The Gates of the penitentiary open to leave me out, and I pause involuntarily at the fascinating sight. It is a street: a line of houses stretches before me; a woman, young and wonderfully sweet-faced, is passing on the opposite side. My eyes follow her graceful lines, as she turns the corner. Men stand about. They wear citizen clothes, and scan me with curious, insistent gaze. . . . The handcuff grows taut on my wrist, and I follow the sheriff into the waiting carriage. A little child runs by. I lean out of the window to look at the rosy-cheeked, strangely youthful face. But the guard impatiently lowers the blind, and we sit in gloomy silence.

The spell of the civilian garb is upon me. It gives an exhilarating sense of manhood. Again and again I glance at my clothes, and verify the numerous pockets to reassure myself of the reality of the situation. I am free, past the dismal gray walls! Free? Yet even now captive of the law. The law!

The engine puffs and shrieks, and my mind speeds back to another journey. It was thirteen years and one week ago this day. On the wings of an all-absorbing love I hastened to join the struggle of the oppressed people. I left home and friends, sacrificed liberty, and risked life. But human justice is blind: it will not see the soul on fire. Only the shot was heard, by the Law that is deaf to the agony of Toil.
"Vengeance is mine," it saith. To the uttermost drop it will shed the blood to exact its full pound of flesh. Twelve years and ten months! And still another year. What horrors await me at the new prison? Poor, faithful "Horsethief" will nevermore smile his greeting: he did not survive six months in the terrible workhouse. But my spirit is strong; I shall not be daunted. This garb is the visible, tangible token of resurrection. The devotion of staunch friends will solace and cheer me. The call of the great Cause will give strength to live, to struggle, to conquer.

II

Humiliation overruns me as I don the loathed suit of striped black and gray. The insolent look of the guard rouses my bitter resentment, as he closely scrutinizes my naked body. But presently, the examination over, a sense of gratification steals over me at the assertiveness of my self-respect.

The ordeal of the day's routine is full of inexpressible anguish. Accustomed to prison conditions, I yet find existence in the workhouse a nightmare of cruelty, infinitely worse than the most inhuman aspects of the penitentiary. The guards are surly and brutal; the food foul and inadequate; punishment for the slightest offense instantaneous and ruthless. The cells are even smaller than in the penitentiary, and contain neither chair nor table. They are unspeakably ill-smelling with the privy buckets, for the purposes of which no scrap of waste paper is allowed. The sole ablutions of the day are performed in the morning, when the men form in the hall and march past the spigot of running water, snatching a handful in the constantly moving line. Absolute silence prevails in cell-house and shop. The slightest motion of the lips is punished with the blackjack or the dungeon, referred to with caustic satire as the "White House."

The perverse logic of the law that visits the utmost limit of barbarity upon men admittedly guilty of minor transgressions! Throughout the breadth of the land the workhouses are notoriously more atrocious in every respect than the penitentiaries and State prisons, in which are confined men convicted of felonies. The Allegheny County Workhouse of the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania enjoys infamous distinction as the blackest of hells where men expiate the sins of society.

At work in the broom shop, I find myself in peculiarly familiar surroundings. The cupidty of the management has evolved methods even more inhuman than those obtaining in the State prison. The tasks imposed upon the men necessitate feverish
exertion. Insufficient product or deficient work is not palliated by physical inability or illness. In the conduct of the various industries, every artifice prevalent in the penitentiary is practiced to evade the law limiting convict competition. The number of men employed in productive work by far exceeds the legally permitted percentage; the provisions for the protection of free labor are skillfully circumvented; the tags attached to the shop products are designed to be obliterated as soon as the wares have left the prison; the words "convict-made" stamped on the broom-handles are pasted over with labels giving no indication of the place of manufacture. The anticonvict-labor law, symbolic of the political achievements of labor, is frustrated at every point, its element of protection a "lame and impotent conclusion."

How significant the travesty of the law in its holy of holies! Here legal justice immures its victims; here are buried the disinherited, whose rags and tatters annoy respectability; here offenders are punished for breaking the law. And here the Law is daily and hourly violated by its pious high priests.

III

The immediate is straining at the leash that holds memory in the environment of the penitentiary, yet the veins of the terminated existence still palpitate with the recollection of friends and common suffering. The messages from Riverside are wet with tears of misery, but Johnny, the young Magyar, strikes a note of cheer: his sentence is about to expire; he will devote himself to the support of the little children he had so unwittingly robbed of a father. Meanwhile he bids me courage and hope, enclosing two dollars from the proceeds of his fancy work, "to help along." He was much grieved, he writes, at his inability to bid me a last farewell, because the Warden refused the request, signed by two hundred prisoners, that I be allowed to pass along the tiers to say good-bye. But soon, soon we shall see each other in freedom.

Words of friendship glow brightly in the darkness of the present, and charm my visions of the near future. Coming liberty casts warming rays, and I dwell in the atmosphere of my comrades. The Girl and the Chum are aglow with the fires of Young Russia. Busily my mind shapes pictures of the great struggle that transplant me to the days of my youth. In the little tenement flat in New York we had sketched with bold stroke the fortunes of the world—the Girl, the Twin, and I. In the dark,
cage-like kitchen, amid the smoke of the asthmatic stove, we had planned our conspirative work in Russia. But the need of the hour had willed it otherwise. Homestead had sounded the prelude of awakening, and my heart had echoed the inspiring strains.

The banked fires of aspiration burst into life. What matter the immediate outcome of the revolution in Russia? The yearning of my youth wells up with spontaneous power. To live is to struggle! To struggle against Cesar, side by side with the people; to suffer with them, and to die, if need be. That is life. It will sadden me to pan with Chum even before I had looked deeply into the devoted face. But the Girl is aflame with the spirit of Russia: it will be joyous work in common. The soil of Monongahela, laden with years of anguish, has grown dear to me. Like the moan of a broken chord wails the thought of departure. But no ties of affection will strain at my heartstrings. Yet-the sweet face of a little girl breaks in on my reverie, a look of reproaching sadness in the large, wistful eyes. It is little Stella. The last years of my penitentiary life have snatched many a grace from her charming correspondence. Often I have sought consolation in the beautiful likeness of her soulful face. With mute tenderness she had shared my grief at the loss of Harry, her lips breathing sweet balm. Gray days had warmed at her smile, and I lavished upon her all the affection with which I was surcharged. It will be a violent stifling of her voice in my heart, but the call of the muzhik rings clear, compelling. Yet who knows? The revolution may be over before my resurrection. In republican Russia, with her enlightened social protestantism, life would be fuller, richer than in this pitifully bourgeois democracy. Freedom will present the unaccustomed problem of self-support, but it is premature to form definite plans. Long imprisonment has probably incapacitated me for hard work, but I shall find means to earn my simple needs when I have cast off the fetters of my involuntary parasitism.

The thought of affection, the love of woman, thrills me with ecstasy, and colors my existence with emotions of strange bliss. But the solitary hours are filled with recurring dread lest my life forever remain bare of woman's love. Often the fear possesses me with the intensity of despair, as my mind increasingly dwells on the opposite sex. Thoughts of woman eclipse the memory of the prison affections, and the darkness of the present is threaded with the silver needle of love-hopes.

IV
The monotony of the routine, the degradation and humiliation weigh heavier in the shadow of liberty. My strength is failing with the hard task in the shop, but the hope of receiving my full commutation sustains me. The law allows five months' "good time" on every year beginning with the ninth year of a sentence. But the Superintendent has intimated to me that I may be granted the benefit of only two months, as a "new" prisoner, serving the first year of a workhouse sentence. The Board of Directors will undoubtedly take that view, he often taunts me.

Exasperation at his treatment, coupled with my protest against the abuse of a fellow-prisoner, have caused me to be ordered into the solitary. Dear Chum is insistent on legal steps to secure my full commutation; notwithstanding my unconditional refusal to resort to the courts, he has initiated a *sub rosa* campaign to achieve his object. The time drags in torturing uncertainty. With each day the solitary grows more stifling, maddening, till my brain reels with terror of the graveyard silence. Like glad music sounds the stern command, "Exercise!"

In step we circle the yard, the clanking of Charley's chain mournfully beating time. He had made an unsuccessful attempt to escape, for which he is punished with the ball and chain. The iron cuts into his ankle, and he trudges painfully under the heavy weight. Near me staggers Billy, his left side completely paralyzed since he was released from the "White House." All about me are cripples. I am in the midst of the social refuse: the lame and the halt, the broken in body and spirit, past work, past even crime. These were the blessed of the Nazarene; these a Christian world breaks on the wheel. They, too, are within the scope of my mission, they above all others -- these the living indictments of a leprous system, the excommunicated of God and man.

The threshold of liberty is thickly sown with misery and torment. The days are unbearable with nervous restlessness, the nights hideous with the hours of agonizing stillness, the endless, endless hours. Feverishly I pace the cell. The day will pass, it must pass. With reverent emotion I bless the shamed sun as he dips beyond the western sky. One day nearer to the liberty that awaits me, with unrestricted sunshine and air and life beyond the hated walls of gray, out in the daylight, in the open. The open world! . . . The scent of fresh-mown hay is in my nostrils; green fields and forests stretch before me; sweetly ripples the mountain spring. Up to the mountain crest, to the breezes and the sunshine, where the storm
breaks in its wild fury upon my uncovered head. Welcome the rain and the wind that sweep the foul prison dust off my heart, and blow life and strength into my being! Tremblingly rapturous is the thought of freedom. Out in the woods, away from the stench of the cannibal world I shall wander, nor lift my foot from soil or sod. Close to the breath of Nature I will press my parched lips, on her bosom I will pass my days, drinking sustenance and strength from the universal mother. And there, in liberty and independence, in the vision of the mountain peaks, I shall voice the cry of the social orphans, of the buried and the disinherited, and visualize to the living the yearning, menacing Face of Pain.

From: Anarchy Archives.

Chronology:

- **November 30, 1911**: Part 3, Chapter 01 -- Publication.

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