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Justice!

Ricardo Flores Magón

1914

The governor, the capitalist, and the priest rested that afternoon in the shadow of an ash tree which glowed vigorously in the canyon of the mountain range.

The capitalist, visibly agitated, mashed the pulp of a red booklet between his hands, and said between sigh and sigh:

“All has been lost: my fields, my cattle, my mills, my factories; everything is now controlled by the revolutionaries.”

The governor, trembling with rage, said:

“It has ended; now no one respects authority.”

And the priest elevated his eyes to the sky and said remorsefully:

“Wicked reason: she has murdered faith!”

The three pillars of society thought, thought, and thought... The previous night, some fifty revolutionaries had invaded the village. The working class of the area had received them with open arms. While the town was searching for the governor, the capitalist, and the priest to demand from them a strict account of their actions, they fled to the canyon seeking refuge.

“Our empire over the masses has ended,” said the governor and the capitalist in one voice.

The priest smiled and said in a convinced tone:

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“Do not worry yourselves. Clearly, faith has lost some ground. However, I assure you that, by means of religion, we can recuperate all we have lost. First of all, it appears that the ideas contained in this evil booklet have triumphed in the village. They will certainly triumph if we remain inactive. I do not deny that these wicked ideas enjoy sympathy among the people. However, others refuse them, especially the ideas that directly attack Religion. Among these last people, we must foment a reactionary movement. Fortunately, the three of us could escape. If we had perished in the hands of the revolutionaries, the old institutions would have died with us.”

The capitalist and the governor felt as if they had been liberated from a terrible burden. Inspired by greed, the capitalist’s eyes drizzled. How? How would it be possible for him to enjoy again the possession his fields, his cattle, his mills, and his factories? Hadn’t it all been just a cruel nightmare. Would he return to having the entire population of his district under his power, thanks to the good minister of Religion? And, standing up, he shook his fist in the direction of the village, whose farmhouses glowed brightly under the rays of the May sun.

The governor, emotional, said with conviction:

“I have always believed that Religion is the most solid support of the principal of authority. Religion teaches that God is the first leader and that governors are his lieutenants on earth. Religion condemns rebellion because it considers governors to be above the people by the will of God. Long live Religion!”

Enamored by his own words, the governor snatched the red booklet from the hands of the capitalist, tearing it to pieces and throwing the scraps at the village, as if challenging the noble insurrectionary proletariats.

“Dogs,” he cried, “receive this with my saliva!”

The bits of paper were blown by the air, flying cheerfully like butterflies playing. It was the Manifesto of September 23, 1911.

The first shadows of the night began to descend upon the valley. Through the twilight could be seen a red flag rippling on

top of a small house in the village. It flaunted in white letters this inscription: “Land and Liberty” The governor, the capitalist and the priest cried out, shaking their fists towards the village:

“Nest of vipers, we will soon crush you!”

The last brushstrokes of the sun still shone, emitted from the West while disappearing. The frogs began their customary serenade, free, happy, ignorant of the miseries that make men suffer. In the ash tree, a pair of mocking birds sang to each other of their free love, without judges, without priests, without clerks. The gentle beauty of the hour invited the human heart to expose all its tortures, and to materialize all its sentiments in a work of art.

Making the rocks shudder, a formidable cry rolled through the dale: “Who lives?”

The governor, the capitalist, and the priest trembled, foreseeing their end. The night had finally come, shrouding everything in blackness. The mocking birds hushed up; the frogs quieted down; a gust of wind stirred the boughs of the ash in a sinister manner. In the awful darkness, a resonating, fateful cry returned “Who lives!”

The three pillars of society remembered all their crimes in a second: they had enjoyed all the delicacies of life at the expense of the suffering of humble people. They had sustained the ignorance and misery of humanity, in order to satisfy their appetites.

A sound of energetic footsteps drew closer to them. It was the soldiers of the people, the soldiers of the Social Revolution. A discharge of rifle shots felled the representatives of the hydra with three heads: Authority, Capital, and the Church.