

Speech at the Silk Market

May 19th 1921

Valencian people:

This act that we are celebrating here is a complement, the end of all the honours that you have paid me. You can give me no more. It is impossible for Valencia to show more of its love for me, nor in a more practical, more eloquent and more beautiful way.

I can only dedicate the rest of my life to working for Valencia and to writing books and books that I hope will be able to externalise before the eyes of the world the beauty of this Valencian land and the gratitude that I feel towards it.

You will understand my state of mind.

Although it may seem immodest, in the course of my life I have received many honours, but I have received them in countries which, although they inspired me with great gratitude, were completely new countries to me; they were countries which represented nothing in history; countries which represented nothing in my past.

Now imagine how emotional it is to see myself received in the middle of my life's journey in this way; here, in this building, which can be said to be the first building I knew when I came to life; to see myself received here, next to the Plaza del Mercado, where I spent my childhood, in the heart of Valencia. Of this Valencia, which is the city that has constantly accompanied me on all my pilgrimages, and which is the one I have always seen in my imagination; What is more - because the time for frankness has come - Valencia, which, if at any time it could have caused me some pain and some sorrow, has never, never, never, never inspired me with any bitter complaint, because I know that Valencia is the mother, and she sometimes pretends to be angry with her son, but then she forgives him and caresses him.

Gentlemen, as an artist and a writer, I am delighted that this event is taking place here, in what we could call the Parthenon of the Valencian people: in this Lonja that tells us about what the Valencian land was in the times when its merchant and war navy dominated in the Mediterranean, carrying the flag of Valencia to the naval battles that took place in front of Byzantium; This Silk Exchange, which is repeated in Barcelona, which is repeated in Mallorca, which is repeated in Tarragona, but like the second proofs of a beautiful original, because none of the Silk Exchanges of the Crown of Aragon can compare with this one, as beautiful, egregious and gallant as this hall which we are occupying at the moment.

I, gentlemen, being very Spanish, do not forget that I am Valencian, that I must be very Valencian. I believe that the greater the homeland, the greater the regions that make it up, the greater it will be.

I would like to have immense power, but since I do not have it, it is the collectivity, all the Valencian people who are working to ensure that Valencia becomes the leading region of Spain. We have the materials to be so. Our people are one of the most hard-working, intelligent and lively imaginative people known. We have a continuous flowering, not only of artists, but also of men of genius, of men of study, of men who work, of men of intelligence. What do we lack? We simply lack the tolerant, grandiose, sublime spirit of, for example, the democracy of the United States, where each man may have in his conscience the ideas that he considers most just, but apart from these internal ideas, for all that is common and national, all come together for a great work.

I have to tell you that I am Valencian, that I will always be Valencian, that whoever is Valencian, whatever his ideas may be, will be a brother to me.

I also ask all Valencians, when they see me, to see me as a brother too.

Those of us who love our small homeland also love our large homeland.

Let us work for Valencia, let us strive to make it progress, to make it bigger and bigger.

I can tell you that even if I am not here, even when the world moves on, Valencia will not lose anything, because wherever I go I will spread and propagate the glories of this country.

Before, my imagination, in certain moments of nostalgia, made me see the Lonja, the Miguelete, it made me see the smiling vega, it made me see our golden sandy coast with its triple row of waves full of foam. I saw Valencia everywhere in my imagination. Now I will see it even better. I carry a talisman with me. I carry this medal that you have given me and that will accompany me on all my travels and in moments of nostalgia it will be enough for me to look at it like a holy image to see Valencia at all times.