

■ This story has the dignity of being part of the historical records of Mexico and the Philippines. In the learned "Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas" by Antonio de Morga, it is noted as a curious circumstance that the death of the Governor of the Philippines was known on the Plaza Mayor in the city of Mexico on the very same day. De Morga adds that he does not know how the news was brought. The Friar Gaspar de San Agustin in the "Conquista de las Islas Filipinas" published in Spain in 1698, tells the same story. — *Muller*.

THE TRANSLATED SOLDADO

On the morning of October 25, in the year 1593, there happened in the City of Mexico an affair most strange, which has not been explained to this day.

The day had well begun. The streets were busy. At the tall doors of the Palace the guard had been set. The Plaza Mayor in front of the Palace was full of people. Then, suddenly, in the bright sunshine, this strange thing happened.

The sentries of the guard saw all at once a strange soldier among them. He was walking back and forth like the rest with his gun on his shoulder, but his uniform was not that of Spanish soldiers in Mexico. It was the uniform of the guard of the Governor's Palace in Manila,

the capital of the Filipinas.

It was evident from his sturdy, bold carriage that he was an old soldier who had seen much campaigning; but it would be seen also that, though he did not seem at all timid, he did most assuredly look dazed and amazed, for he stared around him like a man lost.

"What is your name?" demanded the captain of the guard sharply. "What are you doing on a post to which you have not been ordered?"

The soldier saluted: "My name is Gil Perez. As to standing sentry here, I am doing as nearly as possible what I was ordered to do. I was ordered this morning to mount guard at the doors of the Governor's Palace in Manila. I know very well that

this is not the Governor's Palace, and evidently I am not in Manila. Why or how that may be, I know not. But here I am, and this is a palace of some kind, so I am doing my duty as nearly as possible."

If the captain of the guard was astonished by this extraordinary statement, how much more astonished was he when Gil Perez remarked most simply as one passing on a bit of gossip: "Last night the Governor of the Filipinas, His Excellency Don Gomez Perez Dasmaringas, had his head cracked with an ax in the Moluccas and is dead of it."

All the officers crowded around Gil Perez. He was wholly sober, and it was evident that he was not joking, but truly, was as greatly puzzled as they were. When they told him that he was at that moment in the City of Mexico, thousands and thousands of miles away from Manila, he would not believe it — as how could he?

They hurried him before the Viceroy, the great and noble Don Luis de Velasco. He and his Council examined the soldier in a manner

most subtle. Gil Perez answered correctly all the smallest particulars about the regiment to which he belonged, all about the persons and affairs in the Filipinas and all about the city of Manila. But when they asked him how he had come to be shifted from Manila to the City of Mexico, he could say only that one moment he was standing guard in Manila, and the next moment he was standing guard in Mexico.

Still less he was able to explain how he could know that the night before the Governor of the Filipinas had his head cracked in the Moluccas. He could only say that it was so. Having declared this, he twisted his mustachios and waited, boldly enough, to hear what might be said to him.

The Viceroy and his Council were not long in telling him. They found that the affair had an unmistakable odor of the Devil about it, and that Gil Perez necessarily partook of the odor. Therefore, they turned him over to the Holy Office and he was locked carefully into

the strongest cell in Santo Domingo.

The Familiars of the Holy Office examined him with the utmost shrewdness and industry, but could not shake his testimony. So, while they realized, of course, that the matter was a matter performed by the Devil, they could not find that Gil Perez had any guilty part in it. Consequently they treated him with solicitude rather than severity, and Gil Perez vowed that he preferred jail to soldiering.

Thus months passed, and at last a galleon arrived from the Filipinas. It brought the news that Don Gomez Dasmaringas had sailed from Manila on the 17th of October to help the King of Cambodia repel an invasion by the King of Siam, and that, putting into the Moluccas, he met with the distressing bad luck of having his head cracked — on the night of the 24th of October, 1593, as Gil Perez had said.

Furthermore, said the people of the galleon, supernatural signs had announced the killing in Manila. On a wall of the Convent of San Augustin there was painted a portrait of His Excellency,

and at the very hour when he died a crack opened in the wall and ran straight across the picture.

Finally, a passenger who was an officer of soldiery in Manila was taken to the prison, and he recognized Gil Perez at once as a soldier of the Palace Guard. He said that he had seen this very same identical Gil Perez mounting guard in Manila only a day before he appeared in Mexico so miraculously.

Then the authorities of the City of Mexico were vastly puzzled as to what to do about Gil Perez. The Familiars of the Holy Office, being satisfied that he was innocent, insisted on setting him free. The authorities of the city, satisfied that something devilish adhered to him, even though it might be against his will, felt that he was not a fit person to be at large in the city.

So, in the end, it was decided to ship him back to the Philippines. This was done — not without violent protest from Gil Perez, who wanted to remain in the prison of Santo Domingo. — *As summarized by Julius W. Muller.*