

AGUINALDO CREATURE OF HIS OWN AGE

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Born into a family that was not distinguished either for intellectual attainments or for economic prominence, Aguinaldo tasted a little of Spanish education, taught for a while, and then took to commerce as a means of fortifying the family's sagging economy. He was, until then, an ordinary young man known only as straight-backed, quiet, and soft-spoken. And then the Katipunan, with its incendiary leaflets and revolutionary aims, extended its plebeian arms to Cavite, where the tradition of robust manhood is expressed in deadly combats. It was the eve of the revolution against Spain, and Aguinaldo, having now achieved a sort of fame as the newly-elected headman of his town, took the first significant step in his life by enlisting as a member of the revolutionary secret society.

Individualists to a certain extent, the Caviteños divided themselves into two rival Katipunan factions, each vying to outdo the other. So far, the young major had not made himself conspicuous as potential leader of Cavite. Mariano Alvarez, Baldomero Aguinaldo, and Candido Tirona were far above him in leadership. There was, in fact, no sign that young Aguinaldo would rise as the foremost leader of them all. Yet at one stroke, he succeeded in making himself their acknowledged leader in Cavite by the simple expedient of leading an assault group against the Spanish garrison a few days after the outbreak of the revolution. For Aguinaldo, it was the beginning of his rapid ascent to power.

No Military Education

Without any military education, his courage and

fortitude led him to the arena where men's strength of character and physical endurance are tested. Circumstances, then, led him to develop his potential powers and to devise the means with which to translate latent possibilities into swift action. Thus, the series of brilliant victories in Cavite definitely marked him for future leadership not only in Cavite, but throughout the revolt-ridden areas of Central and Southern Luzon. The stage of activity had now shifted from organization to active military capacity for military strategy, exceeded even his wildest dreams by putting the enemy on the run. By November 9, 1896. When the battle of Binakayan was fought, Aguinaldo had made himself indispensable to the insurgents.

Bonifacio Displaced

To a certain extent, his rise to power and popularity was a misfortune. For precisely because of this popularity, Bonifacio, the great organizer, saw his star sink to the horizon - never to rise again. It was, of course, through no fault of Aguinaldo that the Supremo found himself displaced in the esteem of the Cavite revolutionist. With a man in their midst who had made the enemy feel the concentrated wrath of centuries of oppression, it was inevitable that the Caviteños, like other Filipinos, should instinctively make an appeal to their regionalistic pride to make their man the leader of the entire revolutionary movement. And so, seven months after the outbreak of the revolution, the obscure mayor of Kawit found himself the lord and master of the Revolution.

Humility is not necessarily an ingredient of greatness, but to Aguinaldo humility was a necessary base on which much of his personality and, perhaps, greatness, rest. It is not much of an achievement for a man of high attainments to practice or at least show a semblance of humility, even if assumed, but it certainly is nothing short of superhuman for a common man to remain humble in the face of success. For the common man as a rule does not have in his system that psychological brake which puts to a sudden stop overwhelming passions and exuberant enthusiasm that usually override his crude rational processes. Aguinaldo is an exception.