

FLORANTE'S LAMENT

(from *Florante at Laura*)

Francisco Balagtas (Baltazar)

a narrative poem

translated by George St. Clair

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Vengeful Heaven, where is your wrath?
now my land is overcome, prostrate,
and in beloved Albania's infinite skies,
lately the flag of evil flies.

“Within and without my country of grief,
betrayal reigns, is enshrined, esteemed;
degraded everywhere, the heart's goodness
is consigned to the lowly pauper's grave.

“All manner of good and deed are cast
into the sea of mockery and perturbation,
each good man is treated without respect,
without burial rite entombed.

“But, oh, the cheat, the traitor, the black
of heart, are enthroned in praise,
and for each scoundrel incense is burned,
and offered up in fragrant smoke.

“Betrayal, dishonesty hold high
their heads, and the righteous is timid, bowed,
dismayed, reason itself is on its knees,
fatigued, and to weep is all that's left for it.

“And each mouth that opens
to speak the truth and right
is quickly stopped and cut
by the arrogant blade of death.

“O traitorous ambition for honor and riches!
O hunger for airy and fleeting praise!
You are the reason for all this sinfulness,
this misfortune that has befallen me.

“By the crown of King Lincaeus
and the riches of my father, the duke,
Count Adolfo was so bold to pour evil
upon Albania's sovereign land.

“All these, O merciful Heaven
you witness, why suffer them persist?
O Source of sense and righteousness,
why permit them drown in ruthlessness?”

“Lift your right and righteous hand,
swing the shining blade of your rage,
upon all evil in Albania’s kingdom pour
the full vengeance of your justice.

“Why, O Heaven, do you turn
a deaf ear to my suit and honest plea?
Why from this poor and luckless being
avert your face and shut your ears?”

“And who could ever fathom,
O Great God, your sacred mystery?
The good will not happen on earth
if it is not Your Will.

“Alas, where now turn
for handhold, bring my heart’s lament,
If Heaven refuses to listen
to my plaintive cry, my faint complaint?”



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