

## When San Francisco Saved Manila From Earthquake

Fourth Paper Mission Trail Series: Ancient Power of Saints

Manila is well connected with the world in these days, both radio and cable would flash the news of any peril she might be in, and ships sailing 30 knots an hour would come to her relief, if necessary, from their business on the China coast; so that, as she is not sick, she is not the saintly metropolis she was of old, when there was no telegraph, no steamboat, and nothing but a single galleon a year from Mexico.

It was an age of simple faith and primitive impulses. As the subject of this paper is the Franciscan friars, whose missions will be tabulated in the November issue, let the reader glance into their monastery church in the walled city and observe what is venerated there. In this way he will best gain an accurate impression of the faith that entered into the building of these ancient and noble piles, a faith which most



which, waited for so frequently by the ships of those heretic nations, England and Holland, might never arrive in port. The Spanish colony indeed comprised but a handful of men, the friars, the civil officials and the troops, and besides the perils of attack by sea there was the constant danger of uprisings of the Indios or Chinese within the city itself. The citadel, or walled city, was the material refuge; no Chinese save he were baptized a Christian, was allowed to live there, and the native population as well was outside the walls. But the principal reliance was the God whose crucified son's doctrine of salvation was being established in the Far East for the redemption of barbarian mankind.

The saints never deserted the evangelists, though of course these holy men advised the secular authorities to keep their powder dry,

remarkably preserved Spain's most remote and unprofitable colony and induced Philip II to swear, perhaps with some exaggeration not uncommon to the period, that he would give his kingdom in ransom for a single pagan soul.

The Franciscan church in Intramuros was originally built of bamboo and nipa at the expense of Marshal Gabriel de Rivera and Captain Martin de la Rea. The monks took solemn possession of it in the same year, 1577, August 2, and dedicated it to Our Lady of the Angels, "having at the same time the extreme good fortune to be the first to maintain intact (*que conservaron reservado*) the august and most divine sacrament of the eucharist in these islands."

In 1583 the original church and convent burned down and the same benefactors of the mission built another of wood and tile. "In 1602 it was built for the third time, at the expense of

the indefatigable and singular piety of Marshal Rivera, who soon afterward assumed the habit and confessed the Franciscan faith in this province. The church and the greater part of the convent was destroyed in 1739, and the edifice of masonry and timber pillars still existing was then built. On November 5 of that year the corner stone was laid by Sr. Brigadier D. Gaspar de la Torre y Ayala, of His Majesty's council, gentleman of the royal *camara*, governor and captain general of these islands.

"Building proceeded under the direction of Sr. D. Juan Manuel Perez de Tagle, Marquis de las Salinas, knight of Calatrava, and our special benefactor. Although the church is not large, it is much more spacious than those generally belonging to our order. In the earthquake of 1824 the tower was destroyed, and was afterward rebuilt; in the earthquake of June 3, 1863, a good deal of the roof and the southern wall of the main chapel were demolished.

"The devotion felt by Manila and all the Philippines for the seraph of Assisi, and have felt from the beginning, is not to be explained by the easy credulity of the natives nor the impassioned orations of holy men."

Here the old chronicler, Fray Felix Huerta, who wrote during the period when he was minister to the lepers in San Lazaro hospital (a Franciscan charity 300 years old which will be treated with the rest in a future paper), tells how, in the uprising of the Chinese of the Parian October 3, 1603, St. Francis mounted the walls with a flaming sword in his hand to defend the city, as was established in the subsequent judicial investigation by the most respectable witnesses, "including even the enemy, especially 400 prisoners who, sentenced to death, were baptized, and each was given the name of Francis in honor of such a singular portent."

Having been thus saved, they were shot. Francis was officially made the Seraphic Custodian of Manila, and patron and protector of the city, and his intervention on behalf of the colony is regularly celebrated unto this day. In Spanish days these annual rejoicings on October 3 were attended by the governor and captain general, the archbishop and both the secular and ecclesiastical councils as well as the supreme court. In 1692 the court for some reason, no doubt a quarrel between the church and state authorities, found it inconvenient to attend, but a protest was raised to the king, who compelled the court's future attendance by his royal decree of December 17, 1694.

This famous image of St. Francis is kept at the Santa Clara convent chapel, where it may be seen; but on October 4 yearly it is taken out of the chapel in solemn procession to the chapel of the Franciscans, protectors of the Claire nuns, Dominican and Franciscan friars participating in the ceremony and a Dominican, by interceder courtesy, preaching the sermon. After the ceremony in the church, the hospitality of the Franciscans is enjoyed and in the afternoon another procession like the first returns the image to its sanctuary with the nuns.

Another image of St. Francis worshiped at the Franciscan church is the first which was placed in the original building of bamboo and



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nipa. It also had its eminent part in the salvation of Manila. So it was sent to the Franciscans of Dilao (Paco) by Fray Pedro de San Pablo, then provincial of the Franciscans of the Philippines, for their processions. In 1630, another image having been donated for the processions, D. Alonso Cuyapat, the native principal of Dilao, took the first image to the streets and erected on it a little altar. The people and rested on a box at a window overlooking the stricken city. It was put back upon the altar, but it again removed itself to the window, where it displayed signs of anguish and wept copiously, according to reliable witnesses who testified in the usual judicial inquiry into these surprising miracles on the third, fourth and fifth and a fourth. It bent upon its knees at the window, where its weeping and anguish attracted such general notice as at last reached the ear of officialdom. The authorities immediately decided to return the image to Manila, for which purpose a procession was ordered, and placed on the altar by the people. The pomp of the earth ceased as soon as Christ-faith in the holy march began treading its surface. The sky cleared and wind softened so that not one of the thousands of candles was blown out. The public emotion exceeded all bounds and the gratitude of householders for the intervention of the second crucified one was attested in the most astounding rejoicing. One must believe, because Father Huerta has it all from the contemporary records of the monastery.

This happened December 4, 1645; and in the evening of December 4 this year Manilans will have the opportunity to observe the repetition of the ceremony and see the image borne along by the multitude.

The image of Christ in the Sepulcher venerated at the Franciscan church in 1735 and was the gift of Captain D. Francisco Cosio y Mier to the monastery. The pious soldier declared that being desirous of presenting such an image to the church, he went into the forest to select wood proper for making it, and found a tree in the shape of a cross from which he determined to take wood for his statue. He found, however, he was in despair about finding a sculptor skillful enough to fashion the image, so he knelt and sought divine aid. When he arose, a strange Spaniard was standing near him who said he was from Granada. He gave this man welcome in his home, told him his difficulty and the stranger, who was a carpenter—miraculously, one perceives—told him that the Lord commanded him to do the statue. Thereupon the carpenter asked for tools, which were all supplied him; and then he locked himself in a room converted into a workshop until the statue was finished.

"He then requested me," says Captain Cosio, "to bring him a confessor to administer the sacrament before the fifth day or he would die. I did so, and he died on the fifth day as he had believed he would."

Such was the ancient faith of the islands. And why not today? Is it not in the books? Were not the witnesses unimpeachable? But, fifty years ago Spain went republican and revolutionary, and hereby skeptical of the miraculous nature of its own miracles. Men even in this colony, where present welfare rather than humble devotion in the hope of future rewards began to be talked about and desired.

The friars rebuked it, but could not keep it away. The monarchy was soon restored and the mailed fist came down hard, but despite all another day had definitely dawned in the sacred area of science, and its light had reached the Philippines. It wants everything proved by mathematical rule and compass and not by judicial investigations, and the things of the spirit don't always submit themselves to rules and compasses. The friars, puzzled, think it more than passing strange that men may live without all these worldly goods, and yet not believe in them; for they were certainly very real in their time. By faith ye

can remove mountains. Some of the scientists are bold enough to say that the degree man feels his helplessness he leans upon heaven, and as the modification of institutions and improvement of tools add to his self reliance he grows proud and independent of heaven's intervention. It may be.

But what of the day, it must have been in 1623, when the Taycosama of Japan crucified the



## Central America New Abacá Field for United States

NOTE.—The Philippines lost because of inanition. They subsist in penury because determined seemingly at all times and under all conditions to treat in the Lord without helping themselves. The president of the Chamber of Commerce, Captain H. L. Heath, demonstrated in a recent article published in this *Journal* that Sumatra has the jump on the Philippines in abaca: Sumatra produces her rate fiber better standardized by economical methods utilizing machinery to the utmost and hand labor to the least degree possible. He suggested that, unless the Philippines undertake timely reforms, they will gradually forfeit preeminence in the manila hemp field which up to date constitutes a monopoly. But Sumatra, like other areas at the head of the bay, has the usual cold water with rainbows lurking in the bottom of the pool. No, the Philippines couldn't change; no, there was really no cause for alarm. Well, neither assumption is all correct: the Philippines can change their farm methods in manila hemp as in any other crop; it is all a question of financing and executive interests getting together, the planters and their financial backers or bankers, and there is real cause for alarm about big-scale plantations of manila hemp outside the Philippines both in the East and West Indies. The *Journal* doesn't care to repeat what the newspapers have been saying on the subject, but reproduces the latest report from Central America.—ED.

Experimentation looking toward the establishment of abaca plantations in different sections of Central America are being carried on by the Department of Agriculture, according to a statement just issued. Fiber from the abaca plant, sometimes known as manila hemp, is largely used in making manila rope. The entire world's supply of the fiber now comes from the Philippines, with the exception of a few hundred bales produced in Netherlands East Indies.

A collection of approximately 1,400 selected plants were brought from the Philippines to the Canal Zone during the summer of 1925. Thus far the plants have made a satisfactory growth, but it will be necessary to continue experimental work for at least two years before it can be determined whether or not it will be practicable to produce abaca on a commercial scale in tropical America, according to the statement.

The full text of the statement follows: *Assures Plentiful Supplies*  
In order that United States may be assured a plentiful supply of rope at reasonable prices the United States Department of Agriculture is making an effort to establish plantations of abaca in different sections of Central America. Fiber from the abaca plant, sometimes known as manila hemp, is used largely in making manila

rope, and the entire world's supply of the fiber now comes from the Philippines, with the exception of a few hundred bales produced in Netherlands India. More than one-third of the fiber produced is used in the United States, and the present production is barely sufficient to meet the world demand.

Many of the abaca growers are now planting coconuts in the fields that were formerly planted to abaca and two different plant diseases that have appeared during recent years have either damaged or entirely destroyed the abaca crop on limited areas. It has been apparent, in view of these conditions, that an effort should be made to establish the abaca industry in tropical regions other than the Philippines.

They were Jesuits and Dominicans and Recollects too, and some were women. The oil painting of their martyrdom hangs in a little chapel at the Franciscan monastery. Pope Pio IX canonized them all on June 8, 1862. All Spaniards in the islands are expected to revert their memory. Preparations for the hanging of the memorial in the chapel consumed six months and two million *reales*, and no such gorgeous ceremonies ever occurred in the islands before or since.

They were the entire order of the day for nine consecutive days, a novenario, and honored by the highest officials. Delegations passed into Manila from all surrounding villages, each with their particular cross and standard. Three military companies led the march, and cannons volleyed and bells rang loud as the procession filed along the streets. At the cost of the city, the Very Noble and Ever Loyal City of Manila, a castle of powder was set up on the Plaza de Armas, now Plaza McKinley, and burned that first evening as a part of the brilliant illuminations. And so on, day after day, the emotions of the people rising to greater and greater heights of enthusiasm. This was the Christian answer in the 17th century to the pagan crime. "The Ayuntamiento, upon the ecclesiastical authorization, nominated the martyrs patrons of the city May 20, 1631, promising to celebrate their festa every year and to contribute annually eight *cirios* and 24 candles, as is done to this day." Huerta wrote in 1865.

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