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Wednesday's Letter

From the Philippine Islands.

Manila, P. I., April 16, 1903.

Editor Nebraskan:

Your letter asking me to send you a few hundred words on my impressions of this country for publication in The Nebraskan, was received some time ago. I have delayed a reply, hoping to get time to think the matter over and determine just what impressions I have, if any. But I am afraid I shall never get time to think the thing out and set it down in readable shape. If you can use the few thoughts which I may be able to collect after having turned out my usual grist of "copy," you are certainly welcome to them.

Concerning the subject of imperialism, as exemplified by what is being done here by the United States, let me say a few words at the outset. I am thoroughly familiar with the policy of the United States here as interpreted by Governor Taft. He understands that the government here is being administered for the Filipinos. In a speech delivered by him recently at Iloilo, he said that this government belongs to the Filipino primarily, and that the Americans in the islands who are not satisfied to have the government so administered should go back to the states. There is no doubt that this is the policy which Governor Taft has made it his life's highest ambition to carry out. How well he is succeeding is shown by the hearty support he is receiving from the best class of the natives. It is also shown by the attitude of a certain portion of the American residents toward him. This attitude of some of the Americans I have discussed, newspaper fashion, in an editorial in the Manila Cablenews of March 18th, a copy of which runs as follows:

"The disaffected American element of the islands and particularly of Manila is causing about as much obstruction to the government at present as the Boston prototype did during the existence of insurrection. As in the case of the Boston contingent, so in the present instance it is not the number that is worthy of notice, but the cackling, cackling activity of the handful. During the military regime the few disgruntled 'antls' were as effective in prolonging the hostile situation as were the insurrectos in the bosque. It may be safely said that the insular government is more hampered by the little handful of American obstructionists than by the difficulties of the task it has in hand in providing a government for the islands. A glance at the reasons given—when a reason is at all thought necessary—for this hostile attitude toward the government discloses this, the disaffected ones are opposed to the policy of the government in the islands. This opposition crops out in a variety of forms. But usually it is a senseless, cavailing criticism of every act of the government. Sometimes it takes the form of antagonism of some officer of the government or of the officers of a whole department.

"And who are these disgruntled ones? An examination of them individually will show that nearly every one is actuated by some personal grievance, usually imaginary. The aggregation is made up of ex-government employees, who have lost their positions through unfitness, negligence or crime; gamblers who have violated the law and been prosecuted; grafters who have been turned down; adventurers who have flocked to the islands like wolves about a wounded quarry, expecting to prey upon the carcass, but have been confronted with law that protects the weak; lawyers who have lost bad cases in a court of justice and sore, lay the blame upon the judicial system and accuse the court of unfairness because he has shown better judgment than a jury would have done; honest believers in the exploded antebellum system of the southern states, who want two governments, one for the white and one for the colored; dissolute characters, who attribute their perpetual ills to the government as the Kansas populists blamed the republican party for the hot winds and drought; and some few who are disinterestedly averse to the policy of the insular government. They all make

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the same mistake. They all blame the insular government for the policy which they antagonize.

"The policy of the insular government has the sanction of the treaty of Paris and the endorsement of the majority of the American people at the last presidential election. The insular government, if true to the trust imposed in it by the people at home, by whose voice it was created and clothed with power, can no more change its policy than its detractors can change it. The abuse that is heaped upon the insular government by this class of 'antls' belongs in the same class as the persecution that was directed at the officers in the American army by the Boston 'antls.' In each case it is a reward for fidelity to trust. The place to change the policy of the insular government is where that policy was forged.

"The facts in this situation, as viewed by Americans at home, by broad-minded Americans everywhere, are these: The American people decided that they would administer the government of the islands for the people of the islands and the insular government was sent out here with this commission. How well that commission is being executed is testified to by even this disaffected element. Any change in the manner of administration must be made where the policies originated."

If those in the States who are the most earnest advocates of autonomy for the Filipinos could live a year in the islands they would, it seems to me, change their views. I know of none who came here believing that Philippine independence was possible at once, who believe that way now. I doubt if there is one island in the whole group with enough race unity to establish a government and maintain it. What, then, shall I say of the possibility of establishing a government over the whole archipelago? To one on the ground with the data before him the idea is nothing less than absurd.

The Filipino is a child. The race is a child among the other races. The people have all the traits of youth and all the incapacities of youth. To put upon the Filipinos the responsibility of establishing a government over these islands at present would be the same as placing the management of a vast estate upon the shoulders of a ten-year-old boy. There are some very strong men among the Filipinos. Justice Arellano of the supreme court is a jurist worthy of respect among any people. But these men know that their people are not yet able to establish their own government. The average Filipino is quick to learn. We have in the composing rooms of the Cablenews four young men who learned to operate the intricate linotype machines in much less time than the average American boy could have done it. There are others who have already

picked up the knack of running the Hoe presses. The sense of justice is crude and rudimentary in the average native, and the power to reason abstractedly, to fuse facts and formulate logical conclusions, is also very meagerly developed. The power to act disinterestedly is almost wanting.

The Americans here who have approached the situation in the attitude of students anxious to learn and ready to assist in solving the problems, are in full accord with the disposition of the government. Governor Taft is regarded by them as the highest type of manhood produced by the altruistic spirit of the age. He occupies the place of a wise father to the Filipino people. There is no more promising phenomenon to be seen among the natives than the growing appreciation of what he is trying to do for them. He stands as a bulwark against that class of "imperialists" who would exploit the islands and reduce the people to the position of serfs to the conqueror. Those who have used the term, "benevolent assimilation" ironically will find it ennobled and personified in Governor Taft. Respectfully yours,
JOE BOOMER ('01).

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