

THE HERO WHO COULD HAVE BEEN A TEACHER

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General Gregorio del Pilar, the defender of Tirad Pass and the youngest hero of the Philippine Revolution, as a small child nurtured the ambition of becoming a teacher someday. This was the reason why he took up Bachelor of Arts at the old Ateneo de Manila, then called Ateneo Municipal. Call it fate, or anything you want, but had it not been for a combination of certain events and circumstances, del Pilar would now be an obscure maestro instead of occupying a permanent niche in the Hall of the Filipino Greats.

What were the circumstances that thwarted young Gregorio's dream of becoming a teacher and made him a revolutionary figure instead and made him a revolutionary figure instead? There were many. The major causes, however, can be summed up in the following:

- (1) The fact that Goyo, even as a small boy, knew oppression under the Spanish yoke.
- (2) The influence which his uncle, Marcelo, known to many as Plaridel, and his writings wielded over him.
- (3) The death of Anacleto Enriquez, one of his best friends, in a battle between the revolutionists and the Spanish troops.
- (4) The innate revolutionary spirit of the hero himself.

Del Pilar's Childhood

The boy-general was born on November 14, 1875 in Bulacan, Bulacan. He was the youngest child of Fernando H. Del Pilar, brother of the great propagandist, and Felipa Sempio.

As a child, Goyo witnessed the sufferings of the Filipinos under the heel of the invader. After obtaining his early education in his hometown, Goyo began reading the controversial pamphlets of his Tio Celo which were then being distributed during cockfights, or during funeral rites. Sometimes, Plaridel's writings were clandestinely distributed to churchgoers during Sundays and holidays of obligation. Marcelo's writings were oblique indictments against the many excesses of the Spanish authorities.

At that time, young Goyo wanted very much to become a member of the teaching profession. He regarded the maestros and maestras of the day with a certain air of respect. His love for the teaching profession, however, gradually waned as the years passed by and a stronger love - the love of country - took root in Goyo's heart.

The boy used to sell empanadas in the barrios near Balacan. He would combine business with pleasure and at the same time supplement his meager education by selling empanadas in barrio San Nicolas where his Tio Celo lived and where he had ball sessions with the latter. Goyo was Marcelo's pet. The founder of Free Masonry in the Philippines would patiently answer all the curious questions of his nephew. From such tete-a-tetes developed strong ties of understanding and love between uncle and nephew. There was no doubt effect on Goyo and his joining the revolutionary forces a few years later.

Even when Plaridel was already in Spain, the two continuously kept in touch with each other. Goyo never made a big decision without consulting his uncle first when the latter was still living.

The Immediate Cause of del Pilar's Joining the Revolution

After del Pilar obtained his Bachelor's degree from the Ateneo on March 15, 1896, he was torn between his ambition to enter the teaching profession and the desire, which was stronger, to join the ranks of the revolutionary forces. For months, he grappled with the problem.

A tragic incident settled the question for him and this was the death of his bosom pal, Anacleto Enriquez. This occurred in December, 1896. The revolutionary troops suffered serious reverses in the battles of Kalumpit