

WHEN BONIFACIO WROTE HIS POEM -
"Pagibig Sa Tinubuang Bayan"
(Love of Native Land)

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IN THE CAREFUL study of Tagalog literature, you will find as one of its most beautiful gems, the poem entitled "Pagibig sa Tinubuang Bayan" (Love of Native Land), written originally in Tagalog by the glorious Father of Philippine Democracy, the Great Plebeian, Andres Bonifacio.

With this soul-stirring poem Bonifacio demonstrated that he was not only a great patriot, civic leader, and fiery Katipunero, but also a self-made scholar, poet and writer in spite of the fact that he had not the opportunity to go through college. His schooling was very meager, because from early childhood, as early as the age of fourteen years, he was forced to work hard to support his widowed mother, Catalina Castro Bonifacio and his brothers. This he did by manufacturing bamboo canes and paper fans and selling them in the Escolta and other streets of Manila.

But Andres Bonifacio's character was such that, through perseverance, he was able to study by himself by reading books and magazines borrowed from some friends. At times he was under the tutelage of an aunt of a londo teacher.

Through constant reading Bonifacio became very proficient in writing Tagalog prose and poetry. Later he learned bookkeeping and accounting. He was engaged as a foreman and bookkeeper, first at the Britist firm, Fleming and Company, both of them located on the Escolta.

Bonifacio wrote many pieces of Tagalog literature which were published in the newspaper Kalayaan, the

official organ of the Katipunan. A few of these articles were "Mga tungkulin ng mga Z. LL.B." (The Duties of the Sons of the People" - the letters Z. LL.B. stand for K.K.K. ng mga A. Ng. B.). "Ang Dapat Mabatid ng mga Tagalog" (What the Tagalogs Must Know").

Both Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Jacinto wrote poems of the same title but Bonifacio wrote in Tagalog and entitled it "Pagibig sa Tinubuang Bayan" (Love of Native Land"), whereas Emilio Jacinto composed his poem in Spanish and titled it "A Mi Patria." Bonifacio's and Jacinto's poems carried reminiscences of Rizal's thought all the three poets burnt and boundless love of country.

There is no clear existing evidence as to where Bonifacio's poem was published for the first time. Some historians, like Servando de Los Angeles, believe that it was published in the Diariong Tagalog, whereas others opine that it was first printed in the Katipunan's organ, Kalayaan.

If the reader carefully studies Bonifacio's poem, he will find out that in all probability it was published in the Kalayaan, which was a clandestine and secret periodical. Bonifacio's poem could not have been published in the Diariong Tagalog, which was widely circulated and read by many Spaniards.

Andres Bonifacio had read and re-read almost all the poems, novel, and articles of Dr. Rizal before the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution against Spain, that is, before the First Cry of Balintawak, which took place on August 26, 1896. But since Bonifacio had been fleeing from town to town to avoid being captured by the Spanish civil guards, it is very doubtful whether he was able to read Rizal's "Last Farewell" or "Ultimo Adios". And, viceversa, it is not known whether Rizal was ever able to see a copy of Bonifacio's poem.

Yet, there are great similarities of thought in Rizal's and Bonifacio's poems.

The truth is that Andres Bonifacio had read Rizal's appeal to the Filipino youth, found on the lips of Simoun in *El Filibusterismo*, Rizal's "Me Pidan Versos" (They Ask Me for Verses") and other Rizalian poems.