

To the Young Women of Malolos: Summary and Analysis

Jose Rizal's legacy to Filipino women is embodied in his famous essay entitled, "To the Young Women of Malolos," where he addresses all kinds of women – mothers, wives, the unmarried, etc. and expresses everything that he wishes them to keep in mind.

SUMMARY

"To the Women of Malolos" was originally written in Tagalog. Rizal penned this writing when he was in London, in response to the request of Marcelo H. del Pilar. The salient points contained in this letter are as follows:

1. The rejection of the spiritual authority of the friars – not all of the priests in the country that time embodied the true spirit of Christ and His Church. Most of them were corrupted by worldly desires and used worldly methods to effect change and force discipline among the people.
2. The defense of private judgment
3. Qualities Filipino mothers need to possess – as evidenced by this portion of his letter, Rizal is greatly concerned of the welfare of the Filipino children and the homes they grow up in.
4. Duties and responsibilities of Filipino mothers to their children
5. Duties and responsibilities of a wife to her husband – Filipino women are known to be submissive, tender, and loving. Rizal states in this portion of his letter how Filipino women ought to be as wives, in order to preserve the identity of the race.
6. Counsel to young women on their choice of a lifetime partner

Rizal's Message to Filipino Women

Jose Rizal was greatly impressed by the fighting spirit that the young women of Malolos had shown. In his letter, he expresses great joy and satisfaction over the battle they had fought. In this portion of Rizal's letter, it is obvious that his ultimate desire was for women to be offered the same opportunities as those received by men in terms of education. During those days young girls were not sent to school because of the universal notion that they would soon only be taken as wives and stay at home with the children. Rizal, however, emphasizes on freedom of thought and the right to education, which must be granted to both boys and girls alike.

The Responsibilities of Filipino Mothers to Their Children

Rizal stipulates a number of important points in this portion of his letter to the young women of Malolos. The central idea here, however, is that whatever a mother shows to her children is what the children will become also. If the mother is always kissing the hand of the friars in submission, then her children will grow up to be sycophants and mindless fools who do nothing but do as they are told, even if the very nature of the task would violate their rights as individuals.

Qualities Mothers have to Possess

Rizal enumerates the qualities Filipino mothers have to possess:

1. Be a noble wife.
2. Rear her children in the service of the state – here Rizal gives reference to the women of Sparta who embody this quality
3. Set standards of behavior for men around her.

Rizal's Advice to Unmarried Men and Women

Jose Rizal points out to unmarried women that they should not be easily taken by appearances and looks, because these can be very deceiving. Instead, they should take heed of men's firmness of character and lofty ideas. Rizal further adds that there are three things that a young woman must look for a man she intends to be her husband:

1. A noble and honored name
2. A manly heart
3. A high spirit incapable of being satisfied with engendering slaves.

ANALYSIS

"To the Women of Malolos" centers around five salient points (Zaide &Zaide, 1999):

1. Filipino mothers should teach their children love of God, country and fellowmen.
2. Filipino mothers should be glad and honored, like Spartan mothers, to offer their sons in defense of their country.
3. Filipino women should know how to protect their dignity and honor.
4. Filipino women should educate themselves aside from retaining their good racial values.
5. Faith is not merely reciting prayers and wearing religious pictures. It is living the real Christian way with good morals and manners.

In recent times, it seems that these qualities are gradually lost in the way Filipino women conduct themselves. There are oftentimes moments where mothers forget their roles in rearing their children because of the overriding idea of having to earn for the family to supplement their husband's income. Although there is nothing negative about working hard for the welfare of the family, there must always be balance in the way people go through life. Failure in the home cannot be compensated for by any amount of wealth or fame.

Letter to the Women of Malolos by Jose P. Rizal

London, 22 February 1889

TO MY COUNTRYWOMEN:

When I wrote the *Noli me tangere* I pondered long on whether or not courage was a common virtue of the young women of the country. Though I searched my memory diligently, though I recalled one by one all the young women I have known since childhood, only a few conformed to the ideal I longed for. It is true that many were endowed with sweet disposition, beautiful habits, gentle manners, modesty but withal were mingled complete deference and obedience to every work and request of the so-called fathers of the soul – as if the soul had any other father but God – due to excessive goodness, humility, or perhaps ignorance. They are like withered plants, sowed and grown in darkness. Though they may bloom, their flowers are without fragrance; though they may bear fruit, their fruit has no juice.

However, now that news arrived here of what occurred in your town Malolos. I realized that I was wrong, and my joy was beyond bounds. I should not be blamed, for I did not know the town of Malolos nor its young women, except one Emilia and this one only by name.

Now that you have responded to our vehement clamor for public welfare; now that you have shown a good example to you fellow young women who, like you, desire to have their eyes opened and to be lifted from their prostration, our hope is roused, now we are confident of victory. The Filipino woman no longer bows her head and bends her knees; her hope in the future is revived; gone is the mother who helps to keep her daughter in the dark, who educates her in self-contempt and moral annihilation. It is no longer the highest wisdom to bow the head to every unjust order, the highest goodness to smile at an insult, to seek solace in humble tear. You have found out that God's command is different from that of the priest, that piety does not consist in prolonged kneeling, long prayers, large rosaries, soiled scapulars, but in good conduct, clean conscience and right thinking. You have discovered that it is not goodness to be too obedient to every desire and request of those who pose as little gods, but to obey what is reasonable and just, because blind obedience is the origin of crooked orders and in this case both parties sin. The head of the priest cannot say that he alone will be responsible for the wrong order because God gave each one his own mind and his own conscience so that he can distinguish between right and wrong. All are born without chains, free and no one can subject the will and spirit of another. Why would you submit to another your noble and free thought? It is cowardice and an error to believe that blind obedience is piety and arrogance to think and reflect. Ignorance is ignorance and not goodness and honor. God, fountain of wisdom, does not expect man, created in his image, to allow himself to be fooled and blinded. The gift of reason with which we are endowed must be brightened and

utilized. An example is the father who gave each of his son a lamp to light his way in the darkness. Let them intensify its flame, take care of it, not extinguish it to depend on the light of others, but to help one another, seek each other's counsel in the search of the way. He is exceedingly stupid and he can be blamed if he stumbles in following somebody else's light, and the father could say to him: "What for did I give you a lamp of your own?" But one who stumbles by following his own light cannot be greatly blamed because perhaps his light is dim or else the road is very bad.

The usual reply of those who want to fool others is this: He who depends on his own reason is arrogant. I believe that more arrogant is he who wishes to subject another's will and dominate all men. More arrogant is he who poses as God, who pretends to understand every manifestation of God's will. And exceedingly arrogant or blasphemous is he who attributes to God everything he says and desires and makes his personal enemies the enemies of God. We ought not to depend on ourselves solely. We should seek advice, listen to others and do what we believe to be the most reasonable. The habit or the cassock does not add anything to a man's learning. Even if the wild mountaineer is clothed in layers of habits, he remains wild and he cannot fool any other except the ignorant and the ill-willed. So that this can be proven, buy a habit of St. Francis and put it on a carabao. It would be lucky that with the habit on, he does not become lazy. Let me leave this subject and talk about another.

Young womanhood, the nursery of fruitful flowers, ought to accumulate riches to bequeath to its descendants. What could the offspring be of a woman whose virtue is to murmur prayers, whose only knowledge is derived from awit, novena, prayer-books, miraculous tales intended to fool men, with no other recreation but panguingue or frequent confessions of the same sins. What sons would she have but sacristans, servants of the curate, or devotees of cockfighting? The present enslavement of our compatriots is the work of our mothers because of the absolute confidence of their loving hearts and of their great desire to improve the lot of their children. Maturity is the fruit of childhood and childhood is in the lap of the mother. The mother who teaches nothing else but how to kneel and kiss the hand should not expect any other kind of children but stupid ones or oppressed slaves. A tree that grows in the mire is either light or only fit for firewood. Of by chance there should be a bold one, his boldness is concealed and he will use it for evil, like the dazed bat which cannot forth until it is twilight. The common reply is that foremost are piety and love of God. But, what is the piety that they have taught us? To pray and kneel a long time, kiss the hand of the priest, spend all the money on the church, and believe whatever occurs to them to tell us. Chatter, callous knees, rubbing of the nose . . . With the regard to church alms, using God as the pretext, is there anything in the world which does not belong to and is the creation of God? What would you say to a servant who gives to his master alms consisting of a piece of rag borrowed from the same rich master? Who is the vain and foolish man who will give alms to God and believe that his miserable gift will clothe the Creator of all things? Blessed is he who gives the needy, helps the poor, and feeds the hungry, but cursed and censurable is he who is deaf to the entreaties of the poor, who stuffs those who are satiated, and lavishes his money on silver hangings for the altar, on alms of the church or the friar who is swimming in riches, on Masses with music and

rockets, while he squeezes this money from the bones of the poor and offers it to the master with which to buy the chains to bind him and to pay his executioners. Oh, blindness and shortsightedness.

True piety is obedience to what is right, happen what may. "Deeds and not words are what I ask of you", said Christ. "He is not the son of my father, my father, but he who lives according to the will of the father." Piety does not consist in a worn-out nose nor in Christ's successor known for giving his hand to be kissed. He did not fatten the rich and proud scribes. He did not mention scapulars, he did not require the wearing of rosaries, he did not ask money for Masses, and he did not charge for saying prayers. St. John did not ask to be paid for baptizing on the Jordan River nor Christ for preaching. Why is it that now priests ask to be paid for every move they make? And still hungry, they sell scapulars, rosaries, belts, and other things to entice money and to hurt the soul; because even if you wear a scapular all the rags on earth, wear as rosaries all the wood in the forests, gird around your waist all the skin of animals and over all of them all the priests in the world take pains to make the sign of the cross and to murmur prayers, and sprinkle them with all the water of the sea, they cannot cleanse the dirty heart, they cannot absolve the unrepentant of sins. Likewise, for their covetousness they forbid many things, such as eating meat, marrying one's cousin, compadre, and the like, which however are permitted if one pays. Why, can God be bought and is He dazzled by money like the priests? The thief who pays for a bull for composition can rest assured that he has been forgiven. Therefore, God wants to partake of stolen goods? Is it true that God is so needy that He imitates the carabineer or the civil guard? If this is the God that the friars worship, I turn my back to such a God.

Let us be reasonable and open our eyes, especially you women, because you are the ones who open the minds of men. Consider that a good mother is different from the one created by the friars. Raise your children close to the image of the true God – the God who cannot be bribed, the God who is not avaricious, the God who is the father of all, who is not partial, the God who does not fatten on the blood of the poor, who does not rejoice at the plight of the afflicted, and does not obfuscate the intelligent mind. Awaken and prepare the mind of the child for every good and desirable idea – love for honor, sincere and firm character, clear mind, clean conduct, noble action, love for one's fellow men, respect for God – teach this to your children. And because life is full of sorrows and perils, fortify their character against any difficulty, strengthen their hearts against any danger. The country should not expect honor and prosperity so long as the education of the children is defective, so long as the women who raise the children are enslaved and ignorant. Nothing can be drunk in a turbid and bitter spring. No sweet fruit can be picked from a sour seed.

Important indeed are the duties that women must fulfill in order to relieve the country of her sufferings, but they are not beyond the strength and character of the Filipino woman to perform. Everybody knows the power and the prudence of the women of the Philippines. Hence they blind them, chain them, weaken their spirit, so sure are they that so long as the mother is a slave, all her children can be

enslaved also. This is the reason of the enslavement of Asia: the women of in Asia are ignorant and oppressed. Europe and America are powerful because there the women are free and educated, their mind is lucid and their character is strong.

We know that you lack instructive books; we realize that nothing is injected into your mind daily except what will serve to dim your inherent light. We are aware of all this so that we are endeavoring to make the light that is shining over your fellow women in Europe reach you. If you will not be bored with these few words that we are going to say and you will read them, perhaps no matter how thick the fog that envelops our country, the brilliant light of the sun will penetrate it and it will shine however faintly. We shall not falter if you help us. God will help us to dispel the mist for He is the God of Truth; and the former brilliance of the Filipino woman will be restored undiminished. She lacks nothing but a free mind, for she had an excess of goodness.

Such is the longing that is constantly in our thoughts, that we dream of – the honor of the woman who is the partner of our heart, who shares our happiness and our misfortune. If she is a young woman, let the young man love her not only for her beauty or the sweetness of her disposition but also for the firmness of her character, her lofty ideas that invigorate and encourage the weak and timorous man or arouse brilliant ideas. That she may be a young woman of whom the country can be proud, a young woman of who inspires respect. It is the common talk here among Spaniards and friars who came from there that the Filipino woman is weak and ignorant, as if all were weak because some have fallen; as if in other countries there were no women of weak character, whereas in fact the Filipino women possess more virtue than those of other countries. Nevertheless, the Spaniards and the friars who return to Spain, perhaps because of the looseness of their tongues, broadcast first of all in print and by word of mouth, accompanied by shouts, laughter and insults that So and So was like that in the convent, like that to a Spanish houseguest, and many other things that are irritating whenever we remember that many of the failings are due to naïveté, excessive kindness, meekness, or blindness, which is their work. There is a Spaniard here, who is now an important personage, whom we fed and housed during the time he was wandering about the Philippines. As soon as he came back to Spain, he had it published that once he sought hospitality in Pampanga. He ate and slept there and the lady of the house was this and that to him. This was how he returned the kind hospitality of the lady. Likewise the returned friar regaled his Spanish callers with stories about his obedient hand-kissers and other things accompanied with smiles and significant winks. In the book published by Mr. Sinbaldo de Mas and in other books written by friars are related the sins confessed by women, which the friars did not keep secret, recounting them to their Spanish callers and embellishing them at times with incredible tall and lewd stories. I cannot repeat her what a friar unashamedly told Mas he could not believe. Every time we hear or read about these things we ask if the Spanish women are Holy Marys and all Filipino women are sinners. However, if it should come to a point of settling accounts and exposing, perhaps . . . But let me abandon the subject for I am not a father confessor nor a Spanish house-guest who destroys the honor of his hosts. I lay this aside and continue relating the duties of women.

In countries where women are respected as in the Philippines, they ought to recognize their true position so that they may be able to perform the duties expected of them. An old custom was that when a student went courting, he threw away everything – studies, honor, money – as if a young woman sowed nothing but evil. The bravest when he got married, became a coward; the coward became shameless, as if he were waiting only to get married before proclaiming his own cowardice. The son had no other excuse for his pusillanimity except his concern for his mother, and because of this he swallowed gall, endured blows, obeyed the most idiotic order, and he became an accomplice of traitors. It must be known that when no one flees, there will be no pursuer; if there are no small fish there will be no big ones. Why does not a young woman ask of the man she is going to love for a noble and honorable name, a manly heart that can permit him to be the father of slaves? Instill in his mind activity, noble behavior, worthy sentiments, and do not surrender your young womanhood to a weak and timid heart. When she becomes a wife, she should help her husband in every difficulty, encourage him, share with him all perils, console him and drive away his woes, always bearing in mind that a heroic heart can endure any suffering and no legacy is bitter as the legacy of infamy and slavery. Teach your children to guard and love their honor, to love their fellowmen, their native land, and to perform their duties. Tell them repeatedly to prefer death with honor to life with dishonor. They should imitate the women of Sparta and here I am going to cite some examples.

When a mother handed the shield to her son who was going to war, this was all she said to him: “Bring this back or they bring you back”, meaning “You come back a victor or you die” because it was the custom to throw away the shield of the fleeing vanquished warrior or bring back his corpse on top of the shield. A mother heard that her son was killed in the war and the army was defeated. She said nothing but gave thanks that her son had been saved from ignominy; but when her son came back alive, upon seeing him, she put on mourning. A warrior told a mother who had gone out to meet the returning heroes that her three sons had been killed in the war. “That is not what I am asking”, the mother replied, “but, did we win or did we lose?” The hero replied, “We won.” If that is so, let us give thanks to God!” she said, and she went to the temple.

Once a defeated king of theirs hid in the temple for fear of popular indignation. The Spartans agreed to close him up and starve him. When they sealed the door, the mother was the first to bring stones. These customs were common among them and therefore all Greece. Sparta, no enemy was able to set foot on her soil and no Spartan woman ever saw an enemy army. respected the Spartan women. “Of all women”, remarked one, “only you Spartan women wield power over men.” “Of course”, replied the Spartan women, “of all women we alone give birth to real men.” Men, said Spartans are not born to live for themselves but for their country. So long as this manner of thinking and this type of women prevailed in

I do not expect to be believed because I say it. Many people do not respect reason and truth, but the priest's habit, gray hair, or lack of teeth. But if old age is venerable because of hard experience, my past life though a short one, dedicated to the welfare of the country, also has given me some experience. Far be it from me to compel others to believe me, to pretend to be a little god, a successor of God, to expect people to take my word with closed eyes, bowed head, and folded arms. What I ask is for all to think, to reflect and meditate, investigate and shift in the name of reason the following that I am going to state:

First and foremost. Some become treacherous because of cowardice and negligence of others.

Second. Lack of self-respect and excessive timidity invite scorn.

Third. Ignorance is bondage, because like mind, like man. A man without will of his own is a man without personality. The blind who follows other's opinion is like a beast led by a halter.

Fourth. One who wants to help himself should help others, because if he neglects others, he too will be neglected by them. One mid-rib is easy to break, but not a bundle of many mid-ribs, tied together.

Fifth. If the Filipino woman will not change, she should not be entrusted with the education of her children. She should only bear them. She should be deprived of her authority in the home; otherwise she may be unwittingly betray her husband, children, country and all.

Sixth. Men are born equal, naked, and without chains. They were not created by God to be enslaved, neither were they endowed with intelligence in order to be misled, nor adorned with reason to be fooled by others. It is not pride to refuse worship a fellow man, to enlighten the mind, and to reason out everything. The arrogant one is he who wants to be worshipped, who misleads others, and wants his will to prevail over reason and justice.

Seventh. Analyze carefully the kind of religion taught you. Find out if that is the command of God or the teaching of Christ for alleviating the suffering of the poor, for comforting those in pain. Consider everything taught you, the aim in every sermon, the underlying reason for every Mass, novena, rosary, scapular, image, miracle, candle belt, and other things that are forced upon you, dinned daily into your ears and dangled before your eyes, and discover the beginning and their end, and then compare that religion with the pure religion of Christ, and see if your Christianity is not like the milking animals or like

the pig that is being fattened, nor for its own sake, but in order to see it at a price and make money out of it.

Let us reflect then, study our situation, and ponder. May these few loose lines serve as an aid to your natural intelligence and enable you to proceed along the path on which you have started.

Tubo ko'y dakila sa puhunang pagod, and I shall welcome whenever may happen, the usual reward for anyone who dares to tell the truth in our country. May you realize your desire to learn and may you not gather in the garden of knowledge the unripe fruit but select what you pick, think about it, taste it before swallowing it, for on the face of the earth all are mixed and it is not unusual for the enemy to sow weeds together with the good seeds in the middle of the field.

This is the sincere wish of your compatriot.

JOSE RIZAL

Rizal's Letter: To the Young Women of Malolos (Full Copy)

To the Young Women of Malolos

by José Rizal

When I wrote *Noli Me Tangere*, I asked myself whether bravery was a common thing in the young women of our people. I brought back to my recollection and reviewed those I had known since my infancy, but there were only few who seem to come up to my ideal. There was, it is true, an abundance of girls with agreeable manners, beautiful ways, and modest demeanor, but there was in all an admixture of servitude and deference to the words or whims of their so-called "spiritual fathers" (as if the spirit or soul had any father other than God), due to excessive kindness, modesty, or perhaps ignorance. They seemed faced plants sown and reared in darkness, having flowers without perfume and fruits without sap.

However, when the news of what happened at Malolos reached us, I saw my error, and great was my rejoicing. After all, who is to blame me? I did not know Malolos nor its young women, except one called Emila [Emilia Tiongson, whom Rizal met in 1887], and her I knew by name only.

Now that you have responded to our first appeal in the interest of the welfare of the people; now that you have set an example to those who, like you, long to have their eyes opened and be delivered from servitude, new hopes are awakened in us and we now even dare to face adversity, because we have you for our allies and are confident of victory. No longer does the Filipina stand with her head bowed nor does she spend her time on her knees, because she is quickened by hope in the future; no longer will the mother contribute to keeping her daughter in darkness and bring her up in contempt and moral annihilation. And no longer will the science of all sciences consist in blind submission to any unjust order, or in extreme complacency, nor will a courteous smile be deemed the only weapon against insult or humble tears the ineffable panacea for all tribulations. You know that the will of God is different from that of the priest; that religiousness does not consist of long periods spent on your knees, nor in endless prayers, big rosarios, and grimy scapularies [religious garment showing devotion], but in a spotless conduct, firm intention and upright judgment. You also know that prudence does not consist in blindly obeying any whim of the little tin god, but in obeying only that which is reasonable and just, because blind obedience is itself the cause and origin of those whims, and those guilty of it are really to be blamed. The official or friar can no longer assert that they alone are responsible for their unjust orders, because God gave each individual reason and a will of his or her own to distinguish the just from the unjust; all were born without shackles and free, and nobody has a right to subjugate the will and the spirit of another your thoughts. And, why should you submit to another your thoughts, seeing that thought is noble and free?

It is cowardice and erroneous to believe that saintliness consists in blind obedience and that prudence and the habit of thinking are presumptuous. Ignorance has ever been ignorance, and never prudence and honor. God, the primal source of all wisdom, does not demand that man, created in his image and likeness, allow himself to be

deceived and hoodwinked, but wants us to use and let shine the light of reason with which He has so mercifully endowed us. He may be compared to the father who gave each of his sons a torch to light their way in the darkness bidding them keep its light bright and take care of it, and not put it out and trust to the light of the others, but to help and advise each other to find the right path. They would be madmen were they to follow the light of another, only to come to a fall, and the father could unbraid them and say to them: "Did I not give each of you his own torch," but he could not say so if the fall were due to the light of the torch of him who fell, as the light might have been dim and the road very bad.

The deceiver is fond of using the saying that "It is presumptuous to rely on one's own judgment," but, in my opinion, it is more presumptuous for a person to put his judgment above that of the others and try to make it prevail over theirs. It is more presumptuous for a man to constitute himself into an idol and pretend to be in communication of thought with God; and it is more than presumptuous and even blasphemous for a person to attribute every movement of his lips to God, to represent every whim of his as the will of God, and to brand his own enemy as an enemy of God. Of course, we should not consult our own judgment alone, but hear the opinion of others before doing what may seem most reasonable to us. The wild man from the hills, if clad in a priest's robe, remains a hillman and can only deceive the weak and ignorant. And, to make my argument more conclusive, just buy a priest's robe as the Franciscans wear it and put it on a carabao [domestic water buffalo], and you will be lucky if the carabao does not become lazy on account of the robe. But I will leave this subject to speak of something else.

Youth is a flower-bed that is to bear rich fruit and must accumulate wealth for its descendants. What offspring will be that of a woman whose kindness of character is expressed by mumbled prayers; who knows nothing by heart but awits [hymns], novenas, and the alleged miracles; whose amusement consists in playingpanguingue [a card game] or in the frequentconfession of the same sins? What sons will she have but acolytes, priest's servants, or cockfighters? It is the mothers who are responsible for the present servitude of our compatriots, owing to the unlimited trustfulness of their loving hearts, to their ardent desire to elevate their sons. Maturity is the fruit of infancy and the infant is formed on the lap of its mother. The mother who can only teach her child how to kneel and kiss hands must not expect sons with blood other than that of vile slaves. A tree that grows in the mud is unsubstantial and good only for firewood. If her son should have a bold mind, his boldness will be deceitful and will be like the bat that cannot show itself until the ringing of vespers. They say that prudence is sanctity. But, what sanctity have they shown us? To pray and kneel a lot, kiss the hand of the priests, throw money away on churches, and believe all the friar sees fit to tell us; gossip, callous rubbing of noses. . . .

As to the mites and gifts of God, is there anything in the world that does not belong to God? What would you say of a servant making his master a present of a cloth borrowed from that very master? Who is so vain, so insane that he will give alms to God and believe that the miserable thing he has given will serve to clothe the Creator of all things? Blessed be they who succor their fellow men, aid the poor and feed the hungry; but cursed be they who turn a deaf ear to supplications of the poor, who only give to him who has plenty and spend their money lavishly on silver altar hangings for the thanksgiving, or in serenades and fireworks. The money ground out of the poor is bequeathed to the master so that he can provide for chains to subjugate, and hire thugs and executioners. Oh, what blindness, what lack of understanding.

Saintliness consists in the first place in obeying the dictates of reason, happen what may. "It is acts and not words that I want of you," said Christ. "Not everyone that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven." Saintliness does not consist in abjectness, nor is the successor of Christ to be recognized by the fact that he gives his hand to be kissed. Christ did not give the kiss of peace to the Pharisees and never gave his hand to be kissed. He did not cater to the rich and vain; He did not mention scapularies, nor did He make rosaries, or solicit offerings for the sacrifice of the Mass or exact payments for His prayers. Saint John did not demand a fee on the River Jordan, nor did Christ teach for gain. Why, then, do the friars now refuse to stir a foot unless paid in advance? And, as if they were starving, they sell scapularies, rosaries, bits, and other things which are nothing but schemes for making money and a detriment to the soul; because even if all the rags on earth were converted into scapularies and all the trees in the forest into rosaries, and if the skins of all the beasts were made into belts, and if all the priests of the earth mumbled prayers over all this and sprinkled oceans of holy water over it, this would not purify a rogue or condone sin where there is no repentance. Thus, also, through cupidity and love of money, they will, for a price, revoke the numerous prohibitions such as those against eating meat, marrying close relatives, etc. You can do almost anything if you but grease their palms. Why that? Can God be bribed and bought off, and blinded by money, nothing more nor less than a friar? The brigand who has obtained a bull of compromise can live calmly on the proceeds of his robbery, because he will be forgiven. God, then, will sit at a table where theft provides the viands? Has the Omnipotent become a pauper that He must assume the role of the excise man or gendarme? If that is the God whom the friar adores, then I turn my back upon that God.

Let us be reasonable and open our eyes, especially you women, because you are the first to influence the consciousness of man. Remember that a good mother does not resemble the mother that the friar has created; she must bring up her child to be the image of the true God, not of a blackmailing, a grasping God, but of a God who is the father of us all, who is just; who does not suck the life-blood of the poor like a vampire, nor scoffs at the agony of the sorely beset, nor makes a crooked path of the path of justice. Awaken and prepare the will of our children towards all that is honorable, judged by proper standards, to all that is sincere and firm of purpose, clear judgment, clear procedure, honesty in act and deed, love for the fellowman and respect for God; this is what you must teach your children. And, seeing that life is full of thorns and thistles, you must fortify their minds against any stroke of adversity and accustom them to danger. The people cannot expect honor nor prosperity so long as they will educate their children in a wrong way, so long as the woman who guides the child in his steps is slavish and ignorant. No good water comes from a turbid, bitter spring; no savory fruit comes from acrid seed.

The duties that woman has to perform in order to deliver the people from suffering are of no little importance, but be they as they may, they will not be beyond the strength and stamina of the Filipino people. The power and good judgment of the women of the Philippines are well known, and it is because of this that she has been hoodwinked, and tied, and rendered pusillanimous, and now her enslavers rest at ease, because so long as they can keep the Filipina mother a slave, so long will they be able to make slaves of her children. The cause of the backwardness of Asia lies in the fact that there the women are ignorant, are slaves; while Europe and America are powerful because there the women are free and well-educated and endowed with lucid intellect and a strong will.

We know that you lack instructive books; we know that nothing is added to your intellect, day by day, save that which is intended to dim its natural brightness; all this we know, hence our desire to bring you the light that illuminates your equals here in Europe. If that which I tell you does not provoke your anger, and if you will pay a little attention to it then, however dense the mist may be that befores our people, I will make the utmost efforts to have it dissipated by the bright rays of the sun, which will give light, though they be dimmed. We shall not feel any fatigue if you help us: God, too, will help to scatter the mist, because He is the God of truth: He will restore to its pristine condition the fame of the Filipina in whom we now miss only a criterion of her own, because good qualities she has enough and to spare. This is our dream; this is the desire we cherish in our hearts; to restore the honor of woman, who is half of our heart, our companion in the joys and tribulations of life. If she is a maiden, the young man should love her not only because of her beauty and her amiable character, but also on account of her fortitude of mind and loftiness of purpose, which quicken and elevate the feeble and timid and ward off all vain thoughts. Let the maiden be the pride of her country and command respect, because it is a common practice on the part of Spaniards and friars here who have returned from the Islands to speak of the Filipina as complaisant and ignorant, as if all should be thrown into the same class because of the missteps of a few, and as if women of weak character did not exist in other lands. As to purity what could the Filipina not hold up to others!

Nevertheless, the returning Spaniards and friars, talkative and fond of gossip, can hardly find time enough to brag and bawl, amidst guffaws and insulting remarks, that a certain woman was thus; that she behaved thus at the convent and conducted herself thus with the Spaniards who on the occasion was her guest, and other things that set your teeth on edge when you think of them which, in the majority of cases, were faults due to candor, excessive kindness, meekness, or perhaps ignorance and were all the work of the defamer himself. There is a Spaniard now in high office, who has set at our table and enjoyed our hospitality in his wanderings through the Philippines and who, upon his return to Spain, rushed forthwith into print and related that on one occasion in Pampanga he demanded hospitality and ate, and slept at a house and the lady of the house conducted herself in such and such a manner with him; this is how he repaid the lady for her supreme hospitality! Similar insinuations are made by the friars to the chance visitor from Spain concerning their very obedient confesandas, hand-kissers, etc., accompanied by smiles and very significant winkings of the eye. In a book published by D. Sinibaldo de Mas and in other friar sketches sins are related of which women accused themselves in the confessional and of which the friars made no secret in talking to their Spanish visitors seasoning them, at the best, with idiotic and shameless tales not worthy of credence. I cannot repeat here the shameless stories that a friar told Mas and to which Mas attributed no value whatever. Every time we hear or read anything of this kind, we ask each other: Are the Spanish women all cut after the pattern of the Holy Virgin Mary and the Filipinas all reprobates? I believe that if we are to balance accounts in this delicate question, perhaps, . . . But I must drop the subject because I am neither a confessor nor a Spanish traveler and have no business to take away anybody's good name. I shall let this go and speak of the duties of women instead.

A people that respect women, like the Filipino people, must know the truth of the situation in order to be able to do what is expected of it. It seems an established fact that when a young student falls in love, he throws everything to the dogs -- knowledge, honor, and money, as if a girl could not do anything but sow misfortune. The bravest youth becomes a coward when he married, and the born coward becomes shameless, as if he had been waiting to get married in order to show his cowardice. The son, in order to hide his pusillanimity, remembers his mother, swallows his wrath, suffers his ears to be boxed, obeys the most foolish order, and becomes an accomplice to his own dishonor. It should be remembered that where nobody flees there is no pursuer; when

there is no little fish, there can not be a big one. Why does the girl not require of her lover a noble and honored name, a manly heart offering protection to her weakness, and a high spirit incapable of being satisfied with engendering slaves? Let her discard all fear, let her behave nobly and not deliver her youth to the weak and faint-hearted. When she is married, she must aid her husband, inspire him with courage, share his perils, refrain from causing him worry and sweeten his moments of affection, always remembering that there is no grief that a brave heart can not bear and there is no bitterer inheritance than that of infamy and slavery. Open your children's eyes so that they may jealously guard their honor, love their fellowmen and their native land, and do their duty. Always impress upon them they must prefer dying with honor to living in dishonor. The women of Sparta should serve you as an example should serve you as an example in this; I shall give some of their characteristics.

When a mother handed the shield to her son as he was marching to battle, she said nothing to him but this: "Return with it, or on it," which mean, come back victorious or dead, because it was customary with the routed warrior to throw away his shield, while the dead warrior was carried home on his shield. A mother received word that her son had been killed in battle and the army routed. She did not say a word, but expressed her thankfulness that her son had been saved from disgrace. However, when her son returned alive, the mother put on mourning. One of the mothers who went out to meet the warriors returning from battle was told by one that her three sons had fallen. I do not ask you that, said the mother, but whether we have been victorious or not. We have been victorious -- answered the warrior. If that is so, then let us thank God, and she went to the temple.

Once upon a time a king of theirs, who had been defeated, hid in the temple, because he feared their popular wrath. The Spartans resolved to shut him up there and starve him to death. When they were blocking the door, the mother was the first to bring stones. These things were in accordance with the custom there, and all Greece admired the Spartan woman. Of all women -- a woman said jestingly -- only your Spartans have power over the men. Quite natural -- they replied -- of all women only we give birth to men. Man, the Spartan women said, was not born to life for himself alone but for his native land. So long as this way of thinking prevailed and they had that kind of women in Sparta, no enemy was able to put his foot upon her soil, nor was there a woman in Sparta who ever saw a hostile army.

I do not expect to be believed simply because it is I who am saying this; there are many people who do not listen to reason, but will listen only to those who wear the cassock or have gray hair or no teeth; but while it is true that the aged should be venerated, because of their travails and experience, yet the life I have lived, consecrated to the happiness of the people, adds some years, though not many of my age. I do not pretend to be looked upon as an idol or fetish and to be believed and listened to with the eyes closed, the head bowed, and the arms crossed over the breast; what I ask of all is to reflect on what I tell him, think it over and shift it carefully through the sieve of reasons.

First of all. That the tyranny of some is possible only through cowardice and negligence on the part of others.

Second. What makes one contemptible is lack of dignity and abject fear of him who holds one in contempt.

Third. Ignorance is servitude, because as a man thinks, so he is; a man who does not think for himself and allowed himself to be guided by the thought of another is like the beast led by a halter.

Fourth. He who loves his independence must first aid his fellowman, because he who refuses protection to others will find himself without it; the isolated rib in the buri is easily broken, but not so the broom made of the ribs of the palm bound together.

Fifth. If the Filipina will not change her mode of being, let her rear no more children, let her merely give birth to them. She must cease to be the mistress of the home, otherwise she will unconsciously betray husband, child, native land, and all.

Sixth. All men are born equal, naked, without bonds. God did not create man to be a slave; nor did he endow him with intelligence to have him hoodwinked, or adorn him with reason to have him deceived by others. It is not fatuous to refuse to worship one's equal, to cultivate one's intellect, and to make use of reason in all things. Fatuous is he who makes a god of him, who makes brutes of others, and who strives to submit to his whims all that is reasonable and just.

Seventh. Consider well what kind of religion they are teaching you. See whether it is the will of God or according to the teachings of Christ that the poor be succored and those who suffer alleviated. Consider what they preaching to you, the object of the sermon, what is behind the masses, novenas, rosaries, scapularies, images, miracles, candles, belts, etc. etc; which they daily keep before your minds; ears and eyes; jostling, shouting, and coaxing; investigate whence they came and whither they go and then compare that religion with the pure religion of Christ and see whether the pretended observance of the life of Christ does not remind you of the fat milch cow or the fattened pig, which is encouraged to grow fat nor through love of the animal, but for grossly mercenary motives.

Let us, therefore, reflect; let us consider our situation and see how we stand. May these poorly written lines aid you in your good purpose and help you to pursue the plan you have initiated. "May your profit be greater than the capital invested;" and I shall gladly accept the usual reward of all who dare tell your people the truth. May your desire to educate yourself be crowned with success; may you in the garden of learning gather not bitter, but choice fruit, looking well before you eat because on the surface of the globe all is deceit, and the enemy sows weeds in your seedling plot.

All this is the ardent desire of your compatriot.

JOSÉ RIZAL