

Classic Poetry Series

Cecilio Apostol
- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Cecilio Apostol(22 November 1877 - 8 September 1938)

A patriot by sentiment, a lawyer by profession, and a man of letters by avocation, Cecilio Apostol was a colossus in Spanish-Filipino poetry. He was recognized not only in the Philippines but also throughout the Hispanic world as "the greatest Filipino epic poet writing in Spanish." According to Claro M. Recto, Apostol was "the greatest writer of both prose and poetry."

He was born in Sta. Cruz Manila on November 22, 1877, to Jose P. Apostol and Marcelina de los Reyes. He began writing poems as early as when he was in the third grade. In school programs, he used to declaim verses that he himself wrote. Aside from poetry, he loved art. At home and in school, he used to paint landscapes, flowers, birds and people. His first published poem was *El Terror de los Mares Indicos* in *El Comercio*. After his elementary education, he enrolled at the Ateneo Municipal where he obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1894. He later took up law at the University of Santo Tomas. However, he joined the Revolution in 1896 before finishing his law also joined the editorial staff of the newspaper, *La Independencia*, and used either *Catulo* or *Isagani* as his pen name. After peace was restored, he continued his journalistic career and worked in various newspapers, such as *La Fraternidad*, *La Democracia*, *La Patria*, and *El Renacimiento*. Finishing his law studies after the Revolution, he passed the bar and was appointed assistant fiscal of Manila in 1908.

During his spare time, he dedicated himself to poetry, painting and linguistics. He learned several foreign languages, translated Bonifacio's Decalogue into French and the Ilocano epic *Lam-ang* into Spanish. Apostol's patriotic poem, *Mi Raza*, won first prize in the national literary contest sponsored by the Club Internacional in 1902. In it he demonstrated evidence of his supremacy over all Filipino poets in Spanish. His poetical masterpiece *A Rizal (To Rizal)*, is still unsurpassed in epic sweep and patriotic fire. The poems of Apostol have been compiled by Professor Jaime C. de Veyra and published under the title *Pentelicas* (Manila, 1941). Included in this collection are: *Al Heroe Nacional*, *Mi Raza*, *A La Bandera*, *La Siesta*, *Sobre El Plinto* (dedicated to Mabini), *Paisaie Filipino*, *A Emilio Jacinto*, *Los Martires Anonimos de la Patria*, and *El Solo de la Independencia*.

Apostol's fame was acclaimed in practically all Spanish-speaking countries of the

world. His poems, together with his biography, appeared in the World Anthology of Spanish Poetry and in the world-famous Enciclopedia España, and in many other books. In recognition of his poetical genius, Apostol was made a corresponding member of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Literature. Some of his poems have been translated into German. Upon the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1935, this great poet-lawyer was asked to become one of President Quezon's legal advisers. He refused the lucrative offer, and a few months later he retired from his position as Manila's assistant fiscal without claiming the customary retirement privileges. He joined the law office of Don Vicente Francisco and distinguished himself there as a brief writer and legal researcher. On September 17, 1938, Apostol died of cerebral hemorrhage at his home in Caloocan at the age of 61. He was survived by his wife Margarita San Jose and six children.

Al Heroe Nacional

Weep not in the mystery of the tomb,
over the Spaniards' momentary triumph,
for if a bullet your cranium destroye
your idea, in turn, an empire destroyed.

Cecilio Apostol

Kay Rizal Tula Ni

Cecilio Apostol

To The Yankee

As long as greed
Tears a gash in foreign hands

Poets, avengers
Of the universal conscience,
Can you be silent,
Drowning the honorable voice of
Protest?

Never, when might,
Joined with treason and injustice
To crush the laws and rights
The sacred rights of a race,

When the sons of the infamous Judas
Fell the faith that has been sworn,
When the whimper of weak peoples
They answer with animal laughter;

When the holy right is bartered
In the banquet of human ambition,
As when the Yankees
Toast a nation to the sound of a cannon;

Silence is impossible: the oppressed nation
Shall protest indignantly
And bury the dagger of vengeance
In the enemy's breast.

This unredeemed people
May perhaps succumb in the struggle,
But only its corpse
Can be yoked by alien tyranny.

Yankee! If u defeat us
With the powerful weight of weapons,
You will not live happily, because you are hated
Even by the air of my native land.

Yankee! If my verses
Survive me, their words
Will echo in the centuries to come
The eternal hate of the eternal outcast.

Cecilio Apostol