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GRACIANO LÓPEZ JAENA:

**SPEECHES, ARTICLES AND LETTERS**

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
NATIONAL HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MANILA

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**Graciano López Jaena (17 December 1856 – 20 January 1896)**

## FOREWORD

From the pivotal years of our political and social struggles during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, we have a wealth of historical works which advocated reforms and emancipation from Spanish rule. At the vanguard of the campaign then were two Filipino groups—the propagandists and the revolutionists—each with a different approach to the attainment of the commonweal.

Of the eminent men of letters was Graciano López Jaena, who with Jose Rizal and Marcelo H. del Pilar composed the political triumvirate in Spain. He was the founder and first editor of *La Solidaridad*. As a fearless writer and fiery orator, his speeches, reflections, articles and letters are sources of invaluable historical materials on Philippine history. Touching on varied subjects discreetly geared towards the enhancement of the Filipino cause, the writings also give us an insight of his character, his intellect, his eloquence, and his style; and most of all, a glimpse of his role as a reformist. In the light of his convictions, we can thus appreciate López Jaena's ideals and aspirations on which he courageously fought till death on January 20, 1896 in Barcelona, without seeing the dawn of liberty for his beloved country.

With the publication of his works, compiled and translated, the National Historical Commission has therefore lived up to its prescribed duties and functions of publishing the works of our national heroes and other great and good Filipinos, as well as their translations into English and Filipino, and other languages of the Philippines.

ESTEBAN A. DE OCAMPO  
Chairman

# TO THE FILIPINOS

Persons with whose friendship I feel highly honored have succeeded in overcoming my tenacious opposition to the publication of my speeches and various articles which I consider works of passing interest, products of improvisation, unconnected with each other, at the time of writing, lacking in value and interest like all works written for publication in magazines and newspapers.

I am giving you this warning, my compatriots, to whom I dedicate this modest work: Do not look in it for literary gems which it does not have; or profound and luminous thoughts, or ingenious and sublime concepts, or even coherent ideas, because such conceptions cannot sprout from a dwarfish intellect like mine.

Though the work suffers from these defects, yet you will discover in it, you will note throbbing on all its pages three sublime aspirations, for in this respect I yield to no one, which are—

1. A stainless patriotism, an immense love of the Philippines; the Philippines, constant love of my heart, my perennial illusion!
2. My aim, my vehement desire to improve her lot, to see the sun of progress, liberty, and law shine over her horizons;
3. My earnest desire to unmask her oppressors, those responsible for her immense misfortunes.

It is said that in certain towns in India are found trees called *manzanillos* whose shade brings death to those who unfortunately seek shelter under their leafy but poisonous bowers.

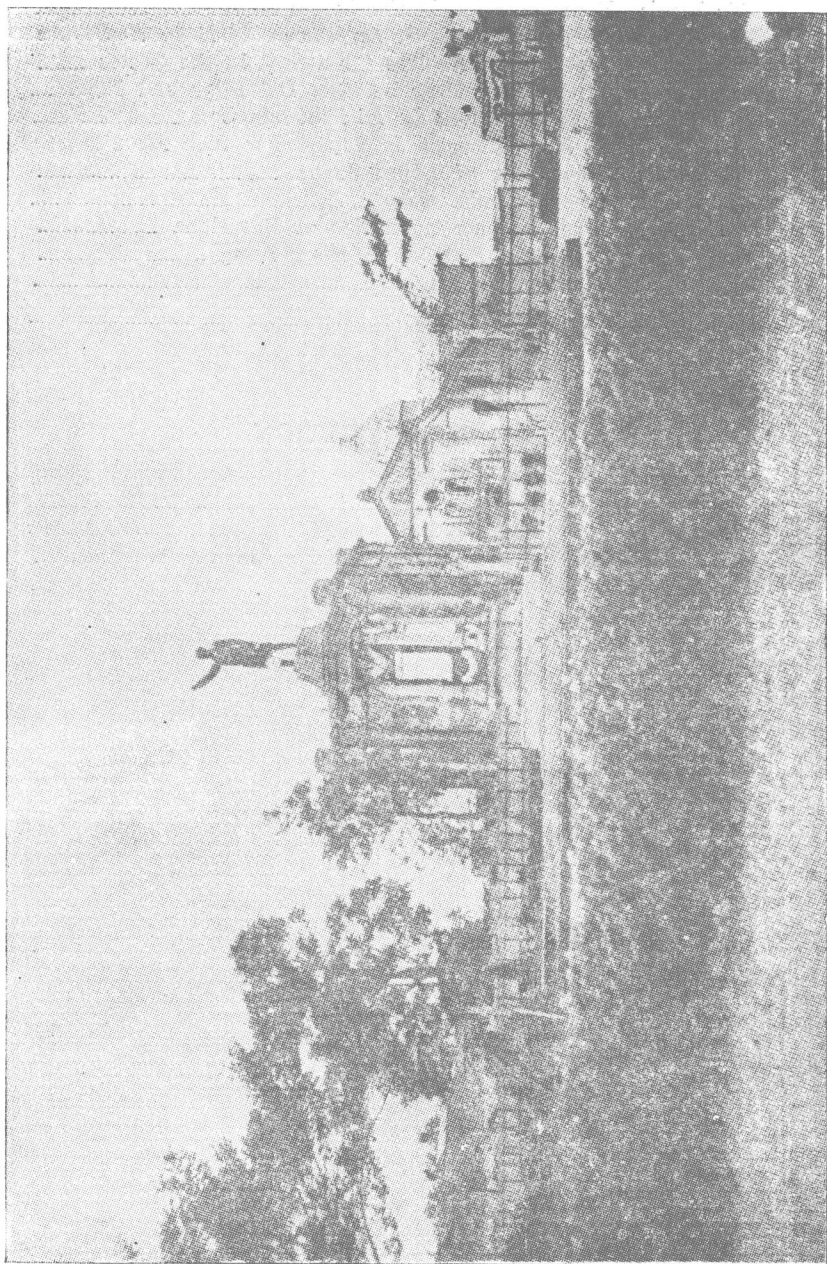
"*Voilà l'ennemi*", said Gambetta; see there the enemy, we say: The friars are the human *manzanillos*, more poisonous than those trees, under whose "protective" shade Philippine towns are languishing and agonizing.

Having pointed out the evil, the "tree" being known, it only remains for us all *in solidum* to pull it up by the roots and thereby render an immense service to our Motherland the Philippines and to all humanity.

*Barcelona, 1891*

GRACIANO LÓPEZ JAENA





Lopez Jaena Monument, Jaro, Iloilo

## GRACIANO LÓPEZ JAENA

General José Alejandrino<sup>1</sup> evokes very gracefully a recollection of Iloilo when he was witnessing the inauguration of the monument to López Jaena.<sup>2</sup> At the sight of his figure attired in formal clothes, he repressed a smile. Why? According to the general, nothing could represent him more inappropriately than to be so attired in a dress coat. To General Alejandrino, López Jaena was "the personification of slovenliness". The article that describes the Iloilo orator from birth is almost all a string of anecdotes in which there is everything except orderliness, propriety and neatness: such was López Jaena.

Among the Filipinos in Spain between 1880 and 1896, it was common practice to choose one with the worst appearance to identify him: that one was López Jaena.

When he appeared before a select audience on a very solemn occasion, he described himself thus: "My limited worth, my obscure and unknown name, a stranger among you with a physiognomy denoting the character of far-away lands, belonging to a race distinct from yours, speaking a language different from yours, as my accent reveals." And General

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<sup>1</sup> José Alejandrino, a contemporary of Rizal, studied chemical and industrial engineering in Ghent, Belgium. When he returned to the Philippines, he joined the Philippine Revolution, rising to the rank of general of the Revolutionary Army. He was a member of the Malolos Congress, 1898. Under the Commonwealth of the Philippines (1935-1946), he was elected senator. In 1933 he published a reminiscences entitled *La Senda del sacrificio*.

<sup>2</sup> Graciano López Jaena was born in Jaro, Iloilo on 29 December 1856.\* He was the son of Plácido López and María Jacobo Jaena. In 1880 he went to Spain, having completed the secondary course at the Seminario de Jaro, to study medicine. He did not finish the course; instead he engaged in journalism. At Barcelona he founded the fortnightly *La Solidaridad* in order that the Filipino reformists might have an organ of their own. As a journalist in Spain, he discovered that it was with great difficulty that Filipino writers could find newspapers willing to give space to their articles about the Philippines.

López Jaena in his campaign for reforms for the Philippines delivered speeches whenever he found a chance. He was greatly admired by Spaniards and Filipinos alike for his eloquence and patriotic fervor. He died in Barcelona on 20 January 1896.

\* Don Jaime de Veyra commits an error here. The church records of Jaro, Iloilo, say that "*En veinte de Diciembre de mil ochocientos cincuenta y seis años Yo Fr. Plácido de Ysana Religioso del ordo de N.P.S. Agustín . . . bautisé solemnemente a Graciano López de tres dias nacido . . .*" T.A.A.



Aleandrino delineates vividly such characteristics with these words: "His physical characteristics were unfavorable to him as an orator. He was of medium stature with a frail constitution, somewhat a stutterer, and with a very pronounced Bisayan accent." Nonetheless, on that memorable night of 25 February 1889, at the Ateneo de Barcelona, the large audience, especially the resplendent women, applauded him wildly. Mariano Ponce who attended the lecture wrote: "That night Graciano López Jaena was a complete success with his interesting lecture. He was warmly and enthusiastically congratulated by the distinguished audience."

\* \* \* \* \*

He was a born orator. He went to Spain as a student in 1880; and before one year was over, he had become a conspicuous figure at a political meeting; and thus he continued for years and years, speaking more than writing and almost always extemporaneously. He was a tribune; he was indispensable in republican meetings. Even when he writes—and anyone with a critical sense will notice it—even when he takes the pen, he appears to be "gesticulating" as if delivering a speech by his style of writing and his hesitant clauses: *Ars bene dicendi* . . .

The reader will remember that Rizal went to Spain in 1882. López Jaena was two years ahead of him. When Rizal started his campaign, his compatriot was already known and appreciated in political circles. It is fair to acknowledge his priority in time. In mentioning the Philippine political trinity of what is called "Progressive Campaign", it would seem appropriate to follow the order of priority in accordance with historical truth, thus: López Jaena—Rizal—del Pilar, not by age but by precedence of work.

Coming from different regions of our Islands they met in Spain, one after the other. They differed in age slightly. Del Pilar was born in 1850; López Jaena in 1856; Rizal in 1861. Our memory, our devotion, place them in a different order. López Jaena was first to reach Spain; then Rizal, and finally, del Pilar. As to talent . . . Aleandrino already said, repeating an appreciation of Rizal himself: he regarded López Jaena as having more ability than he. We all acknowledge

Rizal to be first for the variety of his talents as well as for his special mission and the tragic end of his life. But, what did General Blanco, governor during those critical times, say? That del Pilar, because of his astuteness, prudence, and flexibility, was politically more to be feared than Rizal. López Jaena, the bohemian, the fighter, of the flaming word; Rizal, the cultured man, the encyclopedist, the man-symbol, the man-guide, capable of carrying out the most risky enterprises; del Pilar, the political expert, Janus-faced, noble adversary . . . the three met in Spain at this psychological moment that we can now appreciate better than our predecessors; and perhaps we can never thank Providence sufficiently for having created them thus, different and homogeneous, divergent and concentric, imperfect and complementary; and found them there gathered, determined and ready to coordinate, to help one another, to be the instruments of the same cause: the freedom of the Philippines.

A Rizalist and assiduous reader of our history will remember that when the Patriot was an exile in Dapitan, confidentially he showed Governor Carnicero a syllabus of reforms which in his opinion would appease the progressives. One of them has attracted our attention—this was in 1892—the establishment of a school of arts and trades in each province. Now then: what Rizal wrote in 1892 as desirable, López Jaena had already made the target of his campaign in the Madrid review *Los Dos Mundos*. Openly and under his signature the Ilongo politician advocated liberal measures for our country; and in this publication—where he was a reporter or contributor—and in others, like *El Liberal*, *El Progreso* and *Bandera Social* of Madrid, *La Publicidad*, *El Pueblo Soberano*, and *El Diluvio* of Barcelona, he published from time to time articles the greater number of which had not been gathered: there they are lost and drowned in that swell that is called press. He had published meritorious articles on economic questions and public administration in *España en Filipinas*, *Revista del Círculo Hispano Filipino*, and *Revista Económica de la Cámara de Comercio de España* in London.

During the years 1881–1887, our compatriot had become the advance sentinel of the defense of the Philippines: with his pen in readiness and his attention ever on the alert, he refuted every article that appeared in the newspapers that

he considered injurious to the name of the Filipinos or merely contrary to the truth. Before the educated element in the Philippines began to be scandalized by the articles of the ludicrous and colorful Quioquiap,\* the fiery writer had already taken care of his insults and abuses, which Blumentritt later refuted seriously and which Rizal dismissed with gestures of disgust. The name of López Jaena was becoming notorious; and Martínez Vigil (afterwards Bishop of Oviedo), Alvarez Guerra, Pando and disguised friars, and even women, came forward wishing to contend with the self-styled leader only to get out of the dispute, like the Negro of the story, with cold feet and hot head.

One of his most charming deeds was his work in favor of the compatriots who were "exhibited" in the Philippine Exposition held at Madrid in 1887. His denunciations of the unjust and tyrannical treatment of the Filipino workers stirred up popular horror and gained sympathy to the altruistic cause and to its staunch champion. And the names of the Carolinian Dolores Neiser and the Jolo woman Basalia remained fatidically engraved upon the minds of the Spanish public.

We do not wish to deny that frequently audacity rather than understanding had the better of López Jaena. General Alejandrino writes emphatically: "Like all unpolished talents Graciano was bold with an incredible *sans facon*." And we believe that he himself quotes Rizal's repeated recommendation to him: "Study, study always to become authoritative." However, he was not so ignorant as not to understand the matters he passionately championed. We shall cite the question of municipal reform before General Despujol delivered his memorable address to the Board of Authorities in Manila, and also before Maura's municipal reform in 1893 itself. Is there need for another proof? Review his study on "Philippine Institutions", and the reader will be surprised how thoroughly he knew the subject, superior and very superior to that which J. Felipe del Pan, an expert in administrative matters, published in his *Revista de Filipinas* (1875). The same was true with regard to the question of banditry. His criticism of Minister Fabié's blunder was a full tilt. His articles, though inferior to M. H. del Pilar's notable ones, from

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\* Pen name of Pablo Feced.

the legal point of view, are on a par with them from the political and social viewpoint.

Because the second was López Jaena's forte. It might be said that he knew it by instinct. The majority of the articles in this volume is of this type. Even those which were hastily written do not lack substance. Only his republican passion makes him stray from his target; then he fails, he makes a mistake. His fatidical predictions, the result then of his impatience, now seem candid; but, in spite of the distance in time, they still seem apt: imagine how they must have impressed the public in those days!

In this book there are three headings for as many "studies", stories, or whatever they may be: "Fray Botod", "Entre Kas-tila y filipina", and "Todo es *hambúg!*" After reading a few lines, it will be noted that the author is not certain, as if he were out of his element, *invita Minerva!* Why did he persist in it? That can be a witticism, a pleasant joke: it is not a story, not even a description. One of them has for a subtitle "Fragments heard in a conversation": they are thus, it would have been better to have left them out. The three works are a caricature; they can pass as exaggerations, nothing more. Neither by temperament nor by education was the author prepared for such work. Let us regard them as a mistake. Notwithstanding, there are strokes of wit and even flashes of ingenuity or inspiration, which proclaim a man of talent who, even though mistaken, has sparkle, which is not negligible, and fleeting hits.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Vir bonus dicendi peritus*: a good man who knows how to speak is the definition of an orator in ancient times. López Jaena was such an orator. We have said so and we have repeated it in this biographical study.

He was an orator, and not for fun, but a complete one. Nay, we consider him a born orator, a *nativitate*; and just as the ancients also spoke of a born poet, *poeta nascitur*, the same can be said of the orator: one who is an orator by temperament, by vocation, must have been born an orator.

That López Jaena was so seems to be beyond question. Then, was he *vir bonus*? I will not dare affirm it; but as

*dicendi peritus*, I can affirm it openly. We have not had in our literary annals another orator of greater stature. Dominador Gómez was his contemporary. Here we are familiar with the figures of Manuel Rávago (more of a preacher than anything else) and Macario Adriático, the overwhelming parliamentarian. With all respect to their memory, none of them excels López Jaena. Neither Osmeña nor Quezon who also had oratorical raptures, "ought" to be compared with him; Roxas perhaps, in his felicitous moments . . . In the past, somewhat remotely, perhaps it might be proper to evoke the personality of that victim of the earthquake of 1863; Father Pedro Peláez: imposing stature, choice word, firm, sweeping, grandiloquent. In the pulpit, with his bulky figure and majestic gestures, he indeed was the precursor of López Jaena: those two spirits recognized each other, they shook hands, they understood each other.

In this collection there are only eight speeches of López Jaena—it has not been possible to gather dozens and hundreds of them, many being impromptu addresses at club meetings or public squares; but in these eight speeches will be found the complete orator. The longest speech deals with the Philippine exhibits at the Universal Exposition of Barcelona, while the shortest is about the celebration of the centenary of the discovery of America. Both speeches created sensation and provoked an outburst of enthusiasm among their respective audiences. Mariano Ponce who was among the audience at Barcelona affirmed that the audience was electrified: the ladies waved their handkerchiefs; the men applauded frenetically, rising from their seats to embrace the speaker; a thundering ovation at the close of his lecture.

Such was López Jaena. He advocated repeatedly in his speeches and articles the representation of the Philippines in the Cortes. It seems to me that it was Rizal who said that López Jaena aspired to represent the Philippines in the Spanish Parliament. If this plan had been realized then and our tribune had an opportunity to take part in the political debates, it would have been said of him what a poet wrote about another fighter:

*Con fuerza potentísima y secreta  
brotaban de su espíritu fecundo  
el dardo agudo, la alusión discreta,  
la cólera inspirada del profeta  
y la sentencia del varón profundo.<sup>3</sup>*

JAIME C. DE VEYRA

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<sup>3</sup> Literal translation:

With a force most potent and secret  
gush forth from his fecund spirit  
the pointed dart, the discreet allusion,  
the inspired wrath of the prophet  
and the verdict of the profound thinker.



DISCURSOS  
Y  
**Artículos**  
VARIOS

DE  
GRACIANO LOPEZ JAENA



BARCELONA  
IMPRENTA IBÉRICA DE FRANCISCO FOSSAS  
123 Rambla de Cataluña, 123  
1891

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