

Masonic Heroes

By **RWB RAYMOND E. WILMARTH**
Deputy Grand Master

[Address by Rt. Wor. Bro. Dr. Raymond E. Wilmarth, D.G.M., at the 33rd Convention of Cavite Masonic Lodges, Tagaytay City, Nov. 30, 1965]

It is our privilege on this occasion to honor a great Filipino hero — Andres Bonifacio. Among us who are Freemasons, Andres Bonifacio was more than a national hero, he was a Masonic National hero. It is, therefore, fitting on this occasion of the Convention of the Cavite Masonic Lodges composing District No. 10, that we who are Freemasons do homage not only to this great Filipino Masonic hero, Bro. Andres Bonifacio, but to all of the National Masonic heroes of the Philippines who have, during their respective lifetimes, held the welfare of their country, their fellowmen, and their Masonic tenets above all else.

Masonic heroes are not strangers to the history of our world. Since earliest times our Craft first provided within its lodges a convenient place for the gathering of dedicated men, interested not only in the material welfare of themselves and their immediate families, but also the welfare of all men. No man can become a Mason who does not acknowledge his belief in God and a future life. To the Freemason, God is the Great Architect of the Universe by whose hand the design of the universe has been accomplished and through whose will and

pleasure His plans are manifested. Among us the Great Architect of the Universe is the father of all men, hence all men are brothers. Masonry, therefore, is a Brotherhood of Men under the Fatherhood of God.

In practically every nation on earth, there have been freedom fighters who have sought to free the oppressed from the tyranny of their oppressors. In ancient times it was the oppression of the serfs by the overlords. After the abolition of feudalism, various forms of political tyranny have existed and whenever the occasion demanded, freedom fighters arose to shake off the shackles of oppression. In civilization's struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed, there have been identified with these freedom fighters of all ages, Masonic leaders from every part of the world.

Nearly all who signed the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America on July 4, 1776, were Masons. General George Washington who led the Revolutionary Army of the United States to victory was an ardent Mason all his life. Many of the generals who assisted him were Masons, including among which was that great French leader, Marquis de Lafayette. Although later branded a traitor to the United States, the infamous Benedict Arnold was also a member of our Craft.

Simon Bolivar, after whom his country, Bolivia, was named, was born

Turn to next page

in Caracas on July 23, 1783. After studying law in Madrid and traveling throughout Europe and the United States, he entered Masonry. Having experienced the feeling of liberty, equality, and fraternity that existed in Europe and United States, he returned to his South America and dedicated his life to the liberation of the oppressed people.

The liberator of Italy who contributed greatly to the creation of the Kingdom of Italy was Most Worshipful Brother Giuseppe Garibaldi. He was born on July 4, 1807 in Nice. In 1834 he was forced to leave his native land because he had been condemned for his revolutionary activities. Leaving Italy he went to Marseille where he first joined our Ancient Craft. Finding among Freemasons the dominant spirit of equality, liberty and fraternity, he gained greater inspiration and in its darkest moments returned to Italy to fulfill his destiny in the unification of that disrupted land. After the unification of his homeland, he was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Italy.

In Cuba there was a great national hero, named Jose Marti. In fact, his life was nearly identical of that of our great Brother, Jose Rizal, as he too was executed by the Spaniards in 1895 for having been a Masonic freedom fighter in Cuba. But his execution did not extinguish the torch of liberty. It burned brighter among the Cubans and the nation's independence was largely due to the inspiration gained from the sacrifice he had made.

I mentioned earlier that Lafayette was a general that fought by the side of George Washington in the Revolutionary War and that he was a Mason who had traveled from France across the Atlantic Ocean to help the colonies in their effort to free themselves from the oppression of the English. It was

because of the great friendship that developed between General George Washington and General Lafayette that in 1876, one hundred years after the Revolutionary War, the French people gave to the people of United States a Statue of Liberty that stands at the entrance to the harbor of New York City, to greet all visitors from every corner of the world. What is not known, however, is that a Masonic Lodge in Paris under the name of Alsace-Lorraine suggested the idea that the French Nation should donate to the American people the Statue of Liberty. The sculptor of that statue was Brother Bartolome, a member of the Lodge of Alsace-Lorraine.

In recent years there have been many outstanding officers in the American government who were and still are, Masons. Foremost of these being Most Worshipful Brother Harry Truman, Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Missouri and former President of the United States.

Masonry does not claim that all leaders of the world were Masons, but it does claim that among the leaders of the world, many of the most famous were Masons. So, it is true in the Philippines, as well as throughout the world. In the days of national distress, when the need for freedom fighters and leaders in thought as well as in action was great, Freemasonry was not found wanting, and leaders emerged from its folds to become the Masonic Heroes of Philippine History.

Before Masonry became openly practiced in the Philippines, a number of Filipinos had been initiated in Paris and London, while other outstanding Filipinos such as Rizal, Del Pilar, Lopez Jaena, Mariano Ponce, Antonio Luna, Moises Salvador and others had taken their Masonic obligation in Spain. Among the great names of Filipinos initiated in Spain are those

of Vergel de Dios, Felix Pardo de Tavera, Ventura, Abarquez, Juan Luna and Exmundo Evangelista.

Dr. Jose P. Rizal and Marcelo H. del Pilar planned the organization of Philippine Masonry. This was indeed a fortunate idea both for our Craft and for the Philippines. From the efforts of these great Masonic patriots, leaders arose from the Masonic ranks to champion the cause of the oppressed Filipinos and eventually to bring about the freedom which Filipinos everywhere enjoy today.

If the role of early initiates in the Nilad Lodge were to be read to you today, you will recognize the names of the most outstanding Filipinos of the day. But, as in most cases where many great men are associated into a single body, disharmony developed, a thing which is forbidden among Brothers in Freemasonry. When such division of thinking arose in Nilad Lodge, another famous Filipino patriot arose to give his views. Apolinario Mabini, an acknowledged intellectual leader stated, "Where there is no unity, life becomes impossible. Sever the links of union between the different parts of a machine and you will have nothing but a pile of junk. Destroy the harmony that exists among the different members of the human body and it soon falls prey to disease and death."

Our purpose today is not to trace the organization of Freemasonry in the Philippines nor to repeat merely the names of the many famous Filipinos who were a part of that great movement in its earliest days. Our purpose today is the mention only the names of those outstanding heroes of the Philippines who were members of the Masonic Craft and identify them with the Masonic influence which inspired them in their hour of greatness.

Marcelo H. Del Pilar died on July 4, 1896. His death was a great loss to the Filipino people and a greater

loss to Philippine Masonry. Having joined Masonry in Spain, he brought Masonry to the Philippines and has been known from that time as the Father of Masonry in the Philippines. During those tragic years he wrote under the pen name of Plaridel. The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in the Philippines today is located in the Plaridel Masonic Temple, so named in honor of this great hero. It was together with Jose P. Rizal that Marcelo H. del Pilar brought Masonry to the Philippines. The greatest of Filipino heroes and a most eminent Freemason, Brother Jose P. Rizal is honored by his statue in Masonic regalia, which graces the entrance to our Plaridel Masonic Temple.

In speaking of the great Masonic heroes of the Philippines, Mauro Baradi in his book "Freemasons and Freemasonry" classified Rizal, Del Pilar, Bonifacio, and Mabini as among the greatest Masons of their time as follows:

"THE HONOR ROLL OF FILIPINO IMMORTALS is not complete without Rizal, del Pilar, Bonifacio, and Mabini. These four of our greatest Filipino heroes were all Masons who took their obligation on the altar of Freemasonry.

"President Ramon Magsaysay of the Philippines in his inaugural speech at the Luneta on Rizal Day, December 30, 1953, in paying an eloquent tribute to these Brethren of our Venerable Fraternity, referred to them as the exemplars in our common task of nation-building, the President said:

'All too often, however, we speak of Rizal — and of Del Pilar, Bonifacio, Mabini, and our best heroes — as if their work were done, as if today their spirit had ceased to have any meaning or value to our people.

Turn to page 27

We need it to complete the work which they began.'

'We need men of integrity and faith like Rizal and Del Pilar; men of action like Bonifacio; men of inflexible patriotism like Mabini. We need their zeal, their self-reliance, their capacity for work, their devotion to service, their ability to lose themselves in the common cause of building a nation.'

"These pillars of Philippine freedom — Masons all — were firm believers in the three principal tenets of Freemasonry: Brotherly love, Relief, and Truth; they bravely fought and gladly died that their native land might — as it does now — survive. We who are the recipients of their labors, regardless of color or creed must not forget their considered views and words of counsel, their great courage and heroic sacrifices.

Andres Bonifacio, founder of the Katipunan and a Freemason, was called the "Great Plebeian". Among his writings are these statements of his Masonic ideals:

"Love God with all thy heart.

"Always bear in mind that the true love of God is the love of thy country, and that this love is also the true love for thy fellow man.

"Engrave in thy heart that the height of honor and happiness is to die in order to serve one's country.

"Calmness, constancy, reason, and faith in all work and actions crown every good desire with success.

"Let the acts of each, in good government and the performance of his duties, be such as to serve as an example to his neighbor.

"In so far as it is within thy power, share thy means with every indigent or unfortunate person.

"Diligence in the effort to earn means of substance is the genuine

love for one's self, wife, son, daughter, brother, sister, and compatriot."

The Katipunan had two aims: to join the Filipino people into one nation and to secure Philippine independence by revolt against Spanish oppression. This was in contrast to Bro. Jose P. Rizal's desire for a peaceful campaign.

Initiation into the Katipunan followed the generally accepted principles of Freemasonry and when its membership failed to increase by means of the "triangle system," Bro. Bonifacio did not hesitate to reorganize its structure even more closely along Masonic lines by adopting three degrees:

1st Degree — Katipun (associate)

— Candidates and members wore a black hood with a white ribbon triangle on the forehead.

2nd Degree — Kawal (soldier)

— A green hood with green sash was worn and a jewel suspend from the neck with a green ribbon.

3rd Degree — Bayani (patriot) —

A red hood and sash, both bordered with green was worn. Red symbolized WAR and green, HOPE.

The password of the 3rd degree was RIZAL.

Thus, Bro. Bonifacio wove Masonry into his daily life and manifested to the world the inspiration that Masonry had given him to act boldly for his fellowmen in their hour of need.

Equally important among the great Masonic National Heroes of the Philippines is Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo. It was on January 1, 1895 that Brother Emilio Aguinaldo first knelt before the altar of Freemasonry in Ibarra Lodge No. 31 of Free and Accepted Masons and sixty years later, on Saturday January 1, 1955 he again knelt before the same altar of Freemasonry in his Lodge, Ibarra Lodge No. 31, to renew his vows and rededicate himself to Freemasonry anew, although he was then 85 years old. It was on this oc-

Turn to next page

casation when Brother Aguinaldo was called upon to speak that he remained silent for a moment as if recollecting the past, the colorful, the tragic and demanding years wherein he was a leading participant. And then words seem to come slowly, but in a firm voice, he expressed his gratitude to his Brothers in Freemasonry for the opportunity Freemasonry had given him to serve the Craft and to help strengthen "the frontier of liberty, fraternity and equality in our land." Bro. Aguinaldo then continued, "I have frequently wondered why so many of my associates were Freemasons during those days in which we fought for the independence of the Philippines during the last decades of Spanish sovereignty, and I always reached the same conclusion as our Bro. George Washington probably did during the Revolutionary War in America; all these men, at the time of being initiated in Masonry, had been submitted to a minute investigation, and their obligations, taken before the altar of Freemasonry, were a guarantee of the trust to be put in them. It was very seldom in those days that our judgment as to the mettle of those men was wrong. The list of honor of our leaders at that time of relentless struggle is equivalent to a list of the prominent Brethren in Freemasonry. They were Filipinos of whom even then we were already proud, and who became immortals. There is not a child in our schools who does not feel elated on hearing the names of those patriot Masons — Brothers Rizal, Del Pilar, Lopez Jaena, Mabini, Bonifacio, Candido Tirona, the Thirteen Martyrs of Cavite, and many others who offered their lives for the independence of their country."

Since the beginning of history, Masonic leaders such as these mentioned today have emerged from our Craft to

guide their people out of darkness and suffering. What was considered radical a century or two before its time became conservative a century or two later. What is often overlooked is the struggle between men that took place during the three or four centuries when the concept was passing from radical to conservative in the views of the people. Men fought bravely and lost their lives, either fighting for or defending ideas. Men today are continuing to fight bravely and are losing their lives fighting for and defending the concept of democracy.

Today there is a need for someone to emerge and lead all mankind away from the path of destruction, distrust, hate, and darkness toward the light of understanding, unifying all men in harmonious achievement for the welfare of each without sacrificing the welfare of others.

As science sweeps away the superstitions and mysteries of ancient beliefs, it does not mean that man loses faith in God. Since science is truth and God is all truth, therefore, there can be no other ultimate end except that science must find God. And as Masonry is truth, it helps men to find God giving them the strength and courage to do God's will.

Today, we need Masonic leaders to emerge and rally men to the cause of their fellowmen just as these great Masonic heroes in Philippine History have done in the past. Just as our great Masonic hero Andres Bonifacio did in his lifetime and for which we are privileged to honor him today.

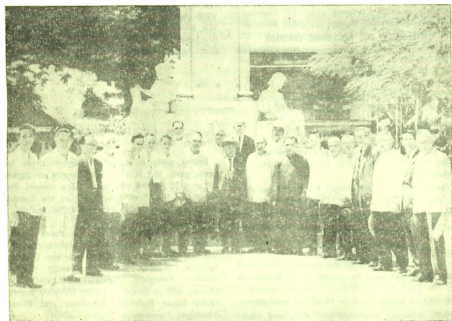
There among you, my Brethren, may stand a Masonic hero of tomorrow. These DeMolay boys are the Masons of tomorrow. From their ranks and yours, and those of millions of Masons yet unborn will come the future leaders of the world. When we look into the mirror and see ourselves

clearly, can we say truly, "I am a Mason?" or must we say "I am a Mason in name only?"

This is our personal challenge. Our personal problem to solve. We are the Masonic examples for these De Molays and our Brother Masons to follow. Are we qualified to set an example for others to follow so that our Craft can continue to furnish the world its heroic leaders in the years to come? Only you and I can answer that question. I hope we can all answer it very well.



DeMolays Lysander E. Canlas, Chev. (l) and Wayne G. Quasha of Loyalty Chapter, O.D. were presented recently the Representative DeMolay Award. The latter is the son of MW William Quasha, PGM.



Delegates to the 8th Annual District Convention of District No. 12, held on October 9, 1965, from Rizal Lodge No. 20, Kailayan Lodge No. 37 and Jose Abad Santos Lodge No. 43, and members and officers of the host Balintawak Lodge No. 28 pose for a picture after a floral offering at the Rizal monument in Gumaca, Quezon. Among the officers of Balintawak Lodge shown are WB Dionisio A. Barrios, Worshipful Master; WB Victor A. Mendoza, PM, Senior Warden; Bro. Serapion Dapilas, Junior Warden; and WB Vicente Q. Tan, PM, Grand Lodge Inspector of Rizal Lodge.