

THE MANILA OBSERVATORY

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The Manila Observatory came into existence, inconspicuously it is true, on January 1, 1865, and ended an unbroken record of service on January 3, 1942, a period of seventy-seven years. It is very desirable, therefore, to put on record a detailed account of this institution which achieved an international reputation, the full history of which has never been written. This narration will follow a chronological order, for the most part, and it may be remarked that practically all of the source material was lost in the fall of Manila in February, 1945.

The Beginning

In 1865 Francisco Colina, a Jesuit scholastic, was teaching the sciences in the Ateneo de Municipal, the Jesuit school in Manila, which had opened its doors in 1859. There was an abandoned pigeon house on the roof in which Colina installed some meteorological instruments and dignified it with the name observatory. He had a thermometer, a hygrometer, a barometer of oil instead of mercury, and his anemometer was a piece of cloth hung by a string from the top of a pole; thus Father Pastells describes the initial equipment, but we are inclined to believe that he may have exaggerated the primitiveness of some of the equipment.

In September, 1865, a strong typhoon passed close by to the north of Manila and its effects were easily seen the next morning in the boats which were driven up on the beach just to the west of the school. This was a new experience to another scholastic, Jaime Nonell, and he at once became interested. He had some meteorological experience in Europe and he drew some curves from the observations which Colina had made before and during the typhoon. Colina brought