

THE CONQUEST OF THE PHILIPPINES.

A Reminiscence.

EDITOR THE CONSERVATIVE,
Nebraska City, Neb.

Dear Sir: One year ago, upon my return trip from the Orient, I wrote as follows:

"Steamship 'Coptic,' Tuesday, June 21, 1898:

"Last night, at 1:30 a. m., I was awakened by three sharp blasts of our ship's whistle saluting the passing transports to Manila. Alas! alas! and alas! Enthusiasm now, but later on sickness, suffering, misery, squalid death under the pitiless sun of a tropical sky in an alien land. And still later on for those who remain at home, taxes! taxes! taxes! Such is the glory and the cost of war. When all the burdens of it are settled on the backs of the people, then look out for political and social revolutions at home. As the war has been repeatedly referred to by my correspondents, I will say I'm no jingo: don't believe in the doctrine of island expansion, annexation or conquest, but fear that the American people are lending a willing ear to the suggestions of pride, ambition, and avarice, rather than to the sober and wholesome dictates of wisdom, prudence and justice. Spain's colonies have ruined her."

Last January I summarized the war craze thus:

"The policy of the present United States congress and the executive administration may be summed up as having shown four stages of progressive development:

First.—"Yellow journalism and hysteria.

Second.—"Revenge and elemental ferocity.

Third.—"Militarism and pride of power.

Fourth.—"Ambition, greed and ignorance."

In February I made the following observations as to the effects of war in a tropical country upon American soldiers:

"When the government of the United States despatches shipload after shipload of unacclimated young men to the everglades and jungles of tropical swamps, whether in the East Indies or West Indies, it is consigning the flower of American youth to unimaginable suffering, and too often alas! to hapless and inglorious death." And I added: "Do you think this overdrawn? Do you think this is an extreme view of the case? Let me quote a sketch by an eye witness, a well-known New York writer, of the embarking of sick and wounded soldiers on board a transport hospital ship homeward bound:

"That day strange figures began to mount the sides of the ship, and to occupy its every turn and angle of space.

Some of them fell on their knees and slapped the bare deck with their hands, and laughed and cried out 'Thank God. I'll see God's country again.' Some of the men were regulars, bound in bandages; some were volunteers, dirty and hollow-eyed, with long beards on boys' faces. Some came on crutches; others with their arms around the shoulders of their comrades staring ahead of them with a fixed smile, their lips drawn and their teeth protruding. At every second step they stumbled, and the face of each man was swept by swift ripples of pain. They lay on cots so close together that the nurses could not walk between them. They lay on the wet decks, in the scuppers, and along the skylights and hatches. They were like shipwrecked mariners clinging to a raft, and they asked for nothing more than that the ship's bow be turned toward home."

It is interesting to remember that the Paris peace commission, that aggregation of American wisdom, decided in its combined sagacity that an army of five thousand men would be ample to control the Philippines. General Lawton said recently, after his very creditable experience in the field, that 100,000 men will be required to hold and pacify the Philippines, or more than four times the strength of our old army. In addition we will need from 25,000 to 50,000 in this country, Porto Rico and Cuba. (It is assumed that Cuba is to be annexed, since our patent laws have already been extended to that island by the assistant secretary of war.)

The latest statistics on the subject (by Edw. W. Harden) allege that the total exports of the Philippine islands are \$41,000,000 (Mexican dollar currency) per annum; or, say, \$20,000,000 gold, United States currency. We know that an army of 23,000 men costs us yearly not less than \$23,000,000 in the United States. One hundred thousand men in the Philippines will cost us over six times as much, owing to the expense of transporting supplies, etc., or, say \$140,000,000 per year.

Now where is the profit to come in—the profit to the American taxpayer—the American workingman? With an outlay seven times as great as the entire commerce of the islands, where are we to recoup ourselves? For Colonel Denby has said that we have taken the islands for considerations of profit solely. The commerce of the islands, even were it all profit, does not come anywhere near the cost of the "keep" of our soldiers, and anyway their entire commerce goes to other nations than the United States. The cost of maintaining an army of 35,000 men in the islands is now some \$5,000,000 a month, or \$60,000,000 per year; and in the same ratio for one of 100,000 men the cost to Uncle Sam for the same period would be over \$170,000,000.

Just when will the ledger balance? And if the opinion of the officers of the "Raleigh" and other government officials should turn out to be correct, the army will have to be further increased

to 150,000, in which event the cost would jump to \$255,000,000 per annum—an expensive luxury. And the American taxpayer will have to foot the bills—they never can be collected from the islanders. And besides we have paid \$20,000,000 spot cash for the bargain, too! our title to which is so astonishingly clouded. Has Uncle Sam fallen into the hands of the Philistines?

In this connection I may mention that in the San Francisco press of June 22, appeared the following:

"In the matter of bodily losses we are told that 664 men have been killed, and 6,500 wounded and invalided." And, "An army officer returned from Manila made the astonishing statement today that eighty per cent of the soldiers in the Philippines will get pensions for dysentery and other intestinal complaints."

And another officer, referred to as of high rank, and well qualified to speak, asserted, in substance, that the war in the Philippines is costing the government at the present time at the rate of \$8,000,000 per month. The cost mounts steadily higher and higher, month by month, as the carnival of death and destruction goes on. Bear in mind that here we are only considering dollars. *Human life is cheap!* Our care is wholly for pelf. Commissioner Denby has said it, in regard to this precious scheme of "Benevolent Assimilation."

The outcome of the last six months' operations was foretold by Spanish officers, who said, "The Americans will win the battles, but the Filipinos will win the campaign," and this is confirmed by the admission of such officers as General Greene, General Reeve, General Lawton, General King, General Hall, Fleet Engineer Ford, Captain Clay, Captain McQueston, and others too numerous to mention. For particulars see San Francisco press of June 22.

In April I averred: "All that this country can possibly acquire (as a result of expansion in the Philippines) is perplexing responsibility, continued unrest and tumult, and liability to constant altercation and even warfare. As against this there is not one single redeeming feature, moral, commercial or otherwise. In fact, to say nothing of the enormities of the last two months' occurrences, the whole scheme is a wild goose chase of the most idiotic kind. From my standpoint no more insane caprice than this fad of colonial expansion into Oriental tropical islands has ever before possessed our people. The old delusions and follies of the past, John Law's Money, the Mississippi bubble, the South Sea islands scheme, the mulberry culture, the blue grass mania, and the free silver craze seem all combined in this last spasm of political delirium tremens."

As to the present status, and in conclusion I will use the language of Col.