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Ricardo Flores Magón

The frock coat and the blouse

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The aristocratic frock coat and the plebian blouse were in the same trash heap.

“What an abomination! What humiliation!” said the frock coat, gazing obliquely at its neighbor. “I am next to a blouse . . .!”

A gust of wind blew one of the humble blouse’s arms atop the arrogant frock coat, as if it intended to reconcile those who were seated equally; to harmonize, by means of a fraternal embrace, the two garments that were situated equally, yet which are normally found so distant from each other in the social life of humans.

“Horror!”, shrieked the frock coat, “Your contact assassinates me, filthy rag! Truly, your audacity is outrageous. How dare you touch me? We are not equal! I am the frock coat, the noble garment that shelters and gives distinction to gentlemen; I am the stylish garment that only comes into contact with decent people. I am the vestment of the banker and the professional, the legislator, and the judge, the industrialist and the merchant; I live in the world of business and talent. I am the garment of the rich, do you understand?”

Another gust of wind removed the blouse’s arm from the frock coat. As if it were indignant, regretting that it had sheltered that pretentious rag for a few sentimental, fraternal instants, and attempting to contain its rage, the blouse said:

“You fill me with pity, you haughty rag, sheath of vain and wicked beings. You should be ashamed for having covered white-gloved scoundrels. I would have died of horror if I had felt under me the dreadful palpitation of a judge’s heart; I would feel defiled covering the paunch of a merchant or a banker. I am the garment of the poor. Under me pulsates the generous heart of the worker; of the herdsman who shaved from the sheep the primary material of which you are composed; of the weaver who converted it into cloth; of the tailor who made it a frock coat. I am the covering of useful beings, hard-working and noble. I do not visit palaces. Rather I live in the workshop; I frequent the mine; I am present in the factory; I go to the fields; I am always found in the places where riches are produced.

“You do not find me in gilded salons nor in luxurious boudoirs, where the gold made by the sweat of the poor is squandered, or where the slavery of the disinherited is agreed upon. Rather, I will be discovered

in the meetings of freedom fighters, where the prophetic word of the people's orator announces the advent of a new society; I will be seen in the bosom of the anarchist group, inside which good people prepare to transform society. And while you, conceited coat, wallow in bacchanals and orgies, I clothe myself with glory in the trench or in the barricade dueling the military officer or in the riot during the struggle for liberty and justice. The moment has come when you and I must fight a duel to the death. You represent tyranny; I am protest: face to face, we are the oppressor and the rebel, the torturer and the victim. In the balance of civilization and progress, I weigh more than you, because I am the force behind everything. I move the machines, I dig the tunnels, I lay the tracks . . . I make the Revolution! I drive the world!

A ragman put an end to the conflict, putting the garments in different sacks, which he carried uphill to his hovel.