

LLANA HERMOSA.

"O Sister! please tell me about the Martyr of Llana Hermosa." Just then the chimes from Manila's numerous churches broke forth, and in an instant the white robed nun of Old Castile and a fair child of the Dakotas bent the knee and from their lips came the words: "Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ."

After saying this celestial prayer, Sister and child arose and went to pay an evening visit to Our Lady's Shrine in a secluded corner of the convent grounds. As both knelt in the soft gleam of the vigil lamp, they indeed presented a pleasing picture; the nun with her dark pensive eyes and her somber veil; the maiden, her golden hair almost concealed beneath the folds of a brightly colored mantilla. Surely the contrast was great and they seemed to have nothing akin. But as the sweet incense of prayer arose; that tender Mother, in whose hands they were placing their petitions, knew that although her devout children were different in many respects they were united in this: they forgot themselves and prayed for others; for one sought solace for her brother Dominicans laboring in the Missions of China; the other asked blessings for her Daddy's

Soldiers fighting in the jungles of Mindanao.

Sister Dolores arose to go, but before she had taken two steps in the direction of the Study Hall, Teresa was up with a bound and calling her said: "Sister, we have twenty minutes yet, so please tell me that story now."

Sister Dolores willingly consented to the child's request, and after they had seated themselves in the cool latticed portico that faces Legaspi Street she told in her sweet Castilian tongue the following story:

"In my own country, Teresa, is a city called Burgos. It is far more beautiful than Manila and its churches are beyond comparison. It was near Burgos about thirty-six years ago that the subject of my little story, David Varas, was born. When but your age he heard the voice of God telling him to go forth and save souls. In response to this divine call he entered the Novitiate at Ocaña, near Toledo, where he received our holy habit of purity and penance on December 5, 1885. A year later, on the lovely feast of the Immaculate Conception, he made what we call the Simple Profession. This was indeed a happy day for Brother David, but a happier one came three years

later, for this time he completed the holocaust by taking Solemn Vows; and then what joy, for he belonged to Christ alone.

"After being ordained priest he bade farewell to home and loved ones and set sail for these Islands, where he was to labor and to die. He arrived here in 1892, and was for a while stationed at such towns as Binondo-c, Calamba and Abucay. Finally he was sent to Llana-Hermosa as Parish Priest.

"Shortly after midnight of the 20th of November, 1896, a band of conspirators entered the town, overpowered the small police force, rifled the church and took Father Varas prisoner. After they had bound his hands they led him forth, and then sought by shameful deeds to disgrace the Pastor in the eyes of his flock. In the midst of this vile persecution the only words that escaped his lips were: "O my people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee? answer thou me. Have I not been among you teaching you and your children?"

"At daybreak his hands became an offering unto the Lord: they were cut off just about the time, I think, had he not been taken by bandits, he would have been holding in them the Body of Christ or the chalice of his Most Precious Blood. After this cruel treatment, Father was forced to walk barefoot to a neighboring town

where he was beheaded, and thus another name was added to that already glorious roll of the Church's Martyrs in the Orient. But this was not all. They threw the body into a swamp where it was discovered by a company of Spanish soldiers a few days later. The head was affixed to a branch of a tree and remained there until recognized by some of Father Varas' altar-boys, who reverently took it down and carried it to the cemetery. Both head and body were then placed in a wooden casket, and amidst a large gathering of Religious, soldiers and citizens, his remains were buried in the cemetery at Balanga."

"But Sister," asked the thoughtful maiden, "why did the people of Llana-Hermosa not help their Pastor when they saw him in such circumstances?"

"Because they feared for their own lives, Teresa," replied the Sister; "for such bands as the one that made the attack on Llana-Hermosa were dreaded by all, and continue to be feared even now. Were it not so, the Americans would not be fighting up to the present. The people of Llana-Hermosa loved their Pastor and to-day venerate his memory. Now you have the story: so, buenas noches: I must go to say office."

As Teresa knelt before Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament to

say her Rosary, she felt in her heart a deep longing to be like Father David Varas; to sacrifice all things for Christ. At the hour of study she took her geography and searched therein for three places: Burgos and Ocaña in Spain, and Llana-Hermosa in the Province of Bataan.

A few months after this day so dear to the heart of Teresa, the huge troop-ship "Logan" hoisted anchor and sailed down the Bay; as she did so the command of Teresa's father bade farewell to Manila. Only one aboard was sad as the towers of the walled city grew dimmer and dimmer and at length disappeared; and that one was Teresa. But as the boat came abreast of Corregidor, she bent her head forward and, gazing for a moment on a medallion of the Madonna which hung by a golden chain from her neck, said: "O Mother dear, is it not wrong for a Catholic to be sad when God demands a sacrifice? Sister Dolores often told me that the early Christians served in gladness and simplicity of heart, and surely that was a time when one was often forced to give up much."

Amidst salutes and greetings from Forts and ships the United States Transport "Logan" entered the Golden Gate after a pleasant voyage of twenty-nine days. Christmas found the Regiment of

Teresa's father quartered in a Presidio near the old romantic town of Monterey. Here, while the papas and mammas of the other young ladies of the Regiment were seeking spouses for their daughters from among those who had carried the sword for their country, the father and mother of Teresa knew that their child was to become the bride of Him who had borne the cross for the world. Sister Dolores had planted and watered the seed; God gave the increase.

Few in the Presidio knew how anxiously Teresa awaited the day on which she was to take the veil. As to the name she would take, I guessed Dolores, but in this I was mistaken; for on my last visit to the Arsenal at Blanco Point the children there, who attended the Convent of Our Lady of the Waters, vied with one another in telling me the story of the Martyr of Llana-Hermosa, which, they said, was told to them by Sister Mary David.

Albert Muller, O. P.

A PRAYER.

My dearest Lord, I pray to Thee for blindness!

I do not ask that sight mine eyes may fail—

I humbly beg Thy grace may work this kindness—

That from my heart, faults of others ever veil.

Hugh Welsh, O. P.