

THE BATTLE ABOVE THE CLOUDS

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"It was a battle above the clouds I saw the youngest and bravest Filipino general trying to align his men to detain the American forces who were pursuing him, so that he could protect the retreat of Aguinaldo. I saw him arrange his soldiers from trench to trench, appealing to their pride, their valor, their love and loyalty to country. He was mounted on a white horse in the midst of the cracking of our Krag rifles. Afterwards one of our soldiers climbed the top of a rock and fired in the direction of General del Pilar. We held our breath, not knowing whether to pray that he might miss, or ascertain his aim... Then we heard a shot and young Del Pilar fell.

"We climbed the mountains where the Company had succeeded in despising of the second battery. Other companies ascended the peak and now were above the clouds.

"Ten men were dead in the first battery. Later we disposed of even the second. One hundred yards farther was the body of the General, lying across the path. I had never seen a similar one - so distinct from the others. I guessed that the form and face was that of a distinguished gentleman and an officer.

"That is Del Pilar," a soldier said to one. We confiscated his Memoirs, his letters, his papers. Commandant March got his memoirs.

"In his memoirs, dated Dec. 2, he writes:

"The General (meaning Aguinaldo) has ordered me to guard the path with a platoon of men. I realized it was a difficult task he gave me. However, I feel it is the most glorious moment in my life. All I do is for my beloved country. There is no greater sacrifice."

"A soldier presented before us a silk handkerchief also of Del Pilar. In one of its corners was embroidered the initials DNJ. Another soldier, seated on a rock, was examining a gold locket which contained the tresses of a woman.

"Thus we left the dead. A raven alighted at his feet and another hovered over his head. I thought that Del Pilar was despoiled - stripped of everything; but I was mistaken - he was left with his glory - the glory of a soldier." This is taken from a newspaper account of Richard Henry Little, an eye witness,

Another version appeared in the Diary of Dr. Simcon Villa - official document of Aguinaldo:

Dec. 2 - "At 5 o'clock in the afternoon of this day, the Hon Capt. General received word from two officials that the Americans after six hours of continuous fight with the Filipinos at last captured all their trenches in the mountains, and that Gen. Del Pilar received a bullet in the head; also some of our soldiers were sure the Americans must be in Angakabe at that time. According to official reports, General del Pilar died about 10 o'clock in the morning. "

The official papers of the U.S War Department had this brief article:

Dec. 2, 1899 - "Commandant P.C March, in charge of a platoon of the 33rd Infantry proceeded after the rebels entrenched in the pass of Tirad, near Lingayen, Luzon, P.I. The path extends high through the mountains in a pronounced zigzag and is dominated by barricades of stones loopholed for the fire of the infantry. Soon the advance started an intense firing from the barricades, killing and wounding many men. Immediately reinforcements were sent and at a renewal of the offensive, it was seen that the position could not be taken with a frontal attack.

"Toward the left of the barricade, a promontory, an appropriate point for shooting was occupied by 10 expert shooters, while Lieutenant Tompkin, in command of Company H retired and mounted the trail ... which was protected by an elevation that rose up to 150 ft. of the summit. Having reached this declivity by means of vines and branches, a simultaneous attack on both sides began,