

The Commoner.

Towne on Imperialism.

Senator Towne's speech is of such exceptional merit that it would be given in full if space permitted. Below will be found some of the strongest passages:

MR. TOWNE. Mr. President, I should like to have the joint resolution introduced by me last Friday read for the information of the senate. (The Secretary read:)

A joint resolution (S. R. 155) in favor of recognition of Philippine independence.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled: That justice, the public welfare, and the national honor demand the immediate cessation of hostilities in the Philippine Islands upon terms recognizing the independence of the people and conserving and guaranteeing the interests of the United States.

Mr. President, the presentation on the 10th instant, by the distinguished Senator from Colorado [Mr. Teller], of a petition signed by more than two thousand inhabitants of the city of Manila was an unexampled and most remarkable circumstance. Whatever the future has in store, this document is historic. It is spread upon the records of the Senate. There it must remain as long as our archives are preserved. To all coming ages its mute eloquence will speak "with most miraculous organ." Either it will have proved a quickening appeal to the ancient spirit of the Republic, or, in my opinion, its rejection must dedicate the twentieth century to a reaction prejudicial, if not fatal, to free institutions.

Who are the signers of this petition? They are peaceable tradesmen, merchants, lawyers, doctors, teachers, mechanics, and artisans at Manila. Whom do they represent? They claim to speak the sentiments and aspirations of the Philippine people. Of what do they complain? Of the assertion over them by force of arms of an alien and arbitrary rule. What nation thus asserts its power against them? The Republic of the United States of America. What is it they desire? Independence and self-government. To whom do they present their appeal? Let the answer be made in the words of the petition itself:

We have not hesitated, therefore, to present this appeal to the United States Congress, trusting that the latter may better understand the real aims and aspirations of our people. Therefore the Philippine nation, bearing in mind not only the heroic history of America, but also her sacred traditions, her humanitarian doctrines, and her democratic institutions, asks of America to cease her persecutions of men struggling to be free against greater odds and greater wrongs than those which inspired the fathers of the American Republic. We ask this of Americans in the name of Washington, in the name of Jefferson, in the name of Lincoln, in the name of justice, and in the name of God eternal, Judge of the world.

Sir, I confess that this appeal moves me. What American can remain insensible to the unhappy plight of a small and relatively feeble people engaged in a hopeless contest with a vastly stronger antagonist for the sacred privilege of self-government? Is not there something infinitely pathetic in the circumstance that we should today be using the very power conferred upon us by our liberties to subjugate a weaker nation invoking those very liberties against us and whom our own glorious example inspires to resist our aggression? Their summons in the name of Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln to challenge justice in the court of heaven is a most solemn adjuration. Never heretofore would the United States have hesitated to stake its cause on such an issue. Do we dare to do it now?

The first expeditionary land force of the United States entered Manila Bay June 30, 1898, Brig. Gen. Thomas M. Anderson commanding. In an article published in the North American Review for February, 1900, General Anderson says: "I was the first to tell Admiral Dewey that there was any disposition on the part of the American people to hold the Philippines if they were captured." But apparently it was to General Merritt, who relieved Anderson about a month later, that the full plan had been confided. In this same magazine article General

Anderson states that his orders were "to effect a landing, establish a base, not to go beyond the zone of naval cooperation, to consult Admiral Dewey and to wait for Merritt."

A sample of our frankness and good faith in dealing with the Filipinos meantime is given by General Anderson in an account of one of his conversations with Aguinaldo. The latter, he says, asked him "if we, the North Americans (as he called us), intended to hold the Philippines as dependencies." "I said I could not answer that, but that in one hundred and twenty years we had established no colonies. He then made this remarkable statement: 'I have studied attentively the Constitution of the United States, and I find in it no authority for colonies; and I have no fear.'

"It may be seen that my answer was somewhat evasive, but I was at the time trying to contract with the Filipinos for horses, carts, fuel and forage." Sir, the gospel of militarism could no farther go. What a commentary is here on the moral consciousness of this age! While entertaining designs on this man's liberty and that of his fellow-countrymen, the American commander deliberately lulls him into false security by an ambiguous observation, and boasts of it afterwards because it procured us "horses, carts, fuel and forage."

I put it, therefore, Senators, to the candor of fair-minded men: When the President of the United States, their late ally in the operations against Spain, having negotiated at Paris a treaty, not yet

President's Proclamation. in force, which assumed to dispose of their country, although their duly appointed representatives had been denied a hearing at the negotiations, solemnly announces by proclamation to the world that the victory over the Spaniards is to be by us treated as a victory over the Filipinos also; that the military government of the United States "is to be extended with all possible dispatch to the whole of the ceded territory;" and that all persons refusing to submit to this assumption of power are to be brought beneath it "with firmness, if need be;" in short, that we propose to take the islands for ourselves and to shoot everybody that refuses to acquiesce in the arrangement; had he not in effect declared war against the supporters of the Filipino Republic? Thereafter were not the precise time, place, and manner of the actual outbreak of hostilities matters of comparative indifference so far as the merits of the case are concerned?

If this is so, what becomes of the war power specifically reposed by the Constitution in Congress alone? It cannot be said that the President was by this act repelling invasion. He makes no such pretense in the proclamation, and as a matter of fact could not have done so with the slightest reason. Nor can it be claimed that he was suppressing insurrection. There had been no act of insurrection and his proclamation alleges none; nor, be it remembered, could there be an insurrection or rebellion by those who owed us no allegiance.

The treaty had not been ratified, and therefore even if, for the sake of argument, it be admitted that a nation may be purchased, along with its good will, allegiance, and loyalty, for twenty millions of dollars, yet the purchase had not been consummated. The high contracting parties had not yet formally struck the bargain. The blood money had not been paid. The Filipinos were their own men, at least until the ratification of that treaty. They therefore were not rebels when this proclamation was written. They were not rebels when it was published. They were not rebels during the opening weeks of that lamentable struggle for the right to govern themselves in the country that God gave them, which still continues, and in which so much of our treasure has been wasted and so many noble Americans have been sacrificed.

They owed us no allegiance when the war began. They have never assumed any since. To call them traitors because of a transaction in which they had

They Owe us No Allegiance. no part and which took effect long after they had begun to shed their blood in honorable war is, even if any technical standing be given it in international ethics, conduct unworthy of a just and chivalrous nation. Fight them if you will. Burn, kill, and destroy. Write large the precepts of Christian charity in their blood and ours upon the tropic sands, and let the flames to which we feed their homes flash as new beacons of civilization across the expanse of summer seas; but spare them, in mercy's name, the imputed infamy of treason. If we are bent on slaughter let it be in open guise. If we lust for this people's land let us not glaze our enterprise with false and sinister pretense. Rather

let us boldly raise the somber flag of international piracy, whistle scruple down the wind, and then close in upon our feeble victim to the cry of "Loot and glory!"

If any evil-disposed person were inclined to suspect that this ill-starred conflict had been desired, or even perhaps connived at, by our officers, he could certainly cite corroborative circumstances. He might, for example, quote the following statement in General Otis's report explaining the occasion for his dispatch of February 8, 1899, commanding General Miller to attack Iloilo:

"It was very important, for overmastering political reasons, to take possession of these southern ports;" and it certainly could not be deemed a wildly

Political Reasons.

improbable guess that the occurrences at Manila on February 4 might have been also associated with "overmastering political reasons." He perhaps would see some relevancy in the statement made by Gen. C. McC. Reeve, of Minnesota, a man I personally know to be of unimpeachable veracity, who was in command of the police of Manila at this time, and who reports that on the day following this first shooting General Torres came with a flag of truce from Aguinaldo to express the latter's regret that fighting had occurred, and to say that it had begun accidentally and that Aguinaldo wanted it stopped and desired the establishment of a suitable neutral zone between the two armies in the interest of peace; but that General Otis refused these overtures, declaring that "the fighting having once begun must go on to the grim end." This alleged occurrence General Otis has since qualified, though without essential contradiction; but General Reeve's account is quite harmonious with the following dispatch sent by General Otis to the War Department February 8: "Aguinaldo now applies for a cessation of hostilities and conference. Have declined to answer."

And this, sir, so far as I am advised, has been our attitude ever since. "No parley; surrender or extermination," is the cry. Ah! sir, this seems to me strange

Thirst for Blood!

language for the opening of the twentieth century, that hazy era of peace and the humanities, of which poets have sung and philosophers have dreamed during so many ages; an inexplicable motto for a people dedicated to liberty and heretofore the champion of human brotherhood. Napoleon said, "Scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar." I have sometimes thought as I have seen this passion for slaughter inflame and distort the faces of good men in whom the frenzied appeal of party orators appeared to move the primal instincts of savagery, that after all the original cave man may lurk just under the modern skin. And now and then, even within these storied walls, when I have looked on crowded galleries stirred to applause by the easy trick of arousing our inherited barbarism, the panorama of the centuries seemed to roll back on itself, and one might almost fancy that one stood in Ancient Rome when the populace had assembled to see the gladiators die "to make a Roman holiday." Here were the same eager faces, the same gleaming and pitiless eyes, the same tense and horrible expectancy; and, except that here the victim was present only in imagination, one might think the next instant to hear the shrill cries of "Habet," "Habet," as the catastrophe to the dread drama came.

Sir, if what I have said conveys even an approximately correct idea of the present state of the supposed "balance" among the coordinate branches of the Government, is not the proposed policy of irresponsible and arbitrary rule in the Philippines a

Death of a Republic.

matter of immediate and overwhelming concern from the standpoint of our own constitutional liberties?

Senators may grow eloquent over the prospect of a great commerce in the East, which, I maintain, we can more securely and more profitably develop through friendly arrangement with a Philippine republic than through the forcible exploitation of an oriental dependency; and may please their fancy with dreams of conquest and military glory which involve a departure from every ideal of our history, but to me the preservation of our constitutional system as the framework of realized political freedom and the pledge of the world's future progress is an object of supreme importance. In the language of Webster:

Other misfortunes may be borne or their effects overcome. If disastrous war should sweep our commerce from the ocean another generation may renew it; if it exhaust our Treasury, future industry may replenish it; if it desolate and lay waste our fields, still, under a new civilization, they will grow green again and ripen to future harvests. It were but a trifle if the walls of yonder Capitol were to crumble, if its lofty pillars should fall and its gorgeous decorations be all covered by the dust of the valley. All these might be rebuilt.

But who shall reconstruct the fabric of demolished government? Who shall rear again the well-proportioned columns of constitutional liberty? Who shall frame together the skillful architecture which unites national sovereignty with State rights, individual security, and public prosperity? No; if these columns fall, they will be raised not again. Like the Coliseum and the Parthenon, they will be destined to a mournful, a melancholy, immortality. Bitterer tears, however, will flow over them than were shed over the monuments of Roman or Grecian art, for they will be the remnants of a more glorious edifice than Greece or Rome ever saw, the edifice of constitutional American liberty.