



Voltaireine de Cleyre  
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#### Memorial address

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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!"<sup>15</sup>

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!'<sup>16</sup>

To have felt oneself a prophet of the great storm<sup>17</sup>, 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.'<sup>18</sup> 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 Pettibone<sup>19</sup> 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 sluggish 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.