

# Francisco Ferrer

Emma Goldman

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NEVER before in the history of the world has one man's death so thoroughly united struggling mankind. Never before has one man's death called forth such a universal cry of indignation. Never before has one man's death so completely torn the veil from the sinister face of the hydra-headed monster, the Catholic Church.

Never before in the history of the world has one man's death so shaken the thrones of the golden calf, and spread ghastly fear among its worshippers.

One solitary death, yet more powerful than a million cringing lives. More powerful even than that black spectre which, for almost two thousand years, has tortured man's soul and poisoned his mind. Francisco Ferrer stretched in the ditch at Montjuich, his tender, all-too-loving heart silenced by twelve bullets —yet speaking, speaking in a voice so loud, so clear, so deep... Wherein lies the secret of this wonderful phenomenon?

Francisco Ferrer, the Anarchist and teacher? Yes, but there were other Anarchists and teachers: Louise Michel and Elisee Reclus, for instance, beloved by many. Yet why has their death not proved such a tremendous force?

Francisco Ferrer, the founder of the Modern School? But, then, the Modern School did not originate with Francisco Ferrer, though it was he who carried it to Spain. The father of the Modern School is Paul Robin, the latter-day Dr. Pascal,—old in years, with the spirit of Spring, tender and loving, he taught modern methods of education long before Ferrer. He organized the first Modern School at Cempuis, near Paris, wherein children found a home, a warm, beautiful atmosphere.

Again, there is Sebastian Faure and his Beehive. He, too, has founded a Modern School, a free, happy, and harmonious place for children. There are scores of modern schools in France, yet no other man's death will act as a fertilizing force as that of Francisco Ferrer.

Was Ferrer's influence so great because of a lifetime of devoted effort? During eight years his heroic spirit strove to spread the light in the dark land of his birth. For eight years he toiled, ceaselessly, to rescue the child from the destructive influence of superstition. One hundred and nine schools with seventy thousand pupils crowned the gigantic efforts of our murdered comrade, while three hundred and eight liberal schools sprang into being, thanks to his beneficial influence. Yet all this and more fails to account for the tremendous volcano that swept the civilized world at Francisco Ferrer's death.

His trial was a farce. The evidence against him perjured. But was there ever a time when the State hesitated to resort to perjury when dealing with opponents? Was there ever a time when it exercised justice toward those who endangered its stronghold? The State is the very embodiment of injustice and perjury. Some make a pretence at fairness: Spain was brazen; that is all. What, then, is the secret of the phenomenon?

Driven from its omnipotent position of open crime by the world's progress, the Catholic Church had not ceased to be a virulent poison within the social body. Its Borgia methods merely became more hidden, more secret, yet none the less malignant and perfidious. Cowed into apparent submission, it had not dared since the days of Huss and Bruno to openly demand a noble victim's blood. But at last, blinded by arrogance and conceit and the insatiable thirst for martyrs' blood, the Catholic Church forgot the progress of the world, forgot the spirit of our age, forgot the growth of free ideas. As of old, it was the Jesuit hand that stretched forth its bloody fingers to snatch its victim. It was the Archbishop of Barcelona who, in a statement signed by the prelates of the Church, first denounced Ferrer and demanded his life. As of old, Inquisition methods were used in the incarceration and mock trial of Ferrer. No time was to be given the progressive world to check the premeditated murder. Hastily and secretly was the martyr assassinated. Full well the Church knew that the dead cannot be saved. In vain the frantic efforts of Church and State to connect Francisco Ferrer with the uprising at Barcelona. In vain their delirious cries defaming the character of the dead.

In vain the scurrilous attacks of their harlots upon the ideas and comrades of Ferrer—attacks which have now reached even the American press.

Before the awakened consciousness of mankind the world over the Catholic Church stands condemned as the instigator and perpetrator of the foul crime committed at Montjuich. It is this awakened human consciousness which has resurrected Francisco Ferrer.

Therein lies the secret of the force of one man's death, of one solitary man in the ditch of Montjuich.

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