

THE FIRST MAYDAY

On 1 May 1886, 800,000 workers from all trades and factories throughout the US went on strike in support of the eight-hour work day. In Chicago, a stronghold of immigrant labour and anarchists, 300,000 workers struck and marched through the city streets in a huge display of proletarian power. Before the Chicago May Day strike action began, the management at McCormick Machine Co. (now International Harvester) had locked out 1500 workers over a wage dispute. On 3 May, when pickets attempted to prevent blackleg labour entering the plant, the Chicago police opened fire on the workers, killing four and wounding many more. Outraged at this act of naked aggression, radical newspapers called for armed resistance against the bloodthirsty Chicago police, and a protest rally was called for the following day (4 May) at Haymarket Square. Speeches condemning police violence and capitalist oppression were given by three leading anarchists: Parsons, Spies and Fielden. As the meeting came to an end, 200 police moved in on the crowd. Suddenly, a bomb was thrown and exploded in the midst of the police, who immediately opened fire on the assembled workers. Several police and many workers were killed.

In the hysterical aftermath of the Haymarket tragedy five anarchists were convicted and sentenced to hang by a specially constituted tribunal. On 11 November, Black Friday, it murdered Parsons, Spies, Fischer and Engels. Ling had committed suicide the previous day. They were later shown to have had nothing to do with the bombings.

On 14 July 1889, on the hundredth anniversary of Bastille Day, an American AFL delegate attending the International Labour Congress in Paris proposed that 1 May be officially adopted as a workers' holiday. This motion was unanimously approved and since then May Day has served as a date for international working class solidarity.

These speeches, delivered between 1885 and 1910 by anarchist agitator Voltairine de Cleyre, eloquently express the mood of US labour militants and confirm the last words of Spies: 'There will come a time when our silence from the grave will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today!'

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The first Mayday: the Haymarket speeches 1895-1910

Voltairine de Cleyre

with an introduction, notes and
 bibliography by Paul Avrich



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**with an introduction, notes and
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Contents

Introduction **Paul Avrich** i

1895 **The fruit of the sacrifice** 1

1897 **November 11th** 6

1899 **November eleventh** 9

1900 **Our martyred comrades** 17

1901 **The eleventh of November 1887** 23

1906 **Memorial address** 31

1907 **November eleventh, twenty years ago** 35

1910 **The defiance of August Spies** 43

Notes to the text 52

Middle section | Haymarket lithographs by Siporin.

Attention Workingmen!

----- GREAT -----

MASS-MEETING

TO-NIGHT, at 7.30 o'clock,

----- AT THE -----

HAYMARKET, Randolph St., Bet. Desplaines and Halsted.

Good Speakers will be present to denounce the latest atrocious act of the police, the shooting of our fellow-workmen yesterday afternoon.

Workingmen Arm Yourselves and Appear in Full Force!

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Achtung, Arbeiter!

G r o ß e

Massen-Versammlung

Heute Abend, 7½ Uhr, auf dem

Seumarkt, Randolph-Straße, zwischen Desplaines- u. Halsted-Str.

☛ Gute Redner werden den neuesten Schurkenstreich der Polizei, indem sie gestern Nachmittag unsere Brüder erschoss, geißeln.

☛ Arbeiter, bewaffnet Euch und erscheint massenhaft!

Das Executiv-Comite.

Introduction

Paul Avrich

The Haymarket affair, one of the most famous incidents in the history of the anarchist movement, began on 3 May 1886, when the Chicago police fired into a crowd of strikers at the McCormick Reaper Works, killing and wounding several men. The following evening, the anarchists held a protest meeting near Haymarket Square. Towards the end of the meeting, which had proceeded without incident, rain began to fall and the crowd started to disperse. The last speaker, Samuel Fielden, was concluding his address when a contingent of police marched in and ordered the meeting to be closed. Fielden objected that the gathering was peaceful and that he was just finishing up. The police captain insisted. At that moment a bomb was thrown. One policeman was killed and nearly seventy were injured, six of whom later died. The police opened fire on the crowd, killing at least four persons and wounding many more.

Who threw the bomb has never been determined. What is certain, however, is that the eight men who were brought to trial; Albert Parsons, August Spies, George Engel, Adolph Fischer, Louis Lingg, Samuel Fielden, Oscar Neebe, and Michael Schwab, were not responsible. Six of them, in fact, were not even present when the explosion occurred, and the other two were demonstrably innocent of throwing the bomb. Moreover, no evidence was produced to connect the defendants with the bombthrower. Yet all eight were found guilty; seven were condemned to death and one (Neebe) to fifteen years in jail (the sentences of Schwab and Fielden were afterwards commuted to life imprisonment). The verdict was the product of perjured testimony, a packed jury, a biased judge, and public hysteria. On 10 November 1887, Lingg committed suicide in his cell with a cigar-shaped explosive smuggled to him by a fellow anarchist, Dyer D. Lum. The following day, 11 November, Parsons, Spies, Engel, and Fischer were hanged.

The five Chicago anarchists became martyrs. Their pictures were displayed at anarchist meetings; every year, 11 November was observed in their honor; and the last words of Parsons and Spies — 'Let the voice of the people be heard!' and 'The time will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today!' — were often quoted in anarchist speeches and writings. Six years later, in 1893, the imprisoned men; Fielden, Neebe, and Schwab,

were pardoned by Governor John P. Altgeld, who criticised the judge for conducting the trial 'with malicious ferocity' and found that the evidence had not shown that any of the eight anarchists were involved in the bombing.

The Haymarket affair — the unfairness of the trial, the savagery of the sentences, the character and bearing of the defendants — fired the imagination of many young idealists and won more than a few to the anarchist cause. Among them was Voltairine de Cleyre (1866-1912), a talented writer and speaker, whom Emma Goldman called 'the greatest woman Anarchist of America'. The fate of the Chicago anarchists haunted Voltairine de Cleyre's life. Nearly every November, from 1895 on, she delivered a memorial oration to her fallen comrades. Despite some inevitable repetition, they were among the most powerful speeches of her career, written with painstaking care and delivered with an intensity of feeling that moved her audiences profoundly. Most of the speeches were delivered in Chicago, the scene of the Haymarket episode, but she also spoke in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit. Owing to illness, she does not seem to have spoken from 1902 through 1905. Of her dozen or so Haymarket addresses, I have been able to locate eight. Six of these appeared in various anarchist journals, while two apparently were never published (unfortunately, I have not been able to find her 1908 oration, which she considered her best to that date). Together they constitute a classic of anarchist literature, a remarkable group of essays on the theme which dominated her life.

New York City
November 11, 1979

Eight times has our Mother Earth bled her sacred breast with the
blood of men — eight times has she bled the unborn and the
dying — this deep gash near her heart where all the
lost and forgotten children's bodies — the grave of Waltham.

Eight weary years have the women wept and the mothers
children placed upon their fathers' tombs their wreaths of love and
flowers.

Eight slender years has the powerful slave, but upon these
that living, never-unworn, saw to utter defiance to the tyrant that
strangled for could not succumb.

Eight slender years has the sweet, dead voice that filled the gloom
corners of Cook County Jail with the tender song of undying love
on the last night that is ever sung, been echoing over the world. Far
far beyond the black wall of the prison, borne on invisible wings, up
high into the gables and eaves, low into the cellars of the world,
floats the hymn-song of death, till from out of the night of the people's
torror, it near and far-off lands, the unknown voices wake and sing.

And so, friends,

Eight rain-breath'd springs have the grass grown green, eight
withering autumns have old and white, and the immortal seed has
germinating in the furrow. For you, Cronin and Gary of the world
who for eight blazing years have borne upon your brows the
burning brand of Cain, for you — the earthquake, for us liberty.

For there are so many things to gather from the grave, whose
whose sodden ground the earth has heaved and heaved — wrapped in
the November wind, bring in the arms of the thousands gathered
there, even as the words of the dead men will and cannot, will
flashing, lighting thence in the hearts they touch.

What shall we gather, comrades? What thought shall we bear away
to serve us in another year of struggle for that cause to us most dear?
What is the worth, precious blood we can learn from the martyrdom of
Parsons, Fisher, Angel, Ling, and Spill?

For the sacred thing to me in all these commemorations is that
the most of us only drop the tears of regret, only say, 'All they took
away the best of our comrades — and there we stand by their
place.' The idea of magnificent, irreparable loss, the idea that
whatever good came from the agitation created was bought too

Eight times has our Mother Earth bared her scarred breast to the bitter blast — eight times laid naked this unhealing wound whence blood still issues, this deep gash near her heart wherein they thrust her murdered children's bodies — the grave at Waldheim.

Eight weary years have the women wept, and the orphaned children placed upon their fathers' tomb their wreaths of tear-wet flowers.

Eight slumbrous years has the powerful silence lain upon those lips that, living, never unclosed save to utter defiance to the tyrant that strangled but could not subdue.

Eight solemn years has the sweet, dead voice that filled the gloomy corridors of Cook County Jail with the tender song of undying love, on the last night that it ever sang, been echoing over the world¹. Far, far beyond the black wall of the prison, borne on invisible wings, up, high into the garrets, and down, low, into the cellars of the world, floats the swan-song of death, till from out of the night of the people's sorrow, in near and far-off lands, the unknown voices waken and sing — *Annie Laurie*.

Eight rain-breath'd springs have the graves grown green, eight withering autumns turned old and white, and the immortal seed lain germinating in the furrow. For you, Grinnells and Garys of the world who for eight blasting years have borne upon your brows the burning brand of Cain, for you — the earthquake, for us, liberty.

Oh, there are so many things to gather from this grave, upon whose sodden grass the scarlet leaves whirl, and scatter — whipped in the November wind, flying in the faces of the thousands gathered there, even as the words of the dead men whirl and scatter, scarlet flaming, lighting blazes in the hearts they touch.

What shall we gather, comrades? What thought shall we bear away to serve us in another year of struggle for that cause to us most dear? What is the most priceless lesson we can learn from the martyrdom of Parsons, Fischer, Engel, Lingg, and Spies?

For the saddest thing to me in all these commemorations is that the most of us only drop the tears of regret, only say, 'Ah, they took away the best of our comrades — and there are none to fill their places'. The idea of incommensurable, irreparable loss, the idea that whatever good came from the agitation created was bought far too

dear, sends a continual pulsation of pain, a hopeless ache in the heart, such as one feels when the clang of the prison gate rings on the ear, and is told that a prisoner for life has gone in thereat.

Is this pain justified? Is it true that sacrifice is foolish, and martyrdom an uncompensated loss?

In the general breaking up of all our former conceptions based upon the theological idea of man and his relations, this is one that calls for an examination. All the history of the race, as we know, has been one long interlinking of sacrifice. Not a corner of the populated world so isolated, not a people so barbarous, not a religion so rude, not a reform so insignificant, but has had its Hofers, its Cranmers, its Savonarolas, breathing defiance under the mouths of guns or singing glorias from the centre of smoke! But at the heart of these ecstatic triumphs over death, has ever been the idea of a compensating God who for pains suffered here will grant reward of bliss hereafter!

Now modern science has proven that this God does not exist; nowhere in sky or earth or sea can any trace of him be found. On the contrary, telescope, microscope, spectroscope, all enter the protest that cannot be gainsaid against a belief in the existence of any mythical power which troubles itself about an individual's life or death; all confirm the utterance of that wise man who said: 'For what preeminence has man above the beast. As the one dieth so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath'. From the heights of the stars we hearken to the dust of the dead, and know that, truly, 'there is nothing new under the sun'.

Therefore the old belief, which sustained the martyrs of the past, the old certainty of reward which upheld the sacrifices of the past, plays no part in our view of the tragedy of 11 November. Since God no longer enters into our estimate of the conduct of life, we must either regard sacrifice and martyrdom as acts of individual folly and social waste, or we must find a scientific basis to justify them. That is, we must find some reason which will not contradict any well-grounded statement of the processes of nature (or as we commonly say natural law), some reason which will warrant a human being involuntarily becoming a handful of senseless ashes for the sake of an idea. For the nineteenth century has produced these men — men who bowed at no shrine, acknowledged no God, believed in no

hereafter, and yet went as proudly and triumphantly to the gallows as ever Christian martyr did of old. It is known that Albert Parsons of his own free will returned and gave himself up to trial by the court which sentenced him to death, when in fact nothing was easier for him than to have left America till the storm passed. It is not so generally known that even till the last, even on the fatal Annie Laurie night, had he but signed the petition to the Governor, his sentence would have been commuted, and today he would have been free. He knew this: knew it to be a certainty; for had he been willing to sign the petition such a pressure would have been brought to bear upon Oglesby³ as he could not have refused.

When Parsons received Capt. Black's⁴ telegram from Springfield, urging him to do it, he placed the telegram upon the table and beside it — the *Marseillaise*.

It was to say: 'Let this answer that. Let the old strong song of defiance that the people have hurled against the rulers since '93 be my reply to those who bid me sue for my life at the feet of the state. No, I will not petition'.

Was it an act of folly? — or heroism? which?

Fielden, Schwab, and Neebe are free today. He might have been. Was it folly?

Let us see the facts a little further. He knew that he could be saved, but his comrades Lingg, Fischer, Engel, and Spies could not. They knew it too. Yet knowing it they said, 'Nevertheless we will sign if Parsons will. We are willing to record ourselves as cowards if by it we can influence him to save his life'. And in that hope Spies did sign the petition though he knew it would be rejected. But Parsons said: 'I will not sign. What is my life that for its sake my comrades should stand before the world as cowards, and their death be lost to the cause? What is my life that for it they should satisfy the passion of the state's attorney, when he said, 'I want to make them do something for which the Anarchists shall hate them'. Take your petition. I will not sign'.

Ah, Mr. Grinnell, astute as you are, you failed. You did not make them waste the wine of the sacrifice; you could not make the Anarchists hate them. No — but for every drop of blood you spilled on that November day you made an Anarchist. You sent their words

on wings of flame in many tongues and many lands: where you hoped to sow the seed of hate the immortelles of love have bloomed; and tonight ten thousand, nay thrice ten thousand repeat in reverence the names of Parsons, Fischer, Engel, Lingg, and Spies.

Lost? Lost to the cause? Gained! gained a thousand fold! Whenever men dream of liberty, and dreaming dare, and daring strike, there above them, white, luminous, shining, as they stood upon the scaffold, appear the ghosts of Parsons, Fischer, Engel, Spies. Wherever in the horrible conflict between laborers and soldiers a shattered, shredded striker is borne away by his comrades, who looking on his blood hate deeper, there walks the mangled corpse of Louis Lingg, that brave, beautiful boy who, tossing his proud head, 'with his tawny hair like a lion's mane', and gazing with dauntless eyes full at the court about to sentence him, exclaimed: 'I do believe in force, hang me for it!'

'Ah,' you say, 'you are talking poetry'. Let us see if we are not near the solution of the problem of martyrdom — the answer to the question, 'what shall it profit a man if he aid a cause, and yet lose his own life, since there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither he goeth'.

Let us, then, ask another question, What is 'a man'? The theological idea was a soul and a body. But science says the body is so much lime, so much iron, so much sulphur, so much carbon, and so on, which disintegrate at death and pass into other forms but cannot be destroyed. But what is the soul? The scientist answers a compound, an organism of certain psychological elements, just as much facts as the physical ones which accompany them. The soul of man is so much courage, so much energy, so much prudence, so much daring, so much poesy, so much fear, hope, and so on through the qualities that make a man. As the body of every individual is a little different in the proportions of its composition from every other so is the soul. This is all that makes an individual. But the soul-elements, like the body-elements, are common to all mankind, and at death nothing is lost in the one case any more than in the other — only transmuted. Death, indeed, to the person who has thrown aside the old ideas of God and immortality, simply means a setting free of original elements to form new combinations — the

lower forms being weeded out by the slow but certain action of natural selection, the higher constantly becoming more active and beneficent.

To all the nobler elements of our comrades, brought so strongly forth in that unjust trial, sentence, incarceration, and execution, death meant only an intenser, larger life. And when I say this I do it not only from my own theoretical standpoint, but in the certain knowledge that such was their belief and acceptance in the case of Parsons and Fischer at least. I know it from the lips of one who never lied, one who lifted their standard when it was stricken down, one who saw them day after day in prison, one who would have gone to the scaffold with them, one who, strangled by the invisible rope of poverty, now lies six feet deep in the eternal dark with the eternal smile upon his lips — Dyer D. Lum! And these were his words: 'In so exalted a state were they, so sure that death by the gallows was but a means of spreading further into the hearts of the people they loved the ideas apart from which they had no life, that it was exactly the truth when Fischer said: 'This is the happiest moment of my life!' And those who saw his face say that it shone with a white light on the scaffold'.

This then is the justification of sacrifice even to death, that through it the most active and enduring element in the martyr's personality is projected into the infinitely greater life of the race.

Let us bear this thought with us. Let us believe that from under the granite shaft at Waldheim, from under the stone pedestal whereon the warrior mother, with the great, sorrowful stern eyes, stands, grasping the dagger while she drops the laurel on her slaughtered child, from under the earth and the night and the blight of death, we hear again: 'Let the voice of the people be heard!'⁵; and low in the ear that listens the murdered five repeating,

'I am not dead, I am not dead;
I live a life intense, divine!
Yours be the days forever fled,
But all the morrows shall be mine.'

Place and date of delivery uncertain,
but probably Philadelphia, November
1897. Manuscript, *Wess Papers*,
London, courtesy of Alfred Wess and
William Fishman.

Year after year, the rising sun of November 11th throws over the world the elongating shadow of the Chicago gallows. Year after year, the knowledge of the history of the governmental crime spreads and spreads. Year after year, the voices strangled to death cry louder through their silence⁶.

It is as if all these years were a thin screen behind which walk the spectres of the Revolution, wearing on this day the faces of those men, done to death for speaking — Parsons, Fischer, Engel, Lingg, and Spies. It is as if these mute faces were bidding us remember their prophecies, and to note how truly they are marching to fulfilment. Every year the governments' hands become redder with the blood of martyrs to free speech. Every year we hear yet more plainly the whizzing of the wings of 'the birds of the coming storm'⁷. Sometimes we fancy it is already the sound of the storm itself. And sitting in our corner we repeat the history of November 11th, and grind our hatred sharp.

We tell ourselves again of the famous McCormick Strike; we see the police riding down on the defenceless people, crying 'Shoot the God damn sons of bitches!' We see men clubbed, bruised, knocked under the horses' feet in the sacred name of the McCormick Reaper Works. We hear our comrades calling for a meeting of protest. We shift our eyes to the Haymarket on the 4th of May, 1886. We see Parsons, Spies, Fielden speaking from the wagon, and the crowd listening. Then the police, marching in double column, coming down Desplaines Street, turning about — firing! A man falls, struck by a police bullet. He clutches his side and writhes upon the ground; a thin line of blood oozes out. Others have fallen. Suddenly a Vengeance goes over our heads, a thing like a lighted cigar, that falls and bursts with a low, sullen, roar. And men fall everywhere.

Then comes the terror! People rushing to accuse, others to escape accusation. Imaginations become realities, and men see bombs reflected from their eyes wherever they look. The police, affrighted, become ferocious. They seize and club at every turn. It is indeed the Reign of the Police. And gradually the Anaconda of the Law coils tighter and tighter. It accuses our comrades — Parsons, who brought his wife and children to the meeting — presumably to be mangled by the bombs! — Fischer, because he set up the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*; Spies,

because he was the editor; Engel, because he, too, set rebellious type; Fielden, because he spoke often at workingmen's meetings, bidding them prepare for the violence of Capital; Schwab, mild and gentle Schwab, who also 'wrote articles'; Neebe, for he had a red flag in his house, and organised trade unions; Lingg, oh! beautiful cold Louis Lingg, who was a bombmaker, but who did not even know till the next day that a meeting had taken place, and whose bombs bore no resemblance to the Vengeance.

They arrested them — all except Parsons, who voluntarily came into the court and gave himself up for trial, because he believed himself so sure of proving his innocence that he did not doubt the issue. Bitter mistake! The capitalists and their tools, Judge Gary and Prosecutor Grinnell, had determined to hunt Anarchy to death. The procession of iniquities, called 'The Trial', begins. The State's Attorney boasts that he will have the jury packed to kill; boasts openly in the court that though these men are being tried legally for murder, or conspiracy to murder, it is Anarchy which is on trial. It is a *political opinion* which is to be hanged, here in this astounding Republic, which sprang into existence as the expression of the free political opinion.

Not a man on the jury who does not admit that he is already prejudiced against the prisoners. Not a single 'peer' among the twelve; all are of the very parasite class which our comrades had shown in their articles and speeches could not continue but at the expense of the slavery of the producers. The verdict was pronounced before a word of witness was taken, and we all knew it. Then the delays, the agony, the tigerish coquetting with justice of the prosecution. The horrible purrings about 'our homes', 'our country', and 'our free institutions'. Then the speeches — immortal voices, going to the ends of the earth! And loud over them the frank, harsh, defiant, ringing sentence of him who was least an orator but bravest among those who were all brave: 'I do believe in force — *Hang me for it!*'⁸

Then the petitions to the governor, the telegrams from the ends of the earth, the pleadings of their families; the swaying of the popular minds towards mercy; the petition tables in the streets; the crowds rushing to sign or to knock the tables over, as they swing towards this or that; the forbidding of all public speech on the subject by Mayor

Roach; the forbidding of the singing of the *Marseillaise* — wonderful song that it should stir into prohibition our free institutions; the slow passing of days and the tightening, the relentless, desperate tightening, of the coil of the Anaconda.

The commutation of the sentence of Fielden and Schwab to life imprisonment. The refusal of Parsons to appeal for commutation, though he knew it would be granted if he did, preferring to die with his comrades, rather than oblige Grinnell and 'do something to make the Anarchists hate them'.

November 10th! Lingg triumphs over the Law through a dynamite cartridge given him in a cigar by a friend. He smokes the cigar and dies with *Hoch die Anarchie!* on his lips. In his cell at night, Parsons sings *Annie Laurie*, listens to the builders putting up the gallows, and sleeps.

November 11th! A thick cordon of police around the jail; Mrs Parsons and Mrs Holmes, with the little Lulu and Albert Parsons, going from one to the other for permission for the promised last interview. Hustled on till at last arrested and thrown in prison, even the little children's bodies stripped naked in the terrorized search for dynamite. And so, with wife and children lying in cells, the condemned man goes to the gallows and never knows.

Waldheim! And the last act of the sowing is completed. Under the raw autumnal sky, men with bare heads are baptized with the solemnity of that faith which already seems springing from the yet unclosed tomb.

And the years pass. The cemetery authorities forbid 11 November processions to the tomb. They cannot forbid the processions of thoughts and acts which go out from it. As the development of the struggle in which they died so early goes on, more and more clearly sound their prophecies, more and more clearly do we recognise that their work is our work, that one Vengeance is the mother of many, that the crimes of States are accumulating, and from the Chicago gallows to the Barcelona torture-room there is one logical alliance of the powers that starve men, and that from the corners of the earth to its centres there is growing the opposing solidarity of the starved.

We watch for the morning of the End, and the light grows over Waldheim!

Greater love hath no man known than this, that he give up his life for his friend.

We are they to whom was given that utterest of love — we, into whose ears there came a crying through the wilderness of poverty and shame and pain, a wind through the desert from the Land of Promise; voices that said: 'It is not right that you should hunger, it is not just that you should be denied one of the glories of this earth. The world is wide: it is not reason that you should bury yourselves in a narrow den and see the earth from behind a cave mouth, while a bird that you could grasp in your hand, so, is free to cross the continent and pick its food where it lists. It is not fairness that the thing you have made should be taken from you by the hand that did not make it, and you be left with nothing but the smut and smell and memory of the torture of its making. It is insane that men should rot for want of things and things for want of men; insane that millions of creatures should huddle together till they choke while millions of acres of land lie desolate; insane that one should pour down his throat the labor of hundreds in a single night, and those hundreds always near the gateway of famine. It is criminal to believe that the mass of us are to be dumb animals, with nothing before us all our lives but eating, sleeping and toiling at the best, with all the light and loveliness of nature and of art an unknown realm of delight to us to which we may look only as the outcast at Eden. It is stupid to allege, still more stupid to believe, that you who are able to do all the hard things of this world, to burrow and dig and hammer and build, to be cramped and choked and beaten and killed for others, are not able to win all for yourselves.

'You are not helpless if you do not will to be, you workers who labor and do not share; you need not be the ever-tricked dupes of politicians, who promise what it is not in their power to perform, and perform what their buyers order them to; you have only to learn your own power to help yourselves, only to learn the solidarity of the interests of all those who work, only to learn to trust yourselves to take your rights, by no indirection, through no intermediary, but openly on the spot where they are denied from the one who denies them — and having taken, keep. The wealth and the love and the beauty of this earth are yours, when you are ready to take them; you

are no beggars at your brothers' table: children of one plenteous board, there is enough for all and none need want.

'Do they tell you to look to the kingdom of God? We tell you to look to the kingdom of this world; for, verily, men have looked long enough to *post mortem* justice, and thereby only supported another injustice, the trade in salvation, and buying and selling of heaven. They tell you there have always been rich and poor, and that what has always been always must be. It is not true that there have always been rich and poor; neither is it true that what has always been must always be. Men and the societies of men are creatures of their conditions, responsive to the pressure upon them from without, like all other things, and not only liable to change but bound to change. Every age finds its own adjustment. There have been times and places wherein all men were poor, as we should think them now, yet no injustice done, for all shared alike. There have been whole races of men with indefinite history behind them, who never knew mine and thine. They have passed away, people and system together, with the method of making a living. And Property, with all its varying forms of attendant slavery, has come into existence in response to the irresistible demand for a change to suit new methods of production — and as it had to come so it will have to go. It is impossible it should continue; for under this plethora of products turned out by the newer methods, Property has lost its power to balance Man and the Thing. Shoved out by the tireless, flying steel hands, piled in great masses, products accumulate; the toiler at the base is flattened under the weight which Property makes it impossible to distribute. The mountain of riches crushes its creator; men and things alike waste. It *cannot* go on. The dead weight cannot forever press down the living energy: in the end distribution must come. Out from its burrow comes writhing a distorted, mangled, bruised, and bleeding figure — misshapen, ugly, black, covered with hell-light: suffocated, gasping, it struggles on to its feet at last, wipes the blood and sweat out of its eyes, gives a wild stare at this mountain of gold and glass and glitter it has made, catches a brief vision of the dwellers on the mountain, and with a mad cry leaps upon the thing to destroy it. He is a giant still: has he not, down there in the underground, been through the blows that temper and fires that try? Maimed and lamed,

there is brawn in him yet; seared and numbed he can yet feel for a white throat. The hand that hammered the bolts has a wild grasp in it still, that lays hold and wrenches apart more desperately than it put together. The mountain is levelled, and — *he begins again.*

'*He is the Revolution, and he is a fool.* For he will need to make and destroy, make and destroy, until he destroys the institution which makes accumulation possible. He! Why 'he'? You, working people, you are that fool. You are he who scoops the sea and dies in the desert for a cup of water. You are he who piles that mountain of wealth, and finds nothing better to do with it when it crushes him thereafter than to set fire to it.

'But listen, Fool, there is something better for you. This thing, Property, is not the final word of the human intellect with regard to the distribution of wealth. Beyond the smoke-edge of this frightful battle of Man and Machine, what lies? The ideal of Communism: perpetual freedom of access to natural sources of wealth, never to be denied by Man to his brother Man. Perpetual claim on the common wealth of the ages, never to be denied to the living by the dead. Perpetual claim upon the satisfactions of all common needs of the human body, never to be denied to the living *by the living*. Beyond the smoke wreath of the battle, what lies? Days of labor that are sweet, men and women doing the work that nature calls them to, that in which they delight — laboring at a *chosen* service, not one into which they have been forced; working and resting at reasonable hours, sleeping when the earth sleeps, not driven out into the darkness, like an unloved child, to turn night into day, and cripple the overdriven body by unnatural hours of pleasure stolen from sleep. Chosen toil, room, recreation, sleep — these, poor outcast animal, Man, are to be yours! Beyond the smoke-rim of the battle, what lies? The death of cities, the people resurgent upon the land, the desert blossoming into homes, the air and light of nature once more sending their strength through nerve and vein, and with it the lost power to feel the joy of existence, the realization that one is something more than flesh to feed and sleep — a creature of colors and sounds and lights, with as keen an ear for a bird's song, as ready an eye for a tint of cloud, as any woodsman in the older days; a creature with as fine a taste for pictures and books and statuary and music, ay, and with a

hand to execute them too, as any man who lives today upon your sweat, buys his library with your dribbled blood, and condenses the flesh that has vanished from your bones into the marble which adorns his alcoves.

'Beyond the smoke-haze of the battle, what lies? Life, life! Not *existence* — life, that has been denied to you, life that has ever been reserved to your masters, the broad world and all its pleasant places, and all its pleasant things.'

This was the cry that came to us, and we listened and heard. We followed the crying voices through these wildernesses of brick and stone; for it was a fair hope, and who would not wish to dream it true? None but the masters, and they were afraid; they clamored for suppression of the voices; 'Let not these work-cattle of ours get this vision of Man,' they said, 'else they will cease to be beasts, and we . . . ?'

And that demand for suppression produced the Haymarket bomb. Let it be said here and now, in the city of the event, in the teeth of those that compassed the death of five men whose sin was to have prophesied a nobler life, to be born even through blood and pain after the manner of all birth, that the time has gone past when one should stand and say, as has been said in the past, that 'the Haymarket bomb was a police plot'. The police never plotted anything half so just! The Haymarket bomb was the defence of a man who stood upon the constitutional declaration that the right of free speech, and the right of the people peaceably to assemble, shall not be abridged. Worker or non-worker, Anarchist or Archist, that man acted as an American constitutionalist; and if ever in this world an act of violence was just, that bomb was just. Every policeman wounded by that bomb was the victim of the treasonable order of Inspector Bonfield. At his door, and the door of the masters he served, lies the blood of Mathias Degan and his fellows⁹.

But did they care, they who had been waiting their opportunity, whose was the act? Did they care for the dead policemen, whose names they used to hang their black, lying charge upon? Not they. They cared no more for the 'hounds of the law', thus sacrificing to a violation of law, than they cared for the undiscovered hand that threw the bomb. They cared only for the crying voices that

threatened them with the New Time. They set themselves to do those men to death, and they did it. What need to repeat here the history of that black crime called 'The Trial of the Chicago Anarchists'? Is it not fresh in all our minds how the 'jury of peers' was chosen from the ruling class — not one single 'peer' of the accused among them all? Has not the highest official authority in the State of Illinois told with legal dispassion how every one of these jurymen admitted before he began that he was prejudiced¹⁰, and how each was so tampered with and twisted by the ruling judge that the lie 'I think I can be fair' was wrung out of their mouths? Do we not remember how Grinnell boasted to Mr Favor that he had packed the jury to hang? Are not that dead wretch's words yet in our ears, saying 'Anarchy is on trial'? Was it not openly avowed to all the world that here, in this country, founded as the asylum of opinions, men were being sentenced to death for their opinions? Have we not today admission coming in from every quarter, such as this from the November number of the *Century Magazine*:

As to miscarriages of justice have there been no cases where groups of men among our most disinterested citizens, moved by misinformation or touched by pride or influenced by false notions of 'honor' have stood up on the side of falsehood and worked *sad* injustice to men of conscience who spoke the truth and feared *not*? At least one such *cause celebre* has not quite passed out of the memory of the living.

'Sad injustice to men of conscience'! This bit of justice comes a little late for the men who are dead. Yet it is an admission.

Of all the political trials that ever outraged the forms even of legal justice to say nothing of the spirit, it has remained to republics to give the worst. If the Czar of Russia wishes an example of despotism, let him look to America. Here it is that we shoot men for marching on the highway and hang them for preaching ideas.

Yes, it is all fresh in our memories — fresh as that bitter November day twelve years ago when Parsons, Fischer, Engel, Spies waited within for the signal of doom, while without a helpless mother and wife plead for the keeping of a broken promise to the heartless cordon of the 'law' around the sullen hole of death; plead for the last clasp of the hand that in an hour could clasp no more, the last

look from the eyes that would die and never know whose promise it was that had been broken; fresh as the memory of the singing voice that went up in the night and gloom calling sweetly, 'she's a' the world to me'; fresh as the memory of the lifted hand and the voice repeating,

This hand is as steady
As when, in the old days,
It plucked the already
Ripe fruit from Life's tree;

fresh as the memory of the deathless words:

*The time will come when our silence will be more powerful than
the voices you strangle today.*

Long live Anarchy: this is the happiest moment of my life.

*Will I be allowed to speak, O men of America? Let me speak,
Sheriff Matson! Let the voice of the people be heard! O — ;¹¹*

fresh as the memory of the gallows and trap and the swinging, dying bodies; fresh as the memory of him, the beautiful one, the brave, defiant one who took his death not waiting for your hangman and from his poor mangled dying throat whispered hoarsely at the end, 'Long live Anarchy!'¹²

Fresh and fresh, and forever fresh, O rulers of the world, the memory of the deed you did that day! Green in our hearts as the holly at Yule — doubt not ye shall be remembered, doubt not ye shall be paid! With what measure ye mete unto others it shall be meted back unto you again. No item of the record shall escape. Shall we not recall the tricks that were done to turn the tide of sympathy which welled up, when terror and cowardice were abating, and decent human nature began to assert itself? Have we not before our eyes the picture of petition-tables overturned in the streets? In our ears the edict of Mayor Roach, 'No public discussion of the Anarchist case, no singing of the *Marseillaise*'? Do we not remember the four

'bombs' found in Lingg's cell conjured through the stone walls and deposited there by Anarchist magic! It is all remembered: we know you are our creditors still! Perhaps you would have interest: it is one of your institutions!

And what did you accomplish? You struck a welding blow that beat the hearts of the working people of the world together. You lifted out of the obscurity of the common man five names, and set them as beacons upon a hill. You sent the word Anarchy ringing through every workshop. You gave us a manifold crucifixion, and dignified what had been a speculative theory with the sacrificial cast of a religion. In the heart of this black slag heap of grime and crime you have made a sacred place, for in it you lopped off an arm from the Cross and gave us the Gallows.

And if it were given us to see tonight the thoughts of men made visible, we should behold the grave at Waldheim in the heart of a star whose rays shot inward from the uttermost earth. Ay, they are streaming over many waters, and out of strange lands where the English tongue is never spoken — they, the invisible phantoms that pass in the darkness, less of substance than the wind that floats the November leaf, but mightier than all the powers that ever mowed the human grass when governments went reaping! They are pouring in tonight, the intangible dreams that bind masses of men together in the bond of the ideal — a bond that ties tighter than all bonds of flesh; for it makes that one shall look into a stranger's eye and know him for his own; shall hear a word from the antipodes, and hold it for a brother's voice; shall ask no name nor station nor race nor country nor religion, but put himself beside his fellow-worker, needing no question since he knows that other labors and would be free. A surge of comradeship sweeping over the earth this night, the chant of rebellious voices singing the storm-song of the peoples, an earth-circle of reverberations from those lips that are dead — 'Long live Anarchy', rung out this hour from platforms in every great city in the United States, England, France, Australia; talked low in Italy and Spain and Germany; whispered in the cellars of Russia, the cells of Siberia! And murmured on the lonely islands where our prisoned comrades rot away, the words, 'Twelve years ago today they hanged our comrades in Chicago, and the debt is yet unpaid'.

Ay, it is growing, growing — your fear-word, our fire-word,
Anarchy.

Lean your ear to the wind and you will hear it, the never-dying,
never finished speech, denied, choked by you that shameless day.

A warmer sanguine glows on the world's communal flag, stamped
out, stamped *in*, by you — the blood of the Rose of Death.

Our martyred comrades

Delivered in Philadelphia, 17
November 1900. Published in *Free
Society* (San Francisco), 16 December
1900; reprinted (abridged) in *The
Firebrand* (Mount Juliet, Tenn.), 13
November 1909.

My heart is away at a grave tonight — a grave I see as I saw it once —
I think I shall always see it so — lying green and sweet in the October
light, that flung its clean unbartered gold so generously on leaf and
blade and stone; and all around in the soft wind the tremulous
flittings and murmurings, that made one feel not in a place of Death,
but in a place of Peace. I see again that speaking stone, that 'silence
that is more powerful than voice', the pedestal with its graving, the
warrior woman and the martyr dead; I feel the last strenuous agony
in the drawn limbs, the shakeless resolution in the warrior mother's
sad, stern eyes; beyond to the right I see my companion's figure, half
turned from me, his hand shading his eyes; and then across the
sunlight, between me and the stone, I see a woman with a little child
by the hand; I see them stop, and hear the pitying pathos in the
woman's voice as she says to my comrade softly in German:

'All under one stone?'

'All under one stone', he answers; and there is a low inarticulate
exclamation of pity, while the child stands with a shadow of awe on
its face. And then I hear the voices from beneath the sod, the voices
that Death sent crying on all the winds of the world, till all men shall
hear and know what they died for. Today it is said that they died
because they preached a gospel of destruction and of hate. Oh, they
died because they loved too much! Because they could not see the
pain, the madness, the blind struggles of ignorance, and be silent,
considering themselves. What did it matter to them that this poor sad
animal Man is apt to turn in his rage and tear the one who would help
him? Did they not know it? Did they not know that the spirit of
authority, stamped into the human soul by unknown thousands of
years, would seek its vengeance? But what did it matter? They had
their message to deliver, their hope to give, the fulness of their being
to express. What matter, if it led them down into the storm and
night?

And what was their message? Why, that real justice and real
liberty might come on earth; that it was all false, all unnecessary, this
wild waste of human life, of bone and sinew and brain and heart, this
turning of people into human rags, ghosts, piteous caricatures of the
creatures they had it in them to be, on the day that they were born;
that what is called 'economy', the massing up of things, is in reality

the most frightful spending — the sacrifice of the maker to the made — the loss of all the finer and nobler instincts in the gain of one revolting attribute, the power to count and calculate. Out of the deep sense of giant wrong done to themselves and their fellows, out of their abiding faith that it needs only to see where the wrong lies, only to realize what possible change might come, and the workers must rise in mass and restore themselves with a strong hand to their right, they cried out. Theirs was a burning message, red at the heart, and leaping in flame from lips that did not stop to pick and choose their words. They preached in the common highway, and gathered to themselves all who willed to listen. They preached in the common language; for they were workingmen, who did not study how to turn periods, but wished to be understood. They said what they meant, and all they meant; and that, perhaps, was unwisdom; but if so, it is the common mistake of all the great fervid souls that have ever scorched their way through the callous rind of Man, and touched the torpid heart within, till it beat drum-music.

They believed that Lincoln and Grant were right, when they predicted further uprisings of the people, wild convulsions, in the effort to reestablish some equilibrium in possessions. They were revolutionists, who believed that the revolution could not be wrought out peacefully, because of the historic tendency in the possessors to use force, whenever their privileges are threatened. They said so: they advised their fellows to prepare for these things.

In this, they may have been mistaken. It may be that the diffusion of ideas and of the spirit of freedom may take such hold upon the general mind, as will give us what we never yet have seen, a great social change without violence or destruction. Let us hope so. But hope cannot blind us to the fact that so far their prophecies have been fulfilled; and that not for any great change, but for a meager bettering of conditions within the existing system, men are shot upon the roads; and their corpses cry up from the sod for justice, receiving none. What like, then, is it to be when they ask for all that which nothing but their own ignorance keeps them from demanding? When they ask for the restoration and the perpetual indivisibility of the earth and the great stores within her bosom? When they ask for the free use of that which the genius of Man, not of men, has made?

When they reclaim their right to the best in the world, not to the meanest and poorest? When they ask for room, and plenty of room, each and every one — no meagre little yard fenced in with walls, but acres — acres without fences where they may watch things grow and blossom, and feel again the joy of life and the sweet kinship with all living things — learn the forgotten lore of the savage who knew all the colors of the leaves, and the shapes of them, and the way they turned to the sun, and the peculiar instrument that played in the throat of every bird, and the promises of weather that boded in the sky, and saw every night a full clear unbroken view of the great arch with all its stars, not a blue patch cut into angles with roofs, fouled with smoke, seen out of the cellar of existence? When the Man with the Hoe shall look up from the sod, and beholding the glory that is around him, shall see in the clod what he has not seen before — beauties and possibilities endless, where before was only a heavy dull thing, that resisted his hoe, but must be turned for its master's sake — nay, when he shall feel in himself, till now the cold, dull, heavy human clod, something stirring towards birth, towards growth, towards light and liberty? When the nature that has been repressed in him, chilled, frosted, bound in abeyance, shall struggle into gleams in those sad eyes, and soften the brute jaw, and push out the backward slanting brow? When he shall feel tumultuous throbbings, beating, beating ineffectually but powerfully within him — the desire to seize something indistinct, which shines, palely luminous in his old darkness — the vision of a larger fuller life, the yearning for selfhood, self-expression, *being* that of which he dreams?

Oh, no longer to echo the thoughts of others — to bring forth a note of one's own! No longer to move at the word of others — to move or be still at one's own desire!

What will it be, when the digger in the depths, down in the blackness and the foulness, pictures to himself the life of light, and takes it boldly? When the toiler amid the machineries, in the clang and clash and roar, demands for his ears the sounds which mellow, the silence which stills?

If for this paltry thing, an hour less of labor, a small wage-increase, men are shot upon the road, what will the answer be when they demand all this?

We do not know. But all this, not one jot or tittle less than this, Anarchism means. It means awakening of soul and body, brain and heart; and good-bye forever to the slave's content with small concessions. Perhaps when the rich and the rulers realize this, when they understand that the non-possessors have wakened to their own powers and possibilities, they will respect those whom they despise so now, whose lives they hold so cheap; for respect is generally given to him who respects himself, and contempt to him who crawls; perhaps when they know that ours is a universal gospel, having its word for them, as well as for the poor, offering them the same as the others — full life, liberty, better ideals and purposes, they too may accept it and voluntarily join with us in working out the problem of society in freedom. But with them or without them, hand-in-hand, or hand against hand, through life or through death, humanity in mass moves towards the Land of Freedom.

And, to borrow the imagery of Olive Schreiner, many are they who go down to the dark river that lies between — 'and are swept away', and are drowned; 'their bodies do not even build the bridge'. And when at last the future men and women shall pass over 'the bridge built with bodies', it will be the unremembered dead, falling today on every hand, in field and factory and mine, whose corpses shall be the piers whereon it rests. I speak of the daily sufferers, the helpless victims of capitalism and the State, who die and know not why they die.

But these, our comrades, who were self-conscious, reasoning, who went with clear eyes to the gallows and died triumphantly as ever any martyr did of old — they of whom even their bitterest enemies had to say 'they died like brave men', they will be known and remembered long, even in the Land of Freedom. We shall feel their living heart-beats, as we step upon this swaying bridge; we shall hear their death words crying till the fields of life are won; and up along the banks of the farther shore, there comes a drifting of unborn voices singing, 'Blessed are the dead who died for freedom'.

Shall I say over again what we have said every year, these thirteen years — that the specific act with which they were charged (conspiracy with the thrower of the Haymarket bomb) was never remotely proven? Shall I repeat that the trial was unfair, the jury

prejudiced, the judge committed to conviction, the prosecutor openly bragging they had packed the jury to hang? Governor Altgeld has saved me the trouble of all this. Whoever will dispassionately read his 'Reasons for Pardoning Fielden, Neebe, and Schwab', will know it beyond a doubt; they are taken from the court testimony itself — you can ask nothing more.

They were tried and hanged for preaching Anarchism; the bomb-thrower was never known, probably never will be. Whoever it was, he threw it as an act of resistance to the unconstitutional proceeding of the police in breaking up a peaceable meeting. The aggression began with the guardians of law and order, who fired into the crowd, and drew forth a bomb as an answer to their bullets. Right or wrong, it had nothing to do with the right to advocate opinions; but it served as the lever to move the machinery of the law against our comrades.

It is all false that the hanging was done because of their preaching violence; it is not violence the ruling classes object to; for they themselves rule by violence, and take with the strong hand at every door. It is the social change they fear, the equalization of men. Tyranny has often mistaken its means; and the rulers of Illinois repeated history. What they would have destroyed, they multiplied; where they would have cursed, they blessed. And many a one will say with me tonight, in answer to the question, 'What made you an Anarchist?' 'The hanging in Chicago'.

Well, they are gone; and we who are here tonight may not have long to stay; for we are moving down past the middle line; and those who live 'the strenuous life' rarely live to be old. But few or many our years, we shall spend them working for that which to us is the only thing worth working for — the free life.

To the fervent hopes and efforts of the younger generations, we commit the memories of thirteen years ago, praying them never to forget the price paid by the dead nor the anguish of some yet living; never to forget that the way to honor a sacrifice is to follow up the spirit of it; and that if to you too has come the Vision of Man made one — without countries, nations, divisions, classes, without authorities priestly or civil, with the peace that is real, the equality which means free self-expression, be bold to bear witness to it;

picture it; work for it; live for it if you can; die for it if you must. Remember the dungeon and the gallows tonight, and the flesh, warm like yours, that is dust, or corroding in prison cells — and be not silent under pain of condemnation of your own soul, that last judge, to whom all courts are as nothing, to whom you can tell no lies, and who will be with you to the edge of doom. True to your ideal, you may at the end speak to scoffer and persecutor the beautiful lines quoted by our beloved Parsons, near the last:

I am not dead — I am not dead,
I live a life intense, divine!
Yours be the days forever fled,
But all the morrows shall be mine.











The eleventh of November 1887

Delivered in Chicago, 11 November 1901. Published in *Free Society* (Chicago), 24 November 1901; reprinted in *Selected Works*, pp. 164-72; *Why?* (Tacoma, Wash.), November 1913; *Free Society* (New York), October-November 1921

Let me begin my address with a confession. I make it sorrowfully and with self-disgust; but in the presence of great sacrifice we learn humility, and if my comrades could give their lives for their belief, why, let me give my pride. Yet I would not give it, for personal utterance is of trifling importance, were it not that I think at this particular season it will encourage those of our sympathizers whom the recent outburst of savagery may have disheartened,¹³ and perhaps lead some who are standing where I once stood to do as I did later.

This is my confession: Fifteen years ago last May when the echoes of the Haymarket bomb rolled through the little Michigan village where I then lived, I, like the rest of the credulous and brutal, read one lying newspaper headline, 'Anarchists throw a bomb in a crowd in the Haymarket in Chicago', and immediately cried out, 'They ought to be hanged'. This, though I had never believed in capital punishment for ordinary criminals. For that ignorant, outrageous, blood-thirsty sentence I shall never forgive myself, though I know the dead men would have forgiven me, though I know those who loved them forgive me. But my own voice, as it sounded that night, will sound so in my ears till I die — a bitter reproach and shame. What had I done? Credited the first wild rumor of an event of which I knew nothing, and, in my mind, sent men to the gallows without asking one word of defence! In one wild, unbalanced moment threw away the sympathies of a lifetime, and became an executioner at heart. And what I did that night millions did, and what I said millions said. I have only one word of extenuation for myself and all those people — ignorance. I did not know what Anarchism was. I had never seen it used save in histories, and there it was always synonymous with social confusion and murder. I believed the newspapers. I thought those men had thrown that bomb, unprovoked, into a mass of men and women, from a wicked delight in killing. And so thought all those millions of others. But out of those millions there were some few thousand — I am glad I was one of them — who did not let the matter rest there.

I know not what resurrection of human decency first stirred within me after that — whether it was an intellectual suspicion that maybe I did not know all the truth of the case and could not believe

the newspapers, or whether it was the old strong undercurrent of sympathy which often prompts the heart to go out to the accused, without a reason; but this I do know, that though I was no Anarchist at the time of the execution, it was long and long before that, that I came to the conclusion that the accusation was false, the trial a farce, that there was no warrant either in justice or in law for their conviction; and that the hanging, if hanging there should be, would be the act of a society composed of people who had said what I said on the first night, and who had kept their eyes and ears fast shut ever since, determined to see nothing and to know nothing but rage and vengeance. Till the very end I hoped that mercy might intervene, though justice did not; and from the hour I knew neither would nor ever could again, I distrusted law and lawyers, judges and governors alike. And my whole being cried out to know what it was these men had stood for, and why they were hanged, seeing it was not proven they knew anything about the throwing of the bomb.

Little by little, here and there, I came to know that what they had stood for was a very high and noble ideal of human life, and what they were hanged for was preaching it to the common people — the common people who were as ready to hang them, in their ignorance, as the court and the prosecutor were in their malice! Little by little I came to know that these were men who had a clearer vision of human right than most of their fellows; and who, being moved by deep social sympathies, wished to share their vision with their fellows, and so proclaimed it in the market-place. Little by little I realized that the misery, the pathetic submission, the awful degradation of the workers, which from the time I was old enough to begin to think had borne heavily upon my heart (as they must bear upon all who have hearts to feel at all), had smitten theirs more deeply still — so deeply that they knew no rest save in seeking a way out — and that was more than I had ever had the sense to conceive. For me there had never been a hope there should be no more rich and poor; but a vague idea that there might not be so rich and so poor, if the workingmen by combining could exact a little better wages, and make their hours a little shorter. It was the message of these men (and their death swept that message far out into ears that would never have heard their living voices) that all such little dreams

are folly. That not in demanding little, not in striking for an hour less, not in mountain labor to bring forth mice, can any lasting alleviation come; but in demanding much — all — in a bold self-assertion of the worker to toil any hours he finds sufficient, not that another finds for him — here is where the way out lies. That message, and the message of others, whose works, associated with theirs, their death drew to my notice, took me up, as it were, upon a mighty hill, wherefrom I saw the roofs of the workshops of the little world. I saw the machines, the things that men had made to ease their burden, the wonderful things, the iron genii, I saw them set their iron teeth in the living flesh of the men who made them; I saw the maimed and crippled stumps of men go limping away into the night that engulfs the poor, perhaps to be thrown up in the flotsam and jetsam of beggary for a time, perhaps to suicide in some dim corner where the black surge throws its slime.

I saw the rose fire of the furnace shining on the blanched face of the man who tended it, and knew surely as I knew anything in life, that never would a free man feed his blood to the fire like that.

I saw swarthy bodies, all mangled and crushed, borne from the mouths of the mines to be stowed away in a grave hardly less narrow and dark than that in which the living form had crouched ten, twelve, fourteen hours a day; and I knew that in order that I might be warm — I, and you, and those others who never do any dirty work — those men had slaved away in those black graves, and been crushed to death at last.

I saw beside city streets great heaps of horrible colored earth, and down at the bottom of the trench from which it was thrown, so far down that nothing else was visible, bright gleaming eyes, like a wild animal's hunted into its hole. And I knew that free men never chose to labor there, with pick and shovel in that foul, sewage-soaked earth, in that narrow trench, in that deadly sewer gas ten, eight, even six hours a day. Only slaves would do it.

I saw deep down in the hull of the ocean liner the men who shoveled the coal — burned and seared like paper before the grate; and I knew that 'the record' of the beautiful monster, and the pleasure of the ladies who laughed on the deck, were paid for with these withered bodies and souls.

I saw the scavenger carts go up and down, drawn by sad brutes driven by sadder ones; for never a man, a man in full possession of his selfhood, would freely choose to spend all his days in the nauseating stench that forces him to swill alcohol to neutralize it.

And I saw in the lead works how men were poisoned; and in the sugar refineries how they went insane; and in the factories how they lost their decency; and in the stores how they learned to lie; and I knew it was slavery made them do all this. I knew the Anarchists were right — the whole thing must be changed, the whole thing was wrong — the whole system of production and distribution, the whole ideal of life.

And I questioned the government then; they had taught me to question it. What have you done — you the keepers of the Declaration and the Constitution — what have you done about all this? What have you done to preserve the conditions of freedom to the people?

Lied, deceived, fooled, tricked, bought and sold and got gain! You have sold away the land, that you had no right to sell. You have murdered the aboriginal people, that you might seize the land in the name of the white race, and then steal it away from them again, to be again sold by a second and a third robber. And that buying and selling of the land has driven the people off the healthy earth and away from the clean air into these rot-heaps of humanity called cities, where every filthy thing is done, and filthy labor breeds filthy bodies and filthy souls. Our boys are decayed with vice before they come to manhood; our girls — ah, well might John Harvey write:

Another begetteth a daughter white and gold,
She looks into the meadow land water, and the world
Knows her no more; they have sought her field and fold
But the City, the City hath bought her,
It hath sold
Her piecemeal, to students, rats, and reek of the graveyard mold.

You have done this thing, gentlemen who engineer the government; and not only have you caused this ruin to come upon others; you yourselves are rotten with this debauchery. You exist for

the purpose of granting privileges to whoever can pay most for you, and so limiting the freedom of men to employ themselves that they must sell themselves into this frightful slavery or become tramps, beggars, thieves, prostitutes, and murderers. And when you have done all this, what then do you do to them, these creatures of your own making? You, who have set them the example in every villainy? Do you then relent, and remembering the words of the great religious teacher to whom most of you offer lip service on the officially religious day, do you go to these poor, broken, wretched creatures and love them? Love them and help them, to teach them to be better? No: you build prisons high and strong, and there you beat, and starve, and hang, finding by the working of your system human beings so unutterably degraded that they are willing to kill whomsoever they are told to kill at so much monthly salary.

This is what the government is, has always been, the creator and defender of privilege; the organization of oppression and revenge. To hope that it can ever become anything else is the vainest of delusions. They tell you that Anarchy, the dream of social order without government, is a wild fancy. The wildest dream that ever entered the heart of man is the dream that mankind can ever help itself through an appeal to law, or to come to any order that will not result in slavery wherein there is any excuse for government.

It was for telling the people this that these five men were killed. For telling the people that the only way to get out of their misery was first to learn what their rights upon this earth were — freedom to use the land and all within it and all the tools of production — and then to stand together and take them, themselves, and not to appeal to the jugglers of the law. Abolish the law — that is abolish privilege — and crime will abolish itself.

They will tell you that these men were hanged for advocating force. What! These creatures who drill men in the science of killing, who put guns and clubs in hands they train to shoot and strike, who hail with delight the latest inventions in explosives, who exult in the machine that can kill the most with the least expenditure of energy, who declare a war of extermination upon people who do not want their civilization, who ravish, and burn, and garrote, and guillotine, and hang, and electrocute, they have the impertinence to talk about

the unrighteousness of force! True, these men did advocate the right to resist invasion by force. You will find scarcely one in a thousand who does not believe in that right. The one will be either a real Christian or a non-resistant Anarchist. It will not be a believer in the State. No, no; it was not for advocating forcible resistance on principle, but for advocating forcible resistance to their tyrannies, and for advocating a society which would forever make an end of riches and poverty, of governors and governed.

The spirit of revenge, which is always stupid, accomplished its brutal act. Had it lifted its eyes from its work, it might have seen in the background of the scaffold that bleak November morning the dawn-light of Anarchy whiten across the world.

So it came first — a gleam of hope to the proletaire, a summons to rise and shake off his material bondage. But steadily, steadily the light has grown, as year by year the scientist, the literary genius, the artist, and the moral teacher, have brought to it the tribute of their best work, their unpaid work, the work they did for love. Today it means not only material emancipation, too; it comes as the summing up of all those lines of thought and action which for three hundred years have been making towards freedom; it means fulness of being, the free life.

And I saw it boldly, notwithstanding the recent outburst of condemnation, notwithstanding the cry of lynch, burn, shoot, imprison, deport, and the Scarlet Letter A to be branded low down upon the forehead, and the latest excuse for that fond esthetic decoration 'the button', that for two thousand years no idea has so stirred the world as this — none which had such living power to break down the barriers of race and degree, to attract prince and proletaire, poet and mechanic, Quaker and Revolutionist. No other ideal but the free life is strong enough to touch the man whose infinite pity and understanding goes alike to the hypocrite priest and the victim of Siberian whips; the loving rebel who stepped from his title and his wealth to labor with all the laboring earth; the sweet strong singer who sang *No Master, high or low*; the lover who does not measure his love nor reckon on return; the self-centered one who 'will not rule, but also will not ruled be'; the philosopher who chanted the Over-man; the devoted woman of the people;¹⁴ ay, and these too —

these rebellious flashes from the vast cloud-hung ominous obscurity of the anonymous, these souls whom governmental and capitalistic brutality has whipped and goaded and stung to blind rage and bitterness, these mad young lions of revolt, these Winkelrieds who offer their hearts to the spears.



Voltairine de Cleyre
30

Memorial address

Delivered in Chicago, 10 November 1906. Published in *The Demonstrator* (Home Colony, Wash.), 5 December 1906.

Blessed are they who die at the floodtide of hope, in the strength of the youth of the spirit, they whose memory among men was fixed at the hour when life pulsed high and full and the task they had set themselves to do seemed worth the doing.

To be stricken at the moment when being is richest, and so to remain forever an image of unconquerable youth and faith through all man's future, yes, that was worth the bitter waters of martyrdom; and so he knew and felt who, facing his agony, called through the door of doom, 'This is the happiest moment of my life!'¹⁵

To have known but two things, work and poverty; not to have known two things, rest or ease; and still through all one's darkness to have searched and found at last the light of liberty — the light of a living faith in living possibilities; to have preached that faith and been done to death for it, and still to have gone to the gallows firm and unshaken, and with one's last voice still to proclaim that hope for other men — that was to reconquer youth, and cease at the moment of greatest faith and greatest fortitude. And so died he, whose last words were 'Long live Anarchy!'¹⁶

To have felt oneself a prophet of the great storm¹⁷, to know that the price of one's cry is a scaffold, but that after the awful moment of strangulation is past, one's bones shall preach from under one's burial-stone more powerfully than one's living tongue; that so one's work remains active and persistent till the history of oppression shall have faded from the human mind, as he did surely know who said, 'The time will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today' — yes, those hours of exaltation were worth years of ordinary life.

To have stood at the summit of moral greatness and renounced the possibility of life and freedom in the end, choosing to take no iota less than one's whole right, and rather than that to give all; to have loved the common people unto the last, and died with a dear, loving, tender appeal to them upon one's lips, leaving those words as the pulse of one's heart forever — that was to die a supreme death; and so died he whose last breath said: 'Let the voice of the people be heard!'

Sculptured by death they stand upon their gallows pedestal, and behind them the mutilated face of that heroic boy still whispering

with his torn and shapeless lips, 'Hoch die Anarchie!'

And whenever a blaze from the storm they foretold streaks across the world, it reveals the Chicago gibbet, its prophets standing thereon, just as they stood nineteen years ago, unshaken and unaltered.

Had the vindictive terror of the bourgeoisie been satisfied with a smaller sacrifice, who knows? Our comrades might have grown weary and worldly wise like other men, and in a little while their words and their deeds been forgotten. But nothing but death sufficed, and they who smote out the fire of life at the full heat smote only to scatter; live sparks flew in the wind and kindled everywhere; and, though there is nothing but ashes in the five-fold grave, there are flaming memories from world's end to world's end tonight.

In the light of those memories we meet 'lest we forget,' and lest you forget who did this thing. You would be glad to forget, and believe that Anarchy was strangled nineteen years ago, and 'the rats driven to their holes.' But long ago you learned that Anarchy was not strangled, nor the movement of the working people; and sometimes you fancy you hear the rats gnawing. And in your terror you want to strangle again; for not yet have you learned the lesson that 'men die but principles live.'¹⁸ This night they sit in an Idaho jail, three men, accused for the same reasons and by the same methods as those used in Chicago.

And if in the end Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone¹⁹ go free, it will not be because you have any intent to do justice, but because your artifices will have failed.

For organizing war upon your system of slavery these men are obnoxious to you; and you seize upon an anonymous act of violence to accuse them of conspiracy! It is ever the coward's word; and small wonder you impute it to others, in view of the miserable lies and tortures you resort to, to extort confessions of conspiracy from weaklings whom your cruelty drives mad. Well, this time you have overshot the mark. But you will not learn by it. So long as teachers rise up to teach the reconstruction of society without you, so long you will do them to death, imprison, persecute somehow, until the working people in mass declare an end of your privileges.

Until then you will continue to pass all manner of stupid and hysterical laws, such as the Illinois conspiracy law, and the New York criminal anarchy law, under which at present eleven persons, most of them under twenty years of age, are now indicted, for the crime of having attended an Anarchist meeting, and who, such is the elasticity of this law which leaves the definition of the offense to the judge's discrimination, are liable to be sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, not for having said anything, but for having heard someone say something.

But though you do all this, in the end the reckoning will be paid.

You will burn it in, and brand it deep into the sluggard brains of the people at last, that their brothers are to be hunted down and killed for trying to liberate them. You will have taught them the lesson of cruelty; and they will show you that they have learned it.

'For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be meted back unto you again, and heaping full.'

It is very still at Waldheim. So still you may hear the falling leaf. And nothing moves under the ground. But in the silence you can feel the gathering of the judgment.



THE EXECUTION.

November eleventh,
twenty years ago

Delivered in New York, 11 November
1907. Published in *Mother Earth*
(New York), November 1907.

A peaceable meeting of protest against a murderous attack of the police on strikers, a meeting already half dispersed because of an approaching storm; an unprovoked attack by two hundred police upon the remnant of the meeting; a sullen glow in the air, a dull and angry roar, wounded and dying police and citizens, terror and consternation, bewildered faces and flying feet, a panic-stricken city full of the savagery of fright! So passed the 4th of May, 1886, into history.

A wild and insane spirit of revenge, a determination to hang somebody, as many as possible, a crystallization of that determination in a conspiracy theory which would drag in those whom the police and the partisans of Old Order most dreaded, a vicious resolution to use every method, every trick no matter how shameful, to bring eight men to the gallows; to deceive and inflame the public mind, to twist the law, to admit prejudiced jurors, to suborn perjury, to rule out every fair-minded person from a chance of influencing the trial in favor of the accused, to convict at all costs and to hang, that was the task the social powers set themselves; and they fulfilled it; and with the hanging of their victims the curtain went down upon the tragedy, and the 11th of November passed into history.

There was a comedy played afterwards — a comedy in which the victimizers became the victims, and paid over thousands of good round dollars to their servants, the police, for protecting them from conspiracies which were hatched in the police stations. The comedy lasted about three years, and was very funny — to the policemen who divided the spoils. It, however, has *not* passed into history; it was thought better to preserve the memory of it by oral tradition.

The tragedy however is written; it is in the school histories of the country, and every child who studies the administrations of the presidents learns about it; and this is what he learns: that in the year 1886 there were many strikes and labor troubles; that there was a small but dangerous class of people in Chicago, called Anarchists; that at one of their meetings a bomb was thrown, killing a number of policemen, and several of the Anarchist leaders were convicted of conspiring to throw it, and hanged.

All up and down the land millions of school children learn that paragraph, with such additional embellishments as their teachers see fit to provide, and the half-truth and altogether lie of it, goes on killing the souls of the murdered men as once the scaffold killed their bodies. Only — long ago the preachers told us — *souls cannot be killed*; and in spite of all the malice and the injustice and the ignorance and stupidity that have heaped and are heaping outrage on their memory, the conquering voices of the dead men rise, and the conquering spirit that animated them in those days of bitter doom, the spirit of love and faith in human possibility triumphing over all oppression and suppression, slowly makes its way.

Twenty years have died upon their graves since they died on the gallows; and venom and spite and fear, most venomous of all, have had their say. Yet other voices sometimes have spoken; great lawyers have said it was a shame; and General Trumbull tried the judgment, after Gary had thought it necessary to defend it;²⁰ and John P. Altgeld said and did a thing or two. And now, after twenty years, a man of different stamp has spoken, and a great conservative magazine has published his say. *Appleton's Magazine* for October contains an article entitled 'The Haymarket and Afterwards,' by Chas. Edward Russell, a newspaper reporter for the *NY World* in 1887; and though there is much misinformation therein (when did a newspaper scribe ever neglect to furnish misinformation), the general intent is plainly to do justice to the memory of the murdered men. I do not know whether this Mr. Russell tried to do anything to save them while they were yet alive; I have never heard that in all these twenty years he tried to tell the world the truths he has told here. But it is something that at last he has spoken and said that the conspiracy charge was conceived in a spirit of revengeful fury; that the working out of it was intrusted to a man afflicted with delusions, who arrested every person that spoke defective English as a direful conspirator, and extracted confessions to suit his purposes; that the methods of the trial were 'unusual' (surely Mr. Russell did not choose a harsh word there); that, 'so far as the record goes, the bomb might have fallen by accident, or been hurled by a lunatic, or by somebody that never heard of the accused men.'

Very grateful I am to Mr. Russell for his tribute to the beauty and

magnanimity of Albert Parson's character. Very glad I am that he has told the readers of *Appleton's* how till the end, till the very last, Parsons could have saved his life had he complied with the formality of the law and signed the petition to Gov. Oglesby, but that he would not do so, because he would not desert those others whose lives could not be saved.

What he does not add is this: that Fischer and Engel were willing to sign the petition if he agreed to it; not that they hoped for themselves, but hoped for him; but he, knowing they could not be saved, said, 'Then every night in Joliet upon retiring and every morning on arising, I should be haunted by the thought that I had made cowards of them in vain. No: I shall die with them.'

Not grateful to Mr. Russell am I for his contemptuous rating of Adolph Fischer, and his miserly recognition of the abilities of Spies and Schwab and Fielden; yet one cannot quarrel with another's impressions so long as there is no malice in their statement, and I let that pass. But when it comes to Lingg, then all at once the fair man disappears, and the sensational news artist, the descriptive magician we all learned to know so well twenty years ago, comes to the surface. Under his prestidigitation the human being disappears, and a monster stands before you, clothed with 'abnormal strength of body and capacity of mind'; a slim boy of twenty-one becomes a 'secret, wily, resourceful and daring conspirator,' 'a wild beast,' 'a modern berserker,' 'the least human man' he ever knew, 'a formidable' creature, pacing 'up and down the jail corridor,' with 'a lithe, gliding and peculiar step,' etc., etc. The more I read, the more forcibly became the contrast between this Lingg of Mr Russell's conceiving, and the Lingg painted by a good, kindly German lady who used to take the prisoners something to eat sometimes. One day he said to her, 'I was dancing in my cell last night. They had a ball over there somewhere, and I heard the music, and oh! I did so want to be there and dance.'

Inhuman desire on the part of a youth of twenty-one. Had Mr Russell seen him dancing in his cell, he would probably have read abnormal physical or mental something-or-other into this pathetic attempt of a caged young creature to pass the lonely hours of a prison cell.

But the reason for Mr Russell's peculiar visions, concerning Lingg, is that he feels nearly certain that Lingg made the Haymarket bomb, Lingg conceived the slaughter of the police, Lingg founded the Lehr and Wehr Verein, Lingg was the only Anarchist of the seven, Lingg was — everything in short, except the bomb-thrower. The latter was, he says, Rudolph Schnaubelt. He does not give his reason for these opinions, he simply makes assertions.

Now as to the Lehr and Wehr Verein, it was not founded by Lingg; he was a member, but not the founder nor suggester of it. In the second place, the Lehr and Wehr Verein had nothing to do with the Haymarket bomb. It would be rather ridiculous to suppose that a society composed of some hundreds of people, organized to maintain its civil rights because of the ballot-box frauds which had wrested their political victory from them, should be led by the nose by one man, and he a mere boy. In the third place, I do not believe Lingg made the Haymarket bomb, for the reason that he pointed out the differences between it and the bombs he did make; and while I do not think he was superhuman, either mentally, physically, or morally, I think he was an exceedingly courageous man and an honest one; and I do not believe he would have resorted to any petty subterfuges before the court. I think if he had done that thing, he would have said so, as boldly as he did say other things. There was no want of candor in his speech.

Mr Russell's confident identification of the bomb-thrower is probably based on the letter written by Schnaubelt taking the responsibility for the act, which may or may not have been true. A lot of fairy stories always arise around a mystery of this kind, and between one man's imagination and another's, the mystery gets so elusive that even shrewder guessers than Mr Russell find themselves at sea and adrift. I believe that the matter will remain a mystery as it has remained for twenty years. Capt Black has said, in a statement printed in the life of Parsons, that in his last endeavors to secure a reprieve for the condemned men, the effort was made on the ground that he had reliable assurance that the bomb-thrower would deliver himself up and prove that he was a stranger to the accused and that they had no complicity with him. The reprieve was not granted, and our comrades being slain, I can see no motive for the bomb-thrower's

ever revealing his identity. A masked and silent figure, he has passed across the world, and left his mark upon it. What does it matter now who he was; it was not one of the eight men whom the State punished for it.

There are other legendary matters in the article, things positively untrue; but they do not greatly matter; the public may believe that Lingg's sweetheart gave him a bomb to kill himself with, if it likes. I do not. The public may believe there were precisely fourteen Anarchists, believers in the use of physical force, grouped together in Chicago. I take the statement with—salt. The public may believe the statement that the police behaved with conspicuous courage in the face of the bomb, and 'did not falter'; that 'they closed up their ranks, drew their revolvers, and began to fire upon the dumbfounded people who fled in all directions.' I should not, myself, have thought it required conspicuous courage to fire upon dumbfounded and fleeing people. Moreover, I have been told of a gentleman who being wounded in the leg by some splinter of the bomb, sought refuge in a closet to whose friendly shelter six policemen had fled before him. They begged him 'not to give them away.' The position may have been undignified and not altogether heroic, but I do not blame those six policemen.

But all these things matter little now. What matters now is that the world shall know how and for what our comrades died. Mr Russell says: 'The world of men outside our country seems to have accepted the belief that the defendants were tried on the charge that they were Anarchists. It may be well, therefore, to recall that they were tried merely on the charge that they were accessories before the fact, of the murders of Mathias J. Degan and others.'

The world outside our country thinks very correctly that our comrades were tried for being Anarchists and hanged for being Anarchists; over and over again the State's Attorney repeated that 'Anarchy was on trial'; his final appeal was: 'Hang these eight men and save our institutions. These are the leaders; make examples of them.'

Well they made the example. They murdered these men, not because of evidence that they had conspired to murder Degan, but because they preached the gospel of liberty and well-being to all, and

an end of institutions which enslave the many to the few. The men are dead; twenty years are dead; but the strange doctrine that they preached is not dead, nor 'stamped out,' nor forgotten; the doctrine that there need be no poor and forsaken in the world, no shelterless, no freezing ones, no craven and cowering ones, biting the dust for a crust and a rag, no tyranny of masters nor of rulers; that all these are not, as we have been taught, necessary, but only ignorant and foolish; that life may mean wide opportunity and rich activity for every human being born; that mankind has only to conceive its own possibilities, cease preying upon itself, and combine its powers for the conquest of the earth, for toil to become easy and fruitful a thousand-fold, so all may have the good things of the earth; and more than that, may have free time to learn what really are *good* things, to modify its barbarian tastes, to escape from the vulgar ideals imposed upon it by its dead past and its slavish present, its stupid pursuit of valueless things, begotten by this profit-making system of production, free time to partake of its heritage in the triumphs of science, which only too often remain barren in the studies of great thinkers, unfruitful because of the lack of the practical genius of the common man, or worse, become the instruments of further robbery in the hands of power. This is strange doctrine; men die for preaching it. And yet another stranger doctrine, though really it is as old as man himself, that these things are to be won, not by entrusting power to legislators, but by the direct dealing of the sympathetic support, finally by complete socialization of the sources and means of production. If in the final struggle, as a measure of resistance, force became necessary, then use it. For saying these things our comrades died; the Haymarket bomb was only the excuse for silencing their tongues.

Well the tongues are silenced; but now 'the silence speaks,' as the prophet voice foretold. Still from the prison earth in the shade of the gallows tree, there springs the blossom of human hope, the blood-root blossom, the blossom with the wax-white face and the red, red root. Strange it should grow always there. Lilies from black mud, and hope, the highest hope, from the carmined stone of sacrifice. Yet thousands pluck the blossom, and hold it to their hearts; and the ideal of our dead waxes in the eyes of the living. And eyes meet

eyes, and the light of them crosses the seas and the boundaries of the nations; and the dream grows, the dream of the common fraternity of humankind, and the equal liberty of brothers. And Greed and Tyranny and Patriotism, dividing man from man, making them strike foul blows against each other these weary thousand, thousand years will die—hard—but they will die; for they are of the past, the dead; and the new world, our world, the nationless world of free men, belongs to the living and the future.



Voltairine de Cleyre
42

The defiance of August Spies

Delivered in Chicago, November 11
1910. Manuscript, *Labadie Collection*,
University of Michigan.

'If Death is the penalty for proclaiming the truth, then I will proudly and defiantly pay the costly price. Call your hangman! Truth crucified in Socrates, in Christ, in Giordano Bruno, in Huss, in Galileo, still lives; they and others whose number is legion have proceeded us on this path. We are ready to follow.'

I think the soul that in those words breathed its indomitable conviction to the man about to sentence him to death, and twenty-three years ago today stepped from the summit of Chicago's Calvary out upon the pathway of Great Ghosts, had in the moment of their utterance a greater vision than the narrow court-room, lined with human hate, the damning jury, and the bitter-lipped Judge. I think that in that superb moment of defiance, the doomed man looked far through the girdle of faces, the girdle of stone, the girdle of time, and the girdle of death, and saw the immemorial procession whose 'number is legion,' marching, marching unflinchingly up the human *via dolorosa*, and fell into line with them, and went upon the path with the rhythm of immortal footsteps in his ears, the sounding of immortal echoes in his brain.

The figure that he and his comrades saw before them—towards which they marched, into which they were soon to merge—the figure and the face upon the Hill of Sacrifice—was it the figure and the face of Christ? of Bruno? of Galileo? or that of the forgotten man lost in some unknown fight of yesterday? Was it not rather the great face that Swinburne saw, and cried as he saw:

O sacred Head, O desecrate,
O labor-wounded feet and hands,
O blood poured forth in pledge to fate
Of nameless lives in divers lands:
O slain and spent and sacrificed
People, the gray-grown, speechless Christ.

Aye, I think that was the vision of the time-old slaying of the common man—the man who has stood up to question the masters as to their handling of the world.

For they were *common men*, who had risen to ask why the *common wealth*, and the *common things* of the earth, were not the

common use and the common upbuilding of life? And they spoke in the *common speech* that was easy to understand, and as it was said of Christ 'the common people heard them gladly.' They stood on the street-corners and spoke the gospel of self-salvation—the gospel of direct expropriation of natural and social wealth, which by the operation of existing law has become the possession of a limited class. And that was their crime—that they had told the people to act directly, and not through the intervention of political powers, which could never be trusted. They had told the people that the cause of their involuntary idleness, and the inadequacy of their wages to buy back their products, lay in the system of property, entrenched behind the moral law of the Church and the force-sustained law of the State, but more than all behind the ignorance, the humility, the dog-like submissiveness of the workers themselves, who cringe and kneel and kiss the hand that smites them, believing in their own slavery. They had tried to waken in these cowering souls some consciousness of their true condition, some sense of what changes they might make in it, some question why starvation and privation should exist, some vision of a society wherein it did not exist, some realization of who is the enemy, some desire to dislodge that enemy from his seat of power, some knowledge of how their would-be saviors in political ranks buy and sell, and cheat them, always, some resolution to depend no more upon roundabout salvation from someone overhead, but upon their own direct, united action.

This was their crime: let no one ever suppose that it was less than this. The historians of this affair, wilfully or ignorantly—I believe in most cases wilfully—have taught the generation that has risen since that the five men done to death by the State of Illinois 23 years ago were executed because they had been proven guilty of conspiring to throw a bomb at a meeting on the Haymarket. But this was never their crime, as those who managed the trial very well knew; the bomb was never anything to Grinnell and the men whose tool he was but the excuse whereby they might crush the movement of the laboring people towards direct revolutionary action. In his speech demanding their execution, the State's Attorney came openly out, dropping the technical lies upon which the prosecution was

supposed to be based, and plainly said: 'Anarchy is on trial.'

That was the one truthful word he said: Men were to be hanged, not because they had thrown a bomb, or had aided, abetted, or suggested that any one else throw it, or had even known who threw it; but because they had said, 'Workingmen, you can never live as men, working at will, and commanding the result of your work, until you socialize wealth—disregarding the law which robs you of it; brushing that law aside as a dead letter. And know that when you are ready to do this, force will be used against you; be prepared to use force in return.'

Now from the standpoint of the possessor, such speech is always a crime; and of this crime they were really guilty. The social revolt that they were dreaming of, the social overturning which would have 'put down the mighty from their seat and exalted them of low degree,' was in the eyes of the Masters of the World a crime beside which the Haymarket bomb was like the snapping of a pop-gun in a boy's hands. A world full of people not one of whom was hungry! not one of whom was naked! or shivering! or ill-sheltered! or idle against his will! Wherein they themselves could no longer have the power to say this man 'Work' and he works; or 'Stop' and he stops; or 'This is mine; you maybe need it and I do not; but it's mine; touch it and you go to prison!'—What! they should no longer have the power to starve any one! to freeze any one! to clutch the wealth they do not need! What then would become of Civilization! Ruination, disorder, chaos would follow!—Oh, to be sure, men might put such things in pretty books if they liked, print them in gold and blue on deckle edged paper, and bind them in fancy leather—give them to their friends, and dawdle over them before an after-dinner nap! It would while away an hour! But talk them to the common people, the people who might listen to it seriously, the hulking brutes who might take it into their heads to act—Oh, there could be but one answer to such a criminal against the public peace: 'Away with him: Crucify him, crucify him.'

The terrible common people! The 'sewer-rats,' they called us, then—rats that had been driven into their holes! The common people, who bear the burdens of the world, but are not to stretch out their unlovely hands to take the thing that they have fashioned;

the common people who are so rude, and so indelicate, and so incapable of fine feeling, and so unable and unworthy to enjoy the art and the glory of life; the common people who are not fit to come among sensitive souls where high ideals are discussed because they are dirty, and coarse, and low. O yes: it is always dangerous to talk to us.

I remember—yes as if it were yesterday though it is twenty years ago, and more—the memory rankles yet of the delicate disgust of a would-be reformer who came to me saying ‘Some striking miners came to the club last night, and really *they smelled*.’ No doubt they smelled, and the choke-damp, of the eternal night of the mine and all that the mine means—the grime, the body-reek, the unwashed clothes, and vile food, the vile tobacco, and the viler whiskey—no doubt they smelled of it all—that is how coal is paid for—by the common man who mines it! Creature of all disgust is the common man to those who do not pay the price for their little niceties.

He is dirty! yes, he is dirty—very, very dirty; the vomit of the engine and the fire-pit is on him; the grease of the machine; the splatter of the gutter and the distillation of the sewer; the ashes of the city dump heaps, the slime of rotting refuse; every parasite and every germ that ever crawled and spilled its venom on humanity has crawled upon him; just as there is no foul and filthy hole above or underground into which it has not crawled.

Yes, he is dirty.

He is hulking and ill-shapen and ungainly. Yes. His figure is unhandsome; he has crept on it too much—crept into vicious places where Life stared Death in the eyes and both clutched at him—and sometimes he left a piece of his body in Death’s fingers; when his shoulders bend together you go through a narrower aperture; when your right arm swings all day doing one work, you become one-sided; when familiarity with the machine breeds contempt your boss is in a hurry you feed your fingers to the machine sometimes; when you wait the pleasure of bailing iron, it occasionally explodes and peppers you with sparks, and leaves something that looks like leper spots upon the skin. Yes, the common man is ill-shapen, and deformed, and unhandsome.

He is diseased with vile, unnamable diseases. O yes: he has

sweated in our social slaughter-pens till every vein ran fire instead of blood, and then in raging thirst he has drunk—drunk evil drinks that filled him full of alcoholic indifference and villainous lusts. And he has infected himself with the taint that has taken him to the hospital, a thing for the worms to feed on before he was dead. Yes; all that, all that.

He is coarse, and loud-mouthed, and dull-eared, and squint-eyed—and his speech is loathsome. Yes: he is coarse; he is the digger in the dung-heaps; the dung-heap doesn’t make people fine—but it has to be dug.

Yes: he is loud-mouthed; he speaks across the roar of engine and growling wheels, above the sound-chaos of the city streets—he speaks of work, loud-sounding work, in coarse work tones, as men speak who have to do with imperative, primal activities.

Dull-eared: O yes; sometimes he cannot distinguish a preference between a symphony orchestra and the slash of a rip-saw; the saw has trained him, not the violin.

Squint-eyed? Yes: he has squinted at micrometers in the semi-darkness of the shop till he cannot open his eyes wide any more; he has squinted at gauges till his sight is narrowed to a gauge; he has squinted down the throat of red-hot furnaces, till he has singed the very nerve of sight; dazzled and blinded, he drops his lids, and looks at the green world outside, and sees it with a wide red flare over it—the burnt-in image of the furnace throat reflected.

His speech is loathsome. Yes, very loathsome. Full of coarse and obscene images, vulgarities for which he does not blush, boisterous curses and vapid laughter. For the worst of all the robbery that has been done upon him is that his soul has been robbed away too; and if the beauty and the strength of the body have been twisted and malformed and sapped away, so too dimmed down the light of the Inner Man—that-might-have-been till it is but a faint spark glimmering through a junk-heap of broken possibilities, twisted and perverted passions.

Yes, the common man is all that—rough, uncouth, misshapen, dull, vulgar, vapid, unfit to grace a social festivity, to bow and scrape in a dance-salon, or carry a lady’s fan.

But also—but also, he has dug, he has mined, he has burrowed, he

has tunneled, he has blasted, and smelted, and forged, he has ploughed, and planted, and gathered, and piled, and shipped, and fetched, and carried; he has built—and torn down, and rebuilt, and cleaned and scoured and repaired; he has woven, and cut, and sewed, and clothed; and *Man's world cannot stand without him*—not for a day, not for an hour. Without the dancing master and the fan-carrier, it still could spin right merrily; without the miner and the farmer and the 'sewer-rat'—never.

And seeing this, and understanding this, and feeling all the wrong and shame of our disinheritance—both of the body and the mind—it happens sometimes that a figure steps from the sullen or indifferent ranks, and a voice arises crying in the wilderness. And this too is the Common Man; the man who is something more than all this rest I have been saying; for he is also the man who goes to unbury his fallen comrade when the mine crushes him, though he knows the chances to save are few, and the chances that he also will be crushed are many; the man who goes down into the sewer-gas to save his reeling companion, and falls by his side; the man who springs into the jaws of the sea to save from it what stranger he knows not, and drowns together with the stranger; the man who thrusts a heedless fellow-craftsman from a danger-track, and is ground to pieces for his generosity; and the Man-who-cries to all these weak, atrophic, opiated souls: 'Comrades, *it is wrong*. The earth is as much ours as theirs—those people who are shutting us out from its free use. The conquests of the dead are as much ours as theirs—those people who claim them as their sole inheritance and will not let us use them. Life can be arranged otherwise. We do not need to be hungry because there is too much food, nor shelterless because we have built too many houses, nor naked because we have made too many clothes. We do not need to be idle because some one has made so much profit, that it pays him for us to be idle. We can all work, and all have leisure to straighten our backs and unbend our muscles and train our brains. We can do this thing; and we can do it ourselves; and we alone can do it. No one can do it for us; no one will do it for us; no one should do it for us. If we are great enough to make these things we are great enough to use them, great enough to manage their making and their dividing; and if anything is made by us now,

which we in freedom would not make, the labor of which is too costly in human life for free men to make, then let those who wish to use it, make it; or *let it not be made*. The purpose of society should be to enable men to live more freely and more fully than in single combat with nature; the purpose of work should be to build the workers' lives—not to rack, enslave, and destroy them. Come then, announce your will to be free men, to take full hold on life, and make it yours. No longer be the ball for politicians to toss back and forth; they will all betray you. Be your own Saviors.'

So our comrades cried, a quarter of a century ago—and like the self-forgetting swimmer, died for it.

And they too were *common men*. For this, likewise, is among the sacrifices that are laid on them—that now and again they go up to Golgotha.

They went, these five men, 'proudly and defiantly', believing in no after reward, knowing there would never be any justice done to them; but hoping and believing that their deaths would bear their message farther and wider than their lives had done.

In Waldheim you may read the stone-cut prophecy: 'The time will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today.' There it stands, a death-defying conviction, waiting its fulfilment. And whether the years be many, or whether they be few, till the people waken and take their own, the surety waits.

Farther and wider indeed the words have already gone; the breath over the gallows blew them on all the winds of heaven. And men remember and commemorate tonight in London, in Berlin, in Paris, in Rome, in Madrid, in Barcelona (seething Barcelona), in Melbourne, in Cape Colony, what an American commonwealth did on this day, 23 years ago—lined itself together with the tyrannies of Europe, proved government to be what our comrades had said (always and ever a tool of the propertied class no matter what its form) and did men to death by false witness, an acknowledged prejudiced jury, and a hangman-judge—not for anything they had done, but for *what they had said*, in the name of what some one else had done.

All over the world their words are repeated. But still the day of awakening seems far off; still the people with their ox-like eyes look

patiently on at their own undoing while the yoke remains upon their necks. And their deliverance taking seems far away. Maybe it will come sooner than it seems; there are sudden darkenings in the social sky at times. In the meantime, 'lest we forget,' and lest our enemies think that we forget, we keep the hangman's day—the day they make corpses of men whose will in the world had been to make it a better place, the day they baptized the cause of human freedom once again with blood.

Through the receding years I see the ghost figures rise—the luminous face of Adolph Fischer shining while crying 'This is the happiest moment of my life,' the mutilated lips of Louis Lingg yet whispering 'Hoch die Anarchie,' the homely sturdy resolute features of Engel saying 'Long live Anarchy,' the ringing prophecy of Spies, and the clear, sweet voice of Albert Parsons pleading till the moment of strangulation 'May I speak Sheriff Matson. Let me speak. O Men and Women of dear America, O—.'

We never knew what he wanted to say. The figures pass along—others and others rise behind them—and later—here in the 20th century—the great figure from the ditch of Montjuich²¹—he, too, done to death for the word of liberty in the name of the deeds of others.

How many more are to pass into that dusky column of the Martyr-Ghosts? Very, very many yet. There will be no end, till there is an end of the belief that ideas can be killed by killing men, or an injustice made acceptable, a dissatisfied people by putting a mailed hand upon the crier's mouth. Until then the lot of the rebel will be to speak and to die for it. So we keep the 11th of November that we may remember what was done, what may be done again, and if the lot comes to us that we too may know how to die.

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- (1) A reference to Albert Parsons, who sang his favourite song, *Annie Laurie*, in his cell on the eve of his execution.
- (2) Julius S. Grinnell was the prosecuting attorney and Joseph E. Gary the judge in the Haymarket trial.
- (3) Governor Richard J. Oglesby of Illinois.
- (4) William P. Black, attorney for the defence.
- (5) Parsons's last words on the scaffold.
- (6) An allusion to Spies's last words, inscribed on the Haymarket tomb: 'The time will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today!'
- (7) A quotation from Spies: 'We are the birds of the coming storm.' Voltairine de Cleyre used this as the epigraph to her poem 'The Hurricane,' written in August 1889.
- (8) From Lingg's courtroom speech: 'I despise you. I despise your order, your laws, your force-propped authority. Hang me for it!'
- (9) The policemen killed by the bomb, commanded by Inspector (then Captain) John Bonfield.
- (10) A reference to Governor Altgeld and his pardon message.
- (11) Last words on the scaffold of Spies, Fischer, and Parsons.
- (12) Louis Lingg.
- (13) A reference to the repressions following President McKinley's assassination in September 1901.

- (14) References to Peter Kropotkin ('who stepped from his title'), William Morris ('No Master'), John Henry Mackay (who 'will not rule'), Friedrich Nietzsche ('who chanted the Over-man'), and Louise Michel ('the devoted woman of the people').
- (15) Fischer's last words.
- (16) Engel's last words.
- (17) A reference to Spies's, 'We are the birds of the coming storm.'
- (18) A quotation from Parsons.
- (19) Charles H. Moyer, William D. Haywood, and George A. Pettibone, accused in a famous labor case of 1906-1907 of having murdered Frank Steunenberg, the former governor of Idaho. Tried and acquitted.
- (20) A reference to Matthew M. Trunbull's *The Trial of the Judgment* (Chicago, 1888).
- (21) Francisco Ferrer, the Spanish anarchist educator, executed on October 13, 1909.