

THE SEISMIC AND MAGNETIC SERVICES OF THE MANILA OBSERVATORY

The catastrophes of war are beyond the power of any seismograph to measure. It is true that they record the violent movements of the earth but they need the help of a seismologist in order to function correctly after having newly acquired its final position. A good seismic service does not go well with the disturbances of war. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the Manila Observatory had seismic stations provided with seismographs in Guam, Butuan, Ambulong, Tagaytay, Baguio and Manila. The one in Guam perished as soon as the American forces abandoned the naval base. When the Japanese landed in Agusan, the worker of the observatory at Butuan had to abandon the apparatus and look for a refuge in the mountains to save himself and his family.

The station in Baguio next only to that of Manila, had the best instruments was left changed into a room of useless implements, iron instruments bent double and broken glass. As soon as it was abandoned by the observer, the ransackers first and the Japanese went up the observatory hill and looted not only clothing and furniture which they found in the house but also iron scraps and clocks of the seismographs and the materials of the show-case. The Taal volcano whose eruption in 1911 prompted the construction of the observatory of Ambulong could have had erupted again without having it recorded by the seismographs of the nearest station, because at the coming of the Japanese, the observatory was left without clocks to record the hour, without paper or pen to record the vibrations on batteries to provide electrical current for the seismographs.

The Japanese turned the Observatory in Tagaytay into a watch - tower for military Observation. The observer had the chance of sending some meteorological instruments to Manila along with a cargo of bananas and eggplants. The Japanese guards did not notice them and so those instruments were saved. When I went to Tagaytay on Dec. 28, 1945 for the first time after the war, the seismic station served as lodgings for the laundry-women of the American soldiers who were staying in the Hotel of Tagaytay. Military clothings were hung along the wired fence of the station for drying. The tripod or framework which had been purchased for the Wiechert served as a stand for a big blower pot. The seismic