this it can also be seen that Marx remained mentally as well as physically active.

Dr. Williamson's "auscultation and percussion" detected that his lung disease had progressed so far that even walks in the sunshine could not bring permanent healing. On December 14, Marx informed his daughter Laura, his beloved "Cacadou," that in addition to his rheumatism he had some further complaints connected with his lung condition:

You knew from the correspondence of the "General" (Engels) that physically I am not unwell, and that I am under house arrest only since approximately two weeks because of a tracheal catarrh but without renewed attacks of pleuresy or bronchitis. This, then, is very encouraging, considering that most of my contemporaries—I mean fellows of the same age—just now kick the bucket. . . . There exist enough young asses to keep the old ones alive. . . . Here, my child, you certainly find better weather than in most other areas, France and Italy certainly included.

In spite of his house arrest, Marx was still full of hope, albeit not at all pleased with the necessity of consulting a physician because he had to request money from Engels. The visits of Dr. Williamson costing "such per minute" were more worrying to him because of the expense involved than because of the doctor's strict objection to his leaving the house. The doctor was probably extremely busy and "counted his minutes," but Marx would not have gotten to like him so well if he had been overly anxious to increase his honoraria.

In the first of the new documents, the letter to Dr. Williamson dated January 6, 1883, Marx reports his fright during the previous night. He describes, almost with an apology for incommoding his physician, how he suffered mortal anguish because his spasmodic cough made him gasp so that he was afraid that he might suffocate on the spot. The physician had provided him with morphine against similar attacks; but the dosage was too small, so that Marx was without medication except for some lozenges which did not alleviate his suffering. He managed to assuage his spasms by swallowing ordinary water by the spoonful. This improved his condition and allowed him to survive the dreadful night. He had been extremely scared. He sat down at once next morning and wrote to Dr. Williamson, without asking him to call. The

apologetic phrasing of the letter could possibly indicate that he was due to call on the doctor that same day but felt too weak to keep the appointment. On one occasion when writing to Engels he mentioned that Ventnor doctors usually visited their patients, and cited as an example the coach of a doctor, whom he disliked, stopping in front of his house at least three times a week when "the most fashionable man, a Mr. I.G. Coghill, Physician to the Royal Hospital for Consumption" came to visit a hypochondriac—an old lady "with whom nothing serious is the matter."

In the second paragraph of the first Williamson letter Marx explains what may have caused the deterioration of his state of health—the alarming news concerning the illness of his eldest daughter, Mme. Charles Longuet in Paris, whose early death he dreaded and apparently considered inescapable. At this stage he was somewhat skeptical on the possible causal connection: "Mere moral agencies do not, I suppose, touch the movement of the mucus." In concluding the letter, he states that the night's attack was by then completely overcome and that his condition was once again quite satisfactory. Marx seems to have written only to report the attack and not to make any appointment with or request from his doctor. No complaint was included, although the doctor was evidently wrong in leaving his patient without sufficient medication. Marx left it to him to draw his own conclusions on the matter.

Once again the house arrest was lifted as soon as the weather improved. Marx reported to Engels on January 8: "Yesterday and the day before I went for walks, today the weather promises to stay good." So Marx had not hesitated to take his daily walk the day after his bad night and remained indeed "the captain of his soul." Marx's health during these Ventnor weeks went up and down week after week; severe catarrhs followed satisfactory recoveries; one day he must take morphine to calm down his spasms, but could soon afterwards once more enjoy the sunshine and splendid sea air. A final blow was to be delivered. On January 11, Eleanor briefly visited him to bring the news of Jenny's death at Argenteuil. The second of the unpublished letters consists of just a single paragraph and was written on January 13, 1883. It was Marx's farewell letter to Dr. Williamson and was possibly the last letter of his life. In it he first tells the doctor of Jenny's death and explains that he must quit Ventnor and return to London. He states that the news of the death was "a stunner," a definite shock that made his suffering worse. This amounts to an assumption of a psychosomatic character to his illness. He wanted the doctor who had improved his condition to learn from the wording that he was in no way doubtful about his efficacy, while advising him at the same time that he now preferred being in his London home and in the care of his family. The main reason for the writing of this letter was the physician's outstanding account, which Marx requests him to send to his indicated London address from which prompt payment would be forthcoming. With this final message, Marx packed up and traveled back to London without assis-

tance. He had insisted that Eleanor should sail to France to look after her sister's children whom she should consider of more importance than her ailing father.

One memento of Marx's final visit to Ventnor was a photograph with a friendly dedication addressed to Dr. Williamson's wife. This photograph is a copy of a portrait taken by Mayall of Regent Street, London, in 1878. It was forwarded by Eleanor to Marx on January 9 at his request. He had asked her to send a photograph taken in Algiers in 1882, which he recalled having left behind on his desk in London in his wallet or "in some little box," stating: "If you could find them, you might send me two photogramms. One of them I have promised to forward to Madame Williamson." Eleanor responded at once to his

Some authors have degraded Marx both mentally and physically by exaggerating his frequent illnesses.

wish, and he wrote his message on the grievous day when he learned of Jenny's death at Argenteuil. In a slightly shaky hand, the dedication reads: "With best wishes for a happy New Year." This suggests that not only did Marx have a good relationship with the young doctor but that he was introduced to the physician's wife, at which time she asked him for his photograph.

On his return to London, Marx once again immersed himself in his studies. Dr. Donkin examined him on March 9, and Engels reported to Laura Lafargue at Paris on March 10 that the doctor had found "a good chance for bringing him around again. Decidedly not worse, but better if anything. . . . Donkin saw Mohr [Marx] last evening and, I am glad to say, gave a more favourable account of his health than a fortnight ago." The hoped for recovery was not to happen. On March 14, Engels and the family servant Lenchen Demuth found Marx dead in an armchair. He had died from a severe abscess of the lungs. Three days later he was buried at Highgate cemetery.

The state of health of personalities in mankind's history has become a favorite topic of today's literature. Whenever historical sources contain a few pertinent facts or hints, these often provide opportunities for amazing speculations. Even worse than the fictionalized reporting of the factual medical circumstances is that of their assumed consequences. These are stated to be self-evident and, in their turn, are supposed to provide the explanation of the actions of historical figures. The greatest pages of human history are supposed to have been written by individuals with some form of medical problem.

Marx has not remained unscathed by this fashionable

literary disease. In their obvious effort to convert this great thinker into an inferior human being some authors have gone as far as degrading him both mentally and physically into a lifelong cripple by exaggerating his frequent illnesses in a dramatic fashion. For example Kuenzli, after years of "psychological research" financed by a clearly propagandist organization, describes *The Flight into Illness* as the explanation of the mystery of Marx's undeniable spiritual power and creativity. After his long study of the man and his work, Kuenzli contends in all seriousness that Marx was in reality hardly ever truly ill in body: "No sooner he really had for once completed a given task, he was healthy again from one day to the next." Such "researchers" are undoubtedly embarrassed by the historical facts.

Although much pertinent data has been gathered, the chief source of information about Marx's health and illnesses remain his own letters. It is well known how little he agreed to an individual emphasizing his own private difficulties, but, in the sense of the German proverb, for him a "shared pain" was a "half pain." Engels was his alter ego in the true sense of the phrase: every thought that went through his mind could be shared with such a friend without ever being taken for a superfluous self-pitying complaint. When he engaged in an exchange of thoughts with Engels or his closest family, Marx could not have foreseen that all his confidential letters might one day be used to denigrate his scientific output by unproven hypotheses.

According to the only special treatise available on the history of Marx's health, by Regnault, his congenital medical problems, above all his liver complaints, were of much less importance than the consequence of his hard life in exile. This was characterized by overwork and by poor, unsuitable nutrition. His lungs were most probably affected by the miserable quality of his extremely cheap cigars. He had taken to smoking far too many of these during his over-long working hours in order to keep himself awake and to be able to read and write in spite of his all too frequent nervous tension. It is incontestable that he never spared his strength and his nerves when engaged in research, in political controversy, or in personal efforts on behalf of his comrades. That Marx's fundamental optimism was never destroyed however many times death was reaping a grim harvest within his inner family circle is proof enough of his thriving mental health. At all times hope, not fear, remained his leitmotif for himself as well as for all mankind.

The various physicians consulted by Marx during the course of his life have so far not been the subject of a monograph. In a letter from the Isle of Wight he once called himself his "own chief medical counsel," and all through his years he trusted in self-control rather than in any other potential remedies against illness. Time and time again his eagerness to continue his work and his sense of responsibility was the spur, even when physical or emotional pains and severe disease weakened him. He

wrote before his first Ventnor stay: "I come out of my last illness doubly disabled—morally because of my wife's death, physically because of a thickening of the mucus and a larger infectability of the bronchiae. Altogether I shall have to lose some time because of the recovery efforts." The last letter to Engels on January 10, 1883, toward the end of his last Ventnor visit closed with these lines: "I still believe that with the help of patience and pedantic self-control I shall soon be once again in shape. The Moor."

He ignored at that time that, in spite of the relative improvement of his liver complaints and furunculosis, he was condemned to die of his lung disease. It is clear from other correspondence that Marx firmly believed in a cure for his condition. For example, a letter from Engels to Marx dated December 15, 1882, mentions a postcard sent by Marx to Eleanor (which has unfortunately not been preserved) on which Marx appears to have first mentioned his trust in such a cure. Engels wrote: "I see from your card to Tussy that you are still under house arrest—probably the best for you with this blizzard and the ground soaking from the waters of the molten snow." Engels had never visited the island and appears to have drawn his conclusions from the prevailing London weather. Heavy snowfalls are extremely rare on the island although there was one in the winter of 1881. "You must count on minor affections of the breathing tubes during this your first Northern Winter since the pleuresy, only next Summer's cure can do away with them."

Marx respected and liked the bourgeois English people whose general culture he shared.

The friends were busily making plans for the following summer and Marx either ignored or was unaware of the gravity of his lung disease. Dr. Williamson, to whom he addressed possibly the last letter of his life, was wise enough to keep his silence. The Marx family was in many ways unlike any other family. It was extremely close and of one mind, almost unanimously sharing ideals, principles, tastes, and enjoyment of the arts. The inner "family" comprised, as well as Marx, his wife and the three daughters, their intimate friends Engels and Lenchen Demuth. Both the latter had sacrificed and set aside their own family ties for the Marx family. All these strong personalities were most deeply linked to the person of the philosopher himself. Although the family split up from time to time, the spirit of the inner contacts that Marx had created

around himself changed but little. The whole family was at all times devoted to the cause in which he believed.

With such strong family ties, it is not surprising that Marx was deeply affected by the death of his wife in 1881 and his daughter in 1883. Many critics have denounced this as a sign of weakness, although Marx overcame these emotional upheavals just as he surmounted his physical setbacks. His son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, confirmed that Marx survived the death of his wife "with great fortitude." Engels, however, stated that her death "killed off half the Moor." Jenny Marx had been, as she herself wrote to Kugelmann, her husband's ever-present comrade in his life's work and the person who had completely shared his ideas and ideals for the longest time.

Just as he was recovering from his wife's death came that of his daughter Jenny. She, too, had been a fellow fighter, confidante, and helper ever since the days of research in the British Museum Reading Room. Later she had worked as a reporter in France on the newspaper *La Marseillaise*, using the nom de plume J. Williams. She had shared the life and work of Jean Longuet, who devoted all his years to the same cause. The fact that Marx mentioned her in both unpublished letters to Dr. Williamson suggests that she was very dear to him. In spite of the stunning blow of her death, his strong will triumphed yet again. He did not give in to sorrow but immediately made arrangements for her children to be cared for by Eleanor. Even so, he clearly recognized that the shock he had suffered had catalyzed a decline in his own health. The Ventnor air and his local doctor could be of no further relief to him, and he decided to return to his home and friends in London.

Many critics have copied ideas from each other concerning Marx's final illness. It is claimed that "the mortally afflicted author was no longer master of his own thoughts," that "his language collapsed" and above all that "his will to survive" had evaporated. The weeks that Marx spent on the Isle of Wight during his last absence from London are described as though the old man, painfully breathing through his respirator, spent his days of illness thoughtlessly and inactively in the incessant rain of an inhospitable holiday resort by the sea, until he returned to his deathbed in the capital. Payne reports the final visit to Ventnor as follows: "He went to the Isle of Wight in search of the sun . . . complaining about the weather, too ill to take his daily walks . . . an old man alone with his grief, doing nothing in a small rented room . . . the papers gathering dust."

Serious authors, even those antagonistic to Marx, know from his published correspondence that these descriptions are totally without foundation and a rather unintelligent defamation of a great thinker. Altogether sixteen of Marx's letters dating from the last visit to Ventnor have been published: eleven to Engels, three to Eleanor, one to Laura, and a brief communication to Mrs. Amalie Daniels in Cologne. All the documents show that, in spite of his illness, Marx was neither completely weak-

ened physically nor mentally broken as has been alleged. On the contrary his power of thought, his keen interest in continuing information, his courage, and his sense of humor appear to have remained undiminished. Right up to his death, and certainly during his weeks in Ventnor, Marx never lost his concern either with the progress of his aims in the political sphere or with the general scientific advances of the period. Examination of the twenty-six letters exchanged between Marx and Engels during the second visit to Ventnor illustrates the range of Marx's interests at the time. References are made to mathematics, electricity, history, anthropology, and sociology. The friends discussed recent publications, exhibitions, political personalities, plots, and elections. Marx even studied the local events as recorded in the newspapers. He was amused by the proposal to commence a court case against detractors who had claimed that the town was more than crowded with consumptives "on their last legs." All this suggests that Marx was very far from "down and out."

The three unpublished documents contain further proof that Marx remained as intelligent, amiable, and self-confident as in former years. Both letters are written with a firm hand in smooth, faultless English, totally de-

void of the more frequently recurring Germanisms that are found in his last letters to Engels and his daughters. They are certainly without any signs that the writer was a terminal patient, a depressed or helpless man. His concern about the physician's remuneration clearly indicates that Marx put himself mentally in his doctor's place and was anxious to put him at his ease, at a time when a lesser man might have thought only of himself. These unpublished letters also possibly show a novel aspect of his character—his relationship with the bourgeois English people whom he respected and liked and whose general culture, colloquial language, and routine style he shared. They provide an insight into how, after his long odyssey, he had finally dropped anchor in the old-age haven of the life of a retired Englishman's routines and how he could still make others, unknown to him until yesterday, into firm friends today. □

Alfred Edward Laurence is a lecturer in sociology for the British Workers' Educational Association. He has been a research chemist, has worked for the United Nations, and has taught sociology at the University of Utah. He is a specialist in international and patent law, corporation finance, and the sociology of industry.

From CONGRESS MONTHLY Magazine — Sponsored by the American Jewish Congress

Proceedings of the
20th Annual America-Israel Dialogue

WOMAN AS JEW, JEW AS WOMAN
An Urgent Inquiry

INCLUDES

- Presentations by Betty Friedan, Judith Hauptman, Elizabeth Holtzman, Shulamit Aloni, Blu Greenberg, Yael Dayan, and other outstanding women from Israel and America.
- Discussions on women and Jewish identity, women in work and politics in Israel and America, women and the religious establishment, feminism and the family.
- Subscribe now to CONGRESS MONTHLY, a journal of opinion and Jewish affairs, and receive a copy of the Dialogue free.

ORDER FORM

Please return this order form to CONGRESS MONTHLY, 15 E. 84th St., New York, NY 10028

Please send me _____ copies of the Dialogue "Woman as Jew, Jew as Woman: An Urgent Inquiry" at the cost of \$2.00 each. My check or money order for _____ is enclosed.

YES, I would like to subscribe to CONGRESS MONTHLY and receive a complimentary copy of the Dialogue.

- One year (\$7.50) _____ Two years (\$14.00) _____ Three years (\$20.00) _____