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## Edward Bellamy was a Friend of Mine (May 28, 1898)

It was with the most sincere regret that I learned of the death of Edward Bellamy.<sup>1</sup> He was a very warm friend of mine.

When in 1888 the first edition of *Looking Backward* appeared, the name of Edward Bellamy flashed around the world. Of this epoch-making book it is estimated that fully 200,000 copies have been sold, and it has been translated into German, French, Italian, Russian, and many other languages.

Rarely has a book created such a profound impression on the popular mind. For years there has been agitation of the social question in other countries, especially in Germany and France, where a mighty international socialist movement was developing at a rate to arouse apprehension among the ruling class. *Looking Backward* was the first popular exposition of socialism in this country. Thousands read it with keen delight without being aware that it undermined the existing social order and paved the way for the social commonwealth.

From that time to this there has been a worldwide interest in Edward Bellamy and he has been classed with the great men of the country. There are those who, while admiring the brilliant achievement of the man, esteem him wholly impractical and place him in the category of visionaries and dreamers. They are less than just to themselves. A careful study of Mr. Bellamy's later works, especially *Equality*,<sup>2</sup> will convince any fair-minded person that the author was eminently practical in his views and theories. As a matter of course he was an idealist, but this only developed the practical side of the man and made it possible for him to present his theories so admirably and effectively as to captivate the mass of the people in all civilized lands.

The fame of this distinguished author, reformer, and humanitarian will rest upon *Equality*, the book that may be said to have sapped his life currents and hurried him to a premature grave.

He foresaw the death of the present competitive system with prophetic vision and how clearly he indicated the revolutionary processes by which

the economic world is being revolutionized and the new social order established will be realized only long after his earthly labors ended.

Edward Bellamy died in the very prime of his manhood. He was but 48 when the summons came. Personally, he was one of the gentlest and most lovable of me. He was in the truest sense a friend of suffering humanity. Touched and shocked by the daily exhibition of social wrong he encountered, he gave his whole heart and head to the task of finding a way to ameliorate the ills of *Les Miserables*, not by dispensing charity, but by the development of a social system, the basis of which should be economic equality, and in which industry should be organized and carried forward cooperatively, not for profit, but for the common and equal good of all.

It is yet too early for the world to form an estimate of the work and worth of this great and able man. Future generations will know him better than this, and when history is fairly and impartially written his name will appear among the most illustrious of the ages.

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<sup>1</sup> Bellamy died of tuberculosis on May 22, 1898 at his home in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts. This statement to a representative of the *Terre Haute Express* was made by Debs the evening of May 28 from his own home.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Bellamy, *Equality*. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1897.