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Ricardo Flores Magón
The rifle
1911

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The rifle

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I serve two factions: The faction that oppresses and the faction that liberates. I do not have preferences. With the same fury, with the same crack, I fire the bullet that snatches life away from the soldier of liberty or the henchman of tyranny.

Workers made me, to kill workers. I am the rifle, the killer of freedom when I serve those on top; the weapon of emancipation when I serve those below.

Without me, there would not be men who say “I am more than you”, and, without me, there would not be slaves who cry “down with tyranny!”

The tyrant calls me “buttress of institutions.” The free man caresses me tenderly and calls me “instrument of redemption.” I am the same thing, and yet nevertheless, I serve to oppress as well as to liberate. I am, at the same time, assassin and vindicator, depending on the hands that wield me.

I can also tell in whose hands I am. Do these hands tremble? There can be no doubt: these are the hands of a military officer. Is it a firm pulse? I say without vacillating: “these are the hands of a liberator.”

I do not need to hear cries to know which faction is using me. It is enough for me to hear the chattering of teeth to know that I am in the hands of oppressors. Evil is cowardly; Good is valorous. When the officer supports my chamber in his bosom to make me vomit out the death nestled in my cartridge, I feel his heart leap with violence. It is because he is conscience of his crime. He does not know who he will kill. He has been ordered: "fire!", and there goes the shot that will perhaps venture through the heart of his father, his brother, or his child, through someone who has been summoned by the honorable cry "Revolution!"

I will exist on this earth as long as there is a stupid humanity that insists on dividing itself into two classes: the rich and the poor, those who consume and those who suffer.

When the last capitalist disappears and the shadow of authority dissipates, I will disappear in my turn, consecrating my materials to the construction of ploughs and the thousand instruments which men transformed into brothers will wield with enthusiasm.