
Wilhelm Liebknecht, the People's Tribune (August 18, 1900)

A titan has fallen. Liebknecht, the scarred warrior of the social revolution, lies pulseless on the field of battle. He fell in full charge, his face to the retreating enemy. For 40 years he fought with dauntless valor, and where the fight was thickest the plume of Liebknecht like a banner, waved defiant. Great captain of the revolutionary hosts, his only title was the divine right of genius to lead, and the only arms he bore were truth and justice.

This immortal man was not Germany's alone. He fought for and belonged to all mankind. His name was known and honored in all the zones that belt the globe, and 7 million socialists uncover and unite as one in reverent tribute to his memory.

With Marx, Lassalle, and Engels, he plucked from fate the fadeless laurels of immortality.

Thou art Freedom's now, and Fame's;
One of the few, the immortal names
That were not born to die. ¹

At the bier of Liebknecht, socialism bows and weeps. For her he was bruised by the contumelious stone; for her he languished long in prison cell; for her he bore the sacrificial cross.

Bismarck in the zenith of his autocratic power could not daunt him. With resolute mien and flashing eye he stood erect; he dared to challenge the king himself though death had been the penalty.

Intrepid soul, thou couldst't proudly say:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods there be
For my unconquerable soul. ²

When the Wilhelms, Bismarcks, and all the titled tyrants of all times have passed to dust, or are remembered only for their crimes, our Liebknecht's name will shine with luster in the firmament of the ages.

Of Wilhelm Liebknecht, too, some Hugo of the future may say, "He disappeared, but left us his soul, the Revolution." And when socialism is triumphant, "I affirm it up there, in the stars, Liebknecht will smile."³

The worn and weary children of toil scarce know their benefactor. But their children and their children's children, emancipated by the genius of socialism he so truly typified, will weave garlands for his grave and sing sweet anthems to his memory.

And we who follow him will seize the standard he held aloft unsullied through all the years, until death relaxed his hold, and bear it on and on until it symbolizes humanity disenthralled, the Universal Commonwealth.

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¹ Concluding lines of "Marco Bozzaris" (1825), by Fitz-Greene Halleck (1790–1867).

² First stanza of "Invictus" (1888), by William Ernest Henley (1849–1903).

³ Adapted from "Oration on Voltaire" (1878), by Victor Hugo (1802-1885).