

## THE LAST DAYS OF APOLINARIO MABINI

By; F. Polor Angeles  
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THERE is an old nipa house on Calle Nagtahan, in the district of Sampaloc, Manila. It stands by the river, at the northern approach of the bridge leading to Pandacan.

This house is owned by the Philippine Historical Committee and visitors are welcome. You go up to the porch and enter the living room. The room is bare of furniture; on a wall, however, is a painting, darkened by age, of a sick man being carried in a hammock by barefooted revolutionaries.

You look up at the ceiling and note with a start that it resembles the top of a coffin. At the door to the next room, you pause for a while and study the large framed photograph of a melancholy man, whose face appears was and drawn, the eyes staring at you from dusky depths.

On the housepost is a marker which explains what the house means to history and to the Filipino people: In this house Apolinario Mabini died on 13 May 1903." At a window is a wreath carved in wood with another inscription: "On this side Mabini breathed his last at midnight of May 13, 1903."

"He died of cholera," the caretaker of the house tells you. "We were told..."

"We?"

"Yes, the patriot was my granduncle." And the caretaker humbly conceals the pride in his eyes. "We were told that he got cholera from milk contaminated by a fly. You know, in the past, during epidemics, people ate under mosquito nets- there were so many flies. Somehow, this fly got in and contaminated his milk. He drank the milk just the same, and soon after he contracted cholera."