The Worm Turns

1897

People:

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Voltairine De Cleyre (1900). The Worm Turns. Philadelphia: Innes & Sons. This pamphlet appears in Anarchy Archives with the permission of http://www.iisg.nl/.
GERMINAL

(The last word of Angiolillo.)

GERMINAL!--The Field of Mars is plowing, And hard the steel that cuts, and hot the breath Of the great Oxen, straining flanks and bowing Beneath his goad, who guides the share of Death.

GERMINAL!--The Dragon's teeth are sowing, And stern and white the sower flings the seed He shall not gather, though full swift the growing; Straight down Death's furrow treads, and does not heed.

GERMINAL!--The Helmet Heads are springing Far up the Field of Mars in gleaming files; With wild war notes the bursting earth is ringing.

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Within his grave the sower sleeps, and smiles.

LONDON, October, 1897.

UT SEMENTEM FECERIS, ITA METES

(To the Czar, on a woman it political prisoner, being flogged to death in Siberia. )

HOW many drops must gather to the skiesBefore the cloud-burst comes, we may not know; How hot the fires ill under hells must glow Ere the volcano's scalding lavas rise, Can none say; but all wot the hour is sure! Who dreams of vengeance has but to endure He may not say how many blows must fall, How
many lives be broken on the wheel, How many corpses stiffen 'neath the pall,
How many martyrs fix the blood-red seal; But certain is the harvest time of Hate!
And when weak moans by an indignant world Reechoed, to a throne are
backward hurled, Who listens hears the mutterings of Fate!

PHILADELPHIA, February, 1890.

SANTA AGUEDA
(Where the torturer Canovas breathed his last.)

SANTA AGUEDA, thou that wast accursed With presence of a demon dressed in
Man, Blessed art thou, for on thy stones there ran The vampire blood from bitter
torture nursed; Along thy streets there flashed the lightning -burst, "Delivered!"
flaming on from eye to eye, Though lips said "killed," and all thy gateways
hearsed In lying black, made mourning mockery. Blessed art thou! From thee
went forth the cry, "Vengeance yet loves, Renunciation hates, And justice smites:
the torturer shall die;" Across his path the steel-nerved slayer waits "And both
shall burn together,"--one in light Of unconsuming hell and reddened night; And
one with feet on hell and brow dawn-rayed, pure white.

PHILADELPHIA, August, 1898.
THE FEAST OF VULTURES (As the three anarchists, Vaillant, Henry and Caserio, were led to their several executions, a voice from the prison cried loudly, "Vive l'anarchie!" Through watch and ward the cry escaped, and no man owned the voice; but the cry is still resounding through the world.)

AMOAN in the gloam in the air-peaks heard-- The Bird of Omen--the wild, fierce Bird, Aflight In the night, Like a whiz of light, Arrowy winging before the storm, Far away flinging, The whistling, singing, White-curdled drops, wind-blown and warm From its beating, flapping, Thunderous wings; Crashing and clapping The split night swings, And rocks and totters, Bled of its levin,

And reels and mutters

A curse to Heaven!

Reels and mutters and rolls and dies,

With a wild light streaking its black,

blind eyes.

Far, far, far,
Through the red, mad morn,

Like a hurtling star,

Through the air upborne,

The Herald-Singer,

The Terror-Bringer,

Speeds—and behind, through the cloud-rags torn,

Gather and wheel a million wings,

Clangiug as iron where the hammer rings

The whipped sky shivers,

The White Gate shakes,

The ripped throne quivers,

The dumb God wakes,

And feels in his heart the talon-stings—

The dead bodies hurled from beaks for slings.

"Ruin! Ruin!" the Whirlwind cries,

And it leaps at his throat and tears his eyes;

"Death for death, as ye long have dealt;

The heads of your victims your head shall pelt;
The blood ye wrung to get drunk upon,

Drink, and be poisoned! Ott, Herald, on!"

Behold, behold,

How a moan is grown!

A cry hurled high 'gainst a scaffold's joist!

The Voice of Defiance-the loud, wild Voice!

Whirled

Through the world,

A smoke-wreath curled

(Breath 'round hot kisses) around a fire!

See! the ground hisses

With curses, and glisses

With red-streaming blood-clots of long-frozen ire,

Waked by the flying

Wild voice as it passes;

Groaning and crying,

The surge of the masses

Rolls and flashes
With thunderous roar-

Seams and lashes

The livid shore ---

Seams and lashes and crunches and beats

And drags a ragged wall to its howling retreats!

Swift, swift, swift,

'Thwart the blood-rain's fall,

Through the fire-shot rift

Of the broken wall,

The prophet-crying,

The storm-strong sighing,

Flies-and from under Night's lifted pall,

Swarming, menace ten million darts,

Uplifting fragments of human shards

Ah, white teeth chatter,

And dumb jaws fall,

While winged fires scatter

Till gloom gulfs all Save the boom of the cannon that storm the forts
That the people bombard with their comrades' hearts;

"Vengeance! Vengeance!" the voices scream,

And the vulture pinions whirl and stream!

"Knife for knife, as ye long have dealt;

The edge ye whetted for us be felt,

Ye chopper of necks, on your own! your own!

Baer it, Coward! On, Prophet, on!"

Behold how high

Rolls a prison cry!

PHILADELPHIA, August, 1894.

NIGHT AT THE GRAVE IN WALDHEIM

QUIET they lie in their shrouds

of rest, Their lids kissed close 'neath the lips of peace;

Over each pulseless and painless breast

The hands lie folded and softly pressed,
As a dead dove presses a broken nest

Ah, broken hearts were the price of these

The lips of their anguish are cold and still,

For them are the clouds and the gloom all past

No longer the woe of the world can thrill

The chords of those tender hearts, or fill

The silent dead-house! The " people's will"

Has snapped asunder the strings at last.

"The people's will! " Ali, in years to come,

Dearly ye'll weep that ye did not save!

Do ye not hear now the muffled drum,

The trampling foot and the ceaseless hum

Of the million marchers,--trembling, dumb,

In their tread to a yawning, giant grave?

PITTSBURG, 1889
THE HURRICANE

("We are the birds of the coming storm."-August Spies.)

THE tide is out, the wind blows off the shore;

Baer burn the white sands in the scorching sun;

The sea complains, but its great voice is low.

Bitter thy woes, 0 People,

And the burden

Hardly to be borne!

Wearily grows, 0 People,

All the aching

Of thy pierced heart, bruised and torn

But yet thy time is not,

And low thy moaning.

Desert thy sands!

Not yet is thy breath hot,

Vengefully blowing;

It wafts o'er lifted hands.
The tide has turned; the vane veers slowly round;

Slow clouds are sweeping o'er the blinding light;

White crests curl on the sea,-its voice grows deep.

Angry thy heart, 0 People,

And its bleeding

Fire-tipped with rising hate!

Thy clasped hands part, 0 People,

For thy praying

Warmed not the desolate!

God did not hear thy moan:

Now it is swelling

To a great drowning cry;

A dark wind-cloud, a groan,

Now backward veering

From that deaf sky!

The tide flows in, the wind roars from the depths,

The whirled-white sand heaps with the foam-white waves;
Thundering the sea rolls o'er its shell-crunchéd wall!

Strong is thy rage, 0 People,

In its fury

Hurling thy tyrants down!

Thou metest wage, 0 People.

Very swiftly,

Now that thy hate is grown:

Thy time at last is come;

Thou heapest anguish,

Where thou thyself wert bare!

No longer to thy dumb

God clasped and kneeling, *Thou answerest thine own prayer.*

SEA ISLE CITY, N. J., August, 1889.

IN MEMORIAM

To General M. M. Trumbull
(No man better than General Trumbull defended my (lead comrades in Chicago.)

BACK to thy breast, 0 Mother, turns thy child,

He whom thou garmentedst in steel of truth,

And sent forth, strong in the glad heart of youth,

To sing the wakening song in ears beguiled

By tyrants' promises and flatterers' smiles;

These searched his eyes, and knew nor threats nor wiles,

Might shake the steady stars within their blue,

Nor win one truckling word from off those lips,-

No-not for gold nor praise, nor aught men do

To dash the Sun of Honor with eclipse.

0, Mother Liberty, those eyes are dark,

And the brave lips are white and cold and dumb;

But fair in other Souls, through time to come,

Fanned by thy breath glows the Immortal Spark.

PHILADELPHIA, May, 1894.
John P. Altgeld

(After an incarceration of seven long years in Joliet State Prison for an act of which they were entirely innocent, namely, the throwing of the Haymarket bomb, in Chicago, May 4, 1886, Oscar Neebe, Michael Schwab, and Samuel Fielden were liberated by Governor Altgeld, who thus sacrificed his political career to an act of justice. Honor him.)

There was a tableau! Liberty's clear light

Shone never on a braver scene than that. Here was a prison, there a man who sat high in the halls of state! Beyond, the might of ignorance and mobs, whose hireling press yells at their bidding like the slaver's hounds, ready with coarse caprice to curse or bless, to make or unmake rulers! -- Lo, there sounds a grating of the doors! And three poor men, helpless and hated, having naught to give, come from their long-sealed tomb, look up, and live, and thank this man that they are free again. And he--to all the world this man
dares say, "Curse as you will! I have been just this day."

PHILADELPHIA, June,

1893.

"LIGHT UPON WALDHEIM"

(The figure on the monument over the grave of the Chicago Martyrs in Waldheim Cemetery is a warrior woman, dropping with her left hand a crown upon the forehead of a fallen man just past his agony, and with her right drawing a dagger from her bosom.)

LIGHT upon Waldheim! And the earth is gray; A bitter wind is driving from the north; The stone is cold, and strange cold whispers say: "What do ye here with Death ? Go forth! Go forth ! "
Is this thy word, O Mother, with stern eyes,

Crowning thy dead with stone-caressing touch?

May we not weep o'er him that martyred lies, Slain

in our name, for that he loved us much?

May we not linger till the day is broad?

Nay, none are stirring in this stinging dawn--

None but poor wretches that make moan to God:

What use are these, O thou with dagger drawn?

"Go forth, go forth! Stand not to weep for these,

Till, weakened with your weeping, like the snow Ye

melt, dissolving in a coward peace! " Light upon

Waldheim! Brother, let us go!

LONDON, October, 1897.

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