

HIS OWN DAY

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ON this day I was born—that was thirty-three years ago. On this day, twenty years later, I fired the shot that placed me among the living-dead for nearly twelve years. On this day, after a year in prison, THEY sent me their first letter. And on this day, only a year ago, I went out into the world once more—and what does the bridegroom expect that may compare with what I expected then?

Other years have brought me other happenings on this day, but I have merely mentioned what stands out most strikingly above the rest. Often and often I have brooded over this curious coincidence, but to no purpose. My existence, as I look back over it, appears not like a succession of years, but like a string of single days—of pearls set far apart on a bare thread. Into these days life distilled the essence of what it had in store for me. And now, of a sudden, a thought comes to me: suppose it were possible, would I then undo or unwish one of the days that have made up my real life? If to-day I were twelve years younger, and if that shot were still unfired, would the fatal moment still find me able or willing to make the slight motion needed to fire it?

I did fire that shot, however—no, there were three of them, but my hand shook so that two never touched the man in front of me. It was only the third one that hit him—after he had had time to raise his left arm up before his face. The bullet went into the back of his upper arm—the arm that was raised. And I was aiming at his heart—or thought I was.

Then men dropped down upon me—strong, heavy men—large numbers of them, I thought. Another shot rang out, but I was not pulling the trigger that time. I was on the floor—pinned down, beaten, trampled on—and at last everything grew black and silent about me.

At the time I must have believed I hated that man, but I know now that I did not. He was nothing to me—had done nothing to me—and not much more to anybody else. He was

nothing but a tool—but the tool had become a symbol of all that pressed down upon us.

Us?—Who were WE in those days? I could hardly tell. They charged me with being an anarchist. Yet it could not be proved at the trial. Had they put me on the stand and asked me outright, I might have answered “yes” or “no” as vanity or fear, defiance or caution happened to move me. I myself did not know what I was in those days—or what anarchism was. I had been to meetings—I had read a little—but what moved me was in the air: anger, revolt, passion for blood—the blood of somebody, of anybody—because the blood of workers, of poor ignorant things like myself, had been shed without much reason—men shot down like wild beasts for talking to other men in the street!

Nobody had advised me—nobody knew. And I knew nobody, not even among my fellow-workers. I was alone then, as I have always been—without a real friend, without anybody to talk or take counsel with. The idea shaped itself in the nights. Somebody seemed to be speaking within me all the time, saying: “You are the man!” I starved to buy the revolver—which I could not do nowadays. What my deed was to accomplish, or why I undertook it, was not very clear to me—nothing was except that voice from within. And then my own day came around.

When it had been done—of course, there could be no hope of escape or acquittal. At first I believed they would take my life. But I was given a lawyer—THEY got him for me, I suspect now. And he told me that nothing much had happened—just a flesh wound—and that my chances might not be so bad but for the general fear that others were behind me. When he told me this I laughed with tears in my eyes. For in those days my heart was still full—not only of hatred, but of faith—though what I had faith in was vague enough, as I see it now.

I remember the lawyer asking me if I harbored a grudge against the man I had shot—any kind of personal grievance. When I said no, he shook his head and said it was bad for me—very bad.

Everything happened in flashes—so quickly that I could

hardly keep track of it. A few weeks merely, and I was tried, sentenced, immured in the cell where they told me I should have to spend the next fifteen years of my life—if I lived that long.

From the first I realized that I was being tried not as an ordinary criminal, but as a member of a gang of dangerous conspirators. I can see now that my own lawyer must have suspected something of the same kind. In court, as in jail, I was watched day and night—watched so jealously that only my lawyer could get near me, and even he could rarely speak a word to me without being overheard by somebody else.

For that reason, probably, I did not learn until the very last day of the trial—and then with a surprise that shook me as had nothing else during or before that trial—that I was being looked after by some mysterious friends, and that they were willing to risk a great deal in helping me as far as any help could be given me. This startling news came through my lawyer, who must have tried to convey it for some time before the chance offered itself at last. It was in the courtroom, on the morning of the last day.

“Listen sharp now,” he said unexpectedly. “Catch the word SANTIR?” He pronounced it “san-teer” and repeated it three times. Finally he spelled it out: “S-a-n-t-i-r.” Then he added, in a barely audible voice: “When you hear it, a friend is speaking and wants to give you a message. Don’t let on when you hear it, but use your ears, and do as you are told.”

Some trivial remark in a louder tone followed. Apparently we were being watched again. And I sat gaping at him in a state that came mighty near unconsciousness. Minutes must have passed before I knew again what was happening around me. Then I became all ear. And after that my whole waking existence was spent listening for that word and speculating on when or where I should first hear it and what it might bring in its wake. Confused ideas of flight and of more or less melodramatic jail-breakings occupied my attention a great deal. Of what was going on around me I knew very little. Even what the judge said when he sentenced me seemed to reach me from a great distance and carried no meaning with it.

The hour for my transfer to prison arrived—and no one had yet breathed the magic word in my presence. I was being put through some formalities and was submitting to them in my usual spirit of half-conscious passivity, when a man in uniform grabbed me by the arm as if to push me back into place. As he did so he roared out something which I did not catch, and then he lowered his voice and shot the one word “santir” at me from between his closed teeth. The sound of it literally froze me—then the blood surged through my veins like fire. But my head remained clear and my ears open, and I heard the man mutter:

“Don’t let them take you to the hospital—it’s your finish if they get you there.”

That was all. The man gave me another angry push and disappeared. I reached the prison without another incident.

How ridiculous it seems to me now, that a single little word—a word which I don’t know the meaning of, having thought it both dangerous and a sacrilege to ask about it—a word that may not even be any real word at all—should be capable of holding such a store of strength, of courage, of hope—yes, I might almost say: of happiness!

I always heard that word when I least expected it. I heard it often, too—not, perhaps, as men at liberty count frequency, but very often for a man spending all his hours in a solitary cell, without so much as a glimpse of the outside world. Rarely I heard it less than once a month, and each time it heralded some warning that served to protect me against unseen enemies or helped to make my existence a little more endurable. At the time, I used to wonder whether the men from whom I heard that word were all anarchists at heart—a ludicrous, but excusable, mistake. Being once more a part of the world, I know now that where you see two or three jailers, there you see at least one man willing to sell out those to whom he has already sold his soul.

For the better part of a year little came but hints against traps said to be set for me. I was given to understand that my premature exit from this world would be very welcome to some persons having the power of doing me harm. I cannot tell

whether any truth was behind these suggestions, but I took them all at their face value. And while I may have profited by them in some ways, I know that they made me additionally nervous.

What I feared above everything else was to get sick or lose my mind; and these fears combined with my surroundings in wearing out my resistance. The gloom, the isolation, the bareness and sameness, the silence without and the tumult of my hammering pulses within—but, above all else, the futile grinding of a brain with nothing to work at: under the infernal pressure of this blank existence I felt myself gradually giving way. My body did not suffer so much as my mind. And one day I lost the hold on myself to such an extent that I fell to beating and kicking the cell door in a fit of senseless rage. For a while the muffled sound of my own blows was the only thing I heard—and, such as it was, that sound brought me a welcome relief. Then a deep voice shouted from the other side of the door:

“Peace in there—keep peace, you fool!”

“Peace!” I echoed, dropping down on the bench that served me both as bed and seat. And there I remained for I don’t know how long, rocking myself sideways and muttering ceaselessly that one word “peace.”

Slowly, very slowly, I became aware of a change within me. Quiet descended upon me—a quiet such as I had not experienced since that shot was fired. Instead of exciting me, the deep silence seemed to soothe my overwrought nerves, and under its influence I fell into a long, restful sleep. From this I woke in a much better mood. The danger was not over, but, by a mere chance, I had discovered a way of overcoming it.

For a long time my whole life revolved about those two words: one reaching me from the outside at uncertain intervals; the other one rising automatically to my own lips whenever darkness threatened to swallow me completely. This latter word became more familiar to my lips than any other word in the language—and not until after I had left the prison did it ever fail to bring back self-control and calm of soul.

In that way—although I was denied the privilege of a walk in the prison yard, or even along the corridors—I wore through one dreary month after another without being drawn into any-

thing that might render my position still worse. And when my own day came around once more, my system seemed actually to have adjusted itself to the new conditions—to all of them but the total lack of occupation.

When the day arrived, I gave but little thought to it—for much of its significance had not yet revealed itself to my mind. The morning passed as usual. Toward noon I was standing in the middle of the cell, gazing up at the one little window under the ceiling. My eyes were riveted to those few square inches of blue sky, while I was trying vainly to catch a glimmer of the sunlight which I knew must be flooding the world outside—perhaps even entering some of the cells at the other end of the building, toward the south. And my one thought was: “If I could only get a single ray of sunshine into this place!”

At that moment I heard somebody unlocking the door—in another it was pulled open—one of the guards appeared and threw something past me onto the bed. Before closing the door again he said:

“There’s a book for you. And you can have others if you ask for them.”

He did not use the word that so far always had signalled a message from the friends of whom I knew so little that I could only speak of them to myself as *THEY*. I stood still, unmoved, uninterested, not even caring to look at the book. And so dulled was my mind—so set in a single direction—that considerable time passed before it occurred to me that here was the change I had yearned for—a something to do at last. Then I turned and picked up the book, but with no haste or anticipation of pleasure.

The title ought to have burned itself into my mind forever. Instead there is not an inkling left of it. It was a novel of some kind, I think. I was turning its pages listlessly, when I caught a glimpse of what looked like a loose piece of paper between two leaves. A suspicion stirred in my mind. My breath quickened. With more excitement than the case seemed to warrant, I tried to find that paper which had dropped out of sight the moment I noticed it. The longer I searched in vain, the more feverishly impatient I grew. When at last I found what I was looking for, the thinness of the paper explained why my search had been so

hard. It was a single sheet, slightly smaller than the pages of the book. On both sides it was closely covered with handwritten words. At the top of one page, written in somewhat larger letters, I saw the countersign: SANTIR.

I had to sit down and wait until I became able to read more than that one word. At last I started—in what state of mind would be hard to describe. There was no address and no signature. Yet I perceived soon that it was a letter, and that it was meant for me. It opened with a direction that it be destroyed before dark of the day when it was received. Then followed—the words have gone out of my mind long ago, though once they seemed engraved on it past erasure. The very contents of that letter are forgotten—nothing remains with me but a faint impression of its general spirit and an acute remembrance of the feelings it aroused.

I read and re-read that letter—the first one of many from the same source. At first I devoured its message with a bursting sense of pleasure. Soon, however, a very different feeling began to steal in upon me, and after a while it prevailed entirely: a sense of inexplicable disappointment and bewilderment. There seemed to be something in that letter which eluded every effort to pin it down. The words were not abstruse or far-fetched—and yet they had, somehow, an appearance of lying hopelessly beyond my understanding.

With this problem I struggled until I could no longer distinguish the writing. Then—with a sinking heart—I set about to obey the instructions of my unknown correspondent. I could think of no other way to destroy the letter than by tearing it into small fragments and swallowing these. I had forced down all but a few shreds of paper, when a startling thought shot through my brain—and soon I had convinced myself that it embodied the truth. It offered the one possible explanation why the plain words of that letter had puzzled me as they did.

Whoever wrote the letter had made it obscure on purpose—and that purpose, I now believed, was to hide, and yet convey, some communication more secret, more dangerous even, than the letter itself. And this message I had been expected to discover, and possibly make use of—but because of my blindness and

stupidity I had missed it. Brought to the very limit of despair by the thought of this possibility, I began alternately to curse and weep—and this I kept up until I suddenly discovered that I had learned the whole letter by heart without being aware of it.

That night I slept little. One by one, I examined each word, each sentence, of the destroyed letter. As I turned them over in my mind, everything seemed gradually to gain in clearness—but without bringing to light anything that was wholly new to me. I became more and more inclined to think that I had been deceived by my own excitement—that I had never been puzzled at all except in my own imagination. And yet something within me protested steadfastly against such a conclusion.

It was morning again, and I was sitting on my bench, when the truth of the whole matter came home to me—and right there, in the solitude of my cell, I felt the blood rising hotly to my cheeks. For the first time in my life something like a realization of inferiority took hold of me. For the first time I recognized a shortcoming in myself without promptly absolving myself from all responsibility for it.

I saw that the mystification produced by the letter had its sole basis in the poverty of my own mind. I understood that my own ignorance had veiled the meaning of words chosen and arranged by a mind better equipped than my own. For the first time I grasped the fact that I was ignorant.

I sat down to think, with my elbows on my knees and my chin in my hands. Then I walked back and forth—three steps one way and as many back again—and thought as I walked. Then I sat and thought some more. At last I threw myself on my bed, and my head struck the book in which the letter had been hidden. Until then I had completely forgotten its presence in the cell, though I must have been almost lying on it all night. It served now to turn my mind in a quite new direction, and finally I found myself thinking to some purpose.

The upshot of it was simple enough—for anything like a detailed plan for my own education was utterly beyond me at the time. No, I just decided to read as much as they would let me, and to pick the most instructive books I could get. To figure out what books and subjects would best meet my needs

appeared—and proved—a difficulty which time and again brought me to the verge of despair. But after every new discouragement I went at it with increased determination. And in the end—as the result of many mistakes—I learned what I wanted and how to reach it. Where the books came from, I don't know. There was a library in the prison, but I have reason to believe that most of the works I called for were smuggled in from the outside. And I am equally sure that THEY had a hand in it.

As, at an earlier period, I had lived only to listen, so I lived now to study. Every day was given to it—for I had nothing else to do: every day from the moment it grew light enough in my cell to permit the reading of print, and until the shadows fell so thick about me that the letters grew blurred and invisible. But the part of the day that I could employ in such manner was altogether too small for my thirst after knowledge. For my cell faced the north, and its one window was very small and placed very high up. Thus, in order to use the long twilight hours—otherwise lost—I took to learning most of what I read by heart and going over it in my mind during the time not available for reading.

Some schooling I had had, of course—of the kind and quantity that any poor boy gets in a small American town before he is sent out to earn his own living. After going to work and moving to a larger scene, I read not a little, partly to occupy my lonely leisure hours, and partly with some faint idea of improving myself—but it was all so pitifully haphazard and shallow. Newspapers, anarchist pamphlets, some “radical” books with more of argument than of fact in them, and a stray novel picked up at random now and then—such was the only food my mind had to live on in those early years. And the result——!

Turning to real books now—books full of what I have seen described somewhere as “organized knowledge”—I found to my grief that much of their contents might as well have been printed in some foreign language. Nor did the main trouble lie in the presence of technical words and terms—for these I conquered easily enough with the aid of a dictionary, which I was

LIBRARY

allowed to keep in my cell after a while. No, the one difficulty that seriously concerned me was exactly the same that had checked me in the reading of that first letter. The words were clear enough, taken singly or together, and yet they refused, for some mysterious reason, to connect with what was already in my mind.

For months I floundered about like a drowning man—giving up all hope one minute, and in the next returning to the struggle with a sort of concentrated fury. Day after day I kept at it—with as much system as I could devise—until finally I began to make tangible progress. Almost from the first my day's reading fell into two sharply divided parts: one reserved for the pursuit of general knowledge, and the other devoted exclusively to the study of the English language and the reading of English poetry.

A rare, overpowering love for my own tongue had taken hold of me. As far as I can make out, it began very simply as a reaction against my humiliating experience with that first letter—the letter which seems to have influenced my life as much as any one thing that ever entered it. But very quickly this vague feeling developed into an absorbing passion that fed with equal greed on the driest grammar and the golden lines of the great poets. Nothing would satisfy me but to master the innermost secrets of my own language—all its ways and resources, its every peculiarity and refinement. For this purpose I turned above all to the poets. My one thought in going to them was to study, but I ended by loving them for their own sake. And while, in the beginning, my attention was wholly directed toward their form, their command of words, their delicacies of expression, I soon learned to look for deep-running emotional undercurrents, for world-embracing wisdom, and for inexhaustible spiritual beauty.

Shakespeare and Milton, Shelley and Byron, Keats and Wordsworth, Browning and Tennyson, Lowell and Whitman—these were my daily associates throughout those eleven years. When a day's reading was finished—under compulsion, because my cell was steeped in darkness—I would often crouch on my bed in a kind of swooning rapture, while I repeated aloud the

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verses I had learned. Thus I was made a new man. A new world was built up for me—a vaster, nobler, sweeter world, of which I yearned to be a living part. And, lastly, the poets taught me how to read the letters that to me meant more even than their own poetry.

No one can tell what trend things might have taken, had I had nothing but my books. But I had the letters also.

My heart is beating wildly again. Head and limbs are restless. Midnight has not come yet. My own day has brought me nothing so far.

I am reading no more poetry these days.

The letters—THEIR letters—would reach me at fairly regular intervals—four to six weeks apart—and always in the same shape and manner: a single, closely written sheet, hidden between the leaves of a book and generally very hard to find. Each new book had to be carefully searched. And even when I had searched it in vain, I would hope against hope that the reading of it might bring out an overlooked letter. Finally, when a letter was found—a few hours of gloating over its text, a feverish scrutiny of each word and mark in it, and an anxious effort to photograph its contents on the brain. Always before I was quite done with that task, the moment would come when the letter had to be destroyed. After that I would repeat its every word to myself the first thing I did when I awoke in the morning—and this would continue every day until another letter arrived. The latest letter always seemed to wipe the preceding one out of my memory. I never could recall the text of more than one at a time. To-day I cannot bring back a single sentence from one of those treasured messages. And I have asked myself at times whether they, too, were nothing but so many delusions—whether, after all, they carried within them nothing vital enough to take a lasting hold of my memory. But such speculations are too dangerous to be pursued very far.

All the letters were written in the same hand—a hand clear as print—and I can still see it when I close my eyes—that is, I can see letters and words, but no sentences with a meaning in them. Even to my untrained perception it was clear, however,

that the letters were composed by several different persons. And I spent excited hours trying to figure out the characters and personalities and appearances of the authors. One of them I felt must be a woman.

They were only known to me collectively—as *THEY*. But out of their letters they seemed to rise before me like so many real presences: startlingly real, and yet unnaturally enlarged—like figures coming at you through a mist. And out of their letters I endowed them with all the qualities that I had missed in ordinary men and women. As I pondered their words, and wondered at their brightness, strength and kindness, a single thought separated itself from all the rest and gathered force above all others, until the feeling it engendered seemed the very essence of my being: “I must be worthy of those friends if I ever meet them!”

All that was sublime in the poets I rediscovered in these letters—only in a more familiar form. All that the poets had dreamt of, and hoped for, and sung about, I felt to be already present in life—embodied in *THEM*, in my friends. And out of all this, new dreams were born—dreams of what might be done when I emerged from my grave and joined that group of men—men free from the marring weaknesses and limitations of ordinary humanity. Mankind should be made to see, even as I had seen—it should be made to understand, even as I, in my prison hole, had come to understand—and *THEY* would do the rest.

Only one adverse thought appeared at times to trouble my faith. How is it, I said to myself, that the rest of the world has not already seen what to me is so plain? If a few letters can reveal so much, how much more may not be proclaimed by speech and glance and action? There must be men to whom *THEY* must come so much closer than to me—free men meeting them face to face every day—and what blindness prevents these more fortunate ones from perceiving what cannot be hidden from me in my cell?

For a long time I opened every letter with a thought, if not a hope, that it might contain some suggestion for my escape. But nothing of the kind was ever mentioned. And by degrees

all idea of a release before the natural end of my term ceased to occupy my mind.

All in all, I must have received more than a hundred letters, and for eleven years I lived in and by those letters—in them and in the works of the poets.

Through eleven years I climbed steadily upward. The work that was so painful in the beginning changed into one continuous, exhilarating joy. I felt myself growing day by day. And the letters provided me with a test for my own growth. Each new one found me better ready for its appreciation. And as I rose, the letters seemed to rise ahead of me—till there were no more letters!

There was no chance for me to answer. Paper and pen were denied me to the last. And I thought it just as well—something of a relief, in fact. For I dared not dream of equalling what I received—and nothing less would do. But just for the fun of it—urged on by the very hopelessness of my undertaking—I tried to shape appropriate replies in my head. First in verse, but that way nothing would come at all. Then in prose. And this task soon formed one of my favorite pastimes. I did not try to judge what I composed—I made no comparisons, as far as I remember—but I believe that if, to-day, I write and speak the English language with some grace, this gift may be traced mainly to that prison practice without pen or paper.

Toward the end of my twelfth year in prison I was told, to my intense astonishment, that “good behavior” had shortened my term, and that I should be set free in a few weeks. And not until then did I realize how completely I had resigned myself to the quiet routine of my studious prison life.

At first the very thought of a return into the crowded, busy world filled me with fear. I should have to earn a living, too—and how? I had gone to prison as an unskilled workman—with all the limitations of such a man, but also with the chances of such a man, such as they are. In prison I had acquired no skill that might bring me a living—but I had changed considerably in other ways. I hardly realized that I had educated myself—that I had risen above the natural circumstances and tastes of my own

class—but I knew there was a great difference in me, and the nature and consequences of it perplexed me.

What first gave me back some courage was the thought of meeting THEM. Later on I drew added confidence from the fact that I was to be released on my own day. For all that, I spent the rest of my prison days swinging back and forth between fear and expectation, between extreme elation and extreme depression—and both feelings grew more intense as the days fell behind me, until at last every nerve in my body was on edge.

And all too soon, as it seemed to me then, the day arrived. I was set free. THEY met me at the prison gate—a dozen people in all, as far as my confused senses could make out.

After running so smoothly and willingly, my pen balks.

It is growing late, and I must have been writing for hours. To whom? To what purpose?

Some power is urging me on—something must be coming out of it in the end.

THEY were very kind to me, very friendly and considerate. They flattered and praised and made much of me. And the more eager they appeared in their efforts to please me and comfort me, the more embarrassed I became.

Of course, I should have borne in mind the vast difference that lies between the words of a letter read within prison walls and the words spoken by a man in the street—between the outpouring of some hour of concentrated enthusiasm and the petty commonplaces that fill up all the hours of all the days of all the years unto the end. I believe I did consider something of this kind. But need the difference have proved so great?

All that first day I felt dazed. Everything jarred me, and yet I saw or heard very little plainly. I cannot even tell what sort of place it was in which we spent the evening. Some festivity had been arranged in my honor. Many people were there besides THEM. Much talking went on—I even took a part in it, and was greatly startled by the queer sound of my own voice. And all the time I was longing for my cell—longing for silence and solitude—longing to get away from THEM.

If they had proved monsters—if I had found them what the

world imagines them—the blow might not have been so hard. But to find them just ordinary human beings—small, earthbound, selfish, spiteful, and vain; full of big words and petty bickerings; looking more at each other than at life or mankind or the future—this—this was the one thing I had never suspected—the one thing I could not bear.

Many a time during these last months, particularly at night, I have been sitting untold hours on the edge of my bed, just as I used to do in the cell—and unfamiliar, unaccountable feelings have torn me—until my heart seemed on the point of stopping or bursting. And I have felt things drifting away from me—just as they were drifting those first months in prison. And I have rocked and rocked, and muttered that one word “peace”—until the taste of it in my mouth filled me with nausea. But to no avail.

As I look back at that first day, an isolated incident stands out grotesquely from the mist that surrounds all the rest—and I wonder why in the world my mind has preserved this thing alone of all that must have taken place around me.

There was a woman among THEM—as I had guessed. She was kind-looking, oldish and fat—knitting away at a sock all the time, and talking faster than she knitted. Once more I have the sense of being in a strange room, full of people and smoke, and beside me this woman is plying her needles as she says to me:

“Oh, I know what it is to be in jail—I go to jail once a year as regular as the sun rises—for just as soon as I try to speak in a public hall, ‘pop!’ comes the police and locks me up on the spot—and I can’t be away from my family oftener—but once a year I risk it and take my dose, and it’s good for me—it keeps me from getting too fat—you see, I am *so* fond of roast pork and red cabbage—with the merest touch of vinegar on the cabbage—but twelve years is too much for anybody.”

Can it be that, after all, this represents the most characteristic thing that *did* happen to me that day?

I learned to know them from one another—learned their names and histories—became acquainted with their ways and

views and aspirations. We talked a great deal together—we were always talking—of “the cause,” of our “plans,” of “action.” And although I could never make out what they were actually doing, or what they intended to do, I had to admit that they were not lacking either in insight or ideals.

As the days went by, they helped me in many ways. They suggested and tried various schemes to get me a livelihood. They got me to try my hand at writing—as I have been doing since, and not without some success. Oh, I know that I have been neither just nor grateful to them!

But no matter what they said or did, my impatience with them increased all the time—my prison dreams receded further and further away—and now—I am here!

Several times I have tried to leave them. Once I went out into the woods, across unknown fields, wandering about for days. In the end they found me, and I went back with them—or was brought back.

One year has passed since I was set free—and it is again my own day. This morning they came to me. They remembered the anniversary and had planned to celebrate it. One of them remembered what lay still further back and spoke of the shots—I could have struck him! Not that I regret—for what would be the use? But how can I tell whether I should care to do now what I did then—twelve years ago?

I told them I was sick and wanted to be alone. They pressed me. They wanted to stay and take care of me. I could see that they were seriously concerned—and disappointed also—but I could not let them. I could not stand being with them on this day again. And at last I got them to leave me.

Not that they are worse than other people—or worse than I am. Not that they are false to themselves—or to their cause, such as it is. But because they are not better than everybody else—because their cause is no more especially theirs than it was his whom I tried to kill.

And this cause, the very name of which sounds unreal in my ears to-day—it has been my cause—it is——?

So this was what my day was to bring me—the great hap-

pening that I have been waiting for since morning! Once more, as always, this one day has set its mark indelibly on my life—and henceforth my life will not be what it was until to-day.

For a year it has been coming—and I did not suspect what it meant until this moment.

I have been thinking of THEM merely—and it was my faith itself that was slipping away from me. If it be wholly their fault, or if it were doomed to happen anyhow, who can tell? If it bodes good or bad—days yet to come must prove it.

This much I know, and no more: what I have lived on during the last twelve years, or longer, has been taken away from me—it is now gone beyond all recovery. When I began to write this, I had a feeling of some great loss—but I did not know then—my pen was only putting chance words on a piece of paper.

Until this very moment the truth was hidden from me, but now I *do* see it: through all these years I have been following a phantom!

My loss may turn into gain in the end, but just now it is a loss and nothing else. I am poor as I never was before I went to prison—I am lonesome as I never was in the solitude of my cell—I am at sea as I never was before I first began to think and dream.

When and where shall I find a scheme, a creed, a faith, that can fill up this gnawing void within—a something on which I may build my life?

How am I going to live at all without something to believe in?

The church clock is striking twelve—my day is gone.

A NIGHT IN THE LUXEMBOURG *

CHARLES VALE

UNE *Nuit au Luxembourg*, by Remy de Gourmont, was published in Paris in 1906. London, after meditating for six years, has decided to challenge public opinion with an unexpurgated translation. Boston, always progressive and adventurous, has repeated the challenge. It is rather astonishing that the journey from Paris to Boston, *via* London, has occupied, comparatively, such a short period. Evidently events are marching.

At the beginning of the volume appears, as a preface, a review by Arthur Ransome. This, in virtue of its excellence, should be considered carefully. It does not explain *Une Nuit au Luxembourg*, or Remy de Gourmont; but neither Remy de Gourmont nor *Une Nuit au Luxembourg* can be explained easily. It does, however, reveal Mr. Ransome's own viewpoint; and that is a revelation entirely worth while.

"*Une Nuit au Luxembourg*," he writes, "is the book that opens most vistas in M. de Gourmont's work. A god walks in the gardens behind the Odéon, and a winter's night is a summer's morning, on which the young journalist who has dared to say 'My friend' to the luminous unknown in the church of Saint-Sulpice hears him proclaim the forgotten truth that in one age his mother had been Mary, and in another Latona; and the new truth that the gods are not immortal, though their lives are long. Flowers are in bloom where they walk, and three beautiful girls greet them with divine amity. Most of the book is written in dialogue, and in this ancient form, never filled with subtler essences, doubts are born and become beliefs, beliefs become doubts and die, while the sun shines, flowers are sweet, and girls' lips soft to kiss. Where there is God he will not have love absent, and where Love is he finds the most stimulating exercise for his brain. Ideas are given an æsthetic rather than a scientific value and are used like the tints on a palette. Indeed, the book is a balanced composition in which each color

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