

The Philippine Question.

· FROM A FILIPINO POINT OF VIEW.

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IN submitting the following statement to the people of the United States I have no desire or intention of seeking to interfere in American politics. I cannot claim the honor of belonging to that enviable company of foreigners who possess the genius which enables them to attend to every one's business but their own. On the con-

trary, I am of opinion that the American people are eminently capable of managing their own affairs. But inasmuch as the Philippine question intimately concerns a people who are not American citizens; as it possesses a humanitarian aspect and is therefore, in a sense, super-political; and inasmuch as the Administration's Philippine

policy has been urged with an eloquence which I can never hope to equal, I may be pardoned if I give a dispassionate statement of the case from a Filipino point of view, leaving the American people to form their own conclusions and to judge on which side lies the balance of truth and justice.

The history of the Philippines, or that part of the history which is immediately germane, may be told in a few sentences. Some three hundred years ago the people of the Philippines suffered *material* conquest at the hands of Spain, but there was never a *moral* submission. The desire for national liberty lived in the hearts of the people in spite of the most cruel oppression. The spirit of rebellion against the usurper had never been quelled. Ever and anon it took active form, and culminated in the insurrection led by Aguinaldo in 1896. The result of that insurrection was an agreement entered into between the insurgent leaders and the Spanish authorities in Manila, providing that certain reforms were to be granted, and that the Filipinos were to have adequate representation in the Spanish Cortes. As a guarantee of good faith the Spanish authorities agreed to deposit with the insurgent leaders a sum of \$800,000. This sum, in the event of Spain failing to keep her compact, was to be used for the repurchase of arms and munitions of war. But if Spain acted in good faith the money was to be invested for the benefit and education of the children of those insurgents who had fallen in the insurrection. The first instalment of \$400,000 was duly paid. But as soon as the insurgent leaders had, according to agreement, taken up their residence in Hong Kong, Spain, with characteristic *mala fides*, repudiated the whole of the agreement.

It was at this juncture that the Nelson of America entered Manila Bay. The Filipinos promptly joined forces with those of the United States and rendered all assistance in their power against the common foe. This assistance to American arms, *whatever its value may have been*, was given with a cheerfulness born of faith in the righteousness of the American people; upon whom we looked as our friends and deliverers. The Filipinos never dreamed that a nation whose first and guiding principle is (or was!) that "All

just powers of government are derived from the consent of the governed," would ever seek to thrust its sovereign will upon an unwilling people. We had received satisfactory assurances from responsible servants of the United States that *whatever rights* America might claim, in lieu of invaluable services to our people, those rights would not be incompatible with our liberty and independence. These assurances were tacitly confirmed in the acceptance, by Admiral Dewey and others, of our assistance against Spain, for we could not believe that America would ever turn its back upon an ally and comrade in arms. But further and, as we thought, final confirmation of these assurances was provided in the explicit statement of President McKinley when he declared, in his Message to Congress, that "fornicible annexation [of Spanish possessions] cannot be thought of." Accepting that declaration as practically a "Self-denying ordinance" on the part of the United States, and with the above mentioned assurances, explicit and implicit, we felt we had nothing to fear in joining forces with a nation which itself had passed through the struggle for liberty and national life.

Can it be believed? We now find ourselves at war with that nation!

Before proceeding to inquire into the reason for this war, it may be prudent to disclose a fact which will enable the people of America to judge as to who were primarily responsible for the outbreak of hostilities.

President McKinley, in his recent speech at Fargo, declared that: "We did not go to war until every effort at peace was exhausted." I disclaim all intention of disrespect to the person and high office of the President when I say I join issue with him on that statement. What was the "every effort at peace?" The President himself tells us. When divested of rhetoric it amounts simply to an instruction to the United States troops not to commence hostilities. Such an instruction was surely a mere elementary, commonplace duty on the part of the United States Administration—a duty which can hardly be regarded in itself as a strenuous effort to preserve peace. But there was one thing within the power of the Administration to do, which was not done.

but which would have had an incalculable influence in preserving peace. I am prepared to bear all just censure for adopting the unusual course of here quoting part of an official letter which has not yet been made public by the United States authorities. Had the President refrained from the declaration that "every effort to preserve peace was exhausted," I should gladly have waited until a request had been made in Congress for the production of this document. But under the circumstances the quotation is justified, and seems to me to be due in common fairness to the Filipinos, as showing that we were as anxious for the preservation of peace as were those in America who claim the same merit. The letter in question was addressed by the late Filipino representative, when in Washington, to the Secretary of State, and bears the date 24th of January, 1899, just eleven days before the outbreak of hostilities in the Philippines:

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"I ventured [in a former letter] to call your attention to the fact that in the present strained position at Manila, the impetuous action of a Filipino or the over zeal of an American soldier might create a condition resulting in grievous loss of life, and for this reason I particularly urged upon you the necessity of early and frank communication between the representatives of the two countries. . . . The conditions have not essentially changed since the writing of my former letter . . . and the urgency then pointed out, I respectfully submit, still exists even in an accentuated degree. . . . There are at the present time, as we are informed, approximately twenty thousand armed and disciplined American troops in the city of Manila and vicinity, controlling a population of about three hundred thousand. A number of war vessels are stationed in the harbor, and many other American men-of-war and transports are to be found within the limits of the Philippine archipelago. . . . Despite the existence of these enormous forces within an extremely circumscribed area, we are informed through the public prints that other vessels of war have been ordered from distant parts of the globe to reinforce those now among the islands in question; while but a few days ago a transport sailed from New York City carrying about two thousand soldiers and having Manila as its destination; and, as we are further informed, regiments of troops are under orders to proceed by way of San Francisco to the Philippines. The public prints

inform us that an attack upon the Philippine Islands is contemplated; that the islands are to be taken in detail, the smaller ones first, the larger ones blockaded, so that they may not assist those first attacked.

"It is naturally the impression of my Government and people that these warlike preparations indicate existing or immediate military operations in the Orient, and they readily conceive that it must be contemplated that such operations are to be leveled at the existing government of the Philippine Islands.

"As the representative of the Philippine government, I hesitate to give adhesion to this idea, for I cannot believe that there is any present or threatened future difficulty between the American and the Philippine governments justifying warlike activities, and as a believer in the humanity of the American people refuse to acquiesce in the idea that America designed war upon the Philippine Islands.

"I cannot, as I have said, conceive any reason why the armies and navies of the United States lately employed against her common enemy should now be turned against America's recent associate.

"I am sure you will appreciate, in view of the circumstances I have detailed, the quieting and reassuring effect upon the minds of my countrymen to result from a disclaimer upon the part of the American Government of any intention to attack their liberties and independence.

"Notwithstanding the serious difficulty under which I labor in not having been formally received by the American Government as a representative of the Filipino nation, I feel it my imperative duty to call your attention to the disturbing facts before enumerated to the end that I may receive from you such assurances as will satisfy my countrymen that it is not the intention of America to make war upon the new republic of Asia, and which will explain to it the reason why large armies and navies should be dispatched to the Philippine Islands, and which will relieve my countrymen of the fear that now possesses them that their liberties are endangered at the hands of a republic whose name they always believed was associated with freedom, and to which they have come first applying for recognition among the nations of the earth.

"I desire again to express the gratitude of my nation to America for services rendered by her in furthering Filipino independence, and to express the hope that friendly relations may ever continue.

"In view of the present alarming situation

may I respectfully urge the importance of an immediate answer?"

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The reasonable prayer contained in the above quotation has never been granted. The letter itself, with several other letters and memorials, were never accorded the courtesy of even a formal acknowledgment of receipt. Those who care to review the situation will see that the letter just quoted was prophetic of what subsequently occurred. When two armed forces are within striking distance; the one waiting—perhaps impatiently—the result of proffered negotiation, the other increasing its forces, the merest indiscretion or display of temper on either side may precipitate a conflict. It has been truly said that "the raising of the eyebrows may affect the destiny of a nation." It is equally true that the smallest act may provoke a bitter and disastrous quarrel. It is then easy to raise one's hands in horror at the enormity of the offense. It is also easy for one side to charge the other with the whole of the blame. If our representative's reasonable and humane request had been granted it would have had a reassuring and calming influence on both forces. But notwithstanding the concentration of the additional troops referred to, and in spite of this reasonable plea for an explanation, the whole of the responsibility for the outbreak of hostilities has been placed upon the Filipinos, and a declaration has been made on high authority that "every effort at peace was exhausted!" Is this fair? The Filipinos had much to lose and nothing whatever to gain by a conflict with the American forces. Would they be likely to deliberately commit an act so palpably detrimental to their interests, and so opportune for securing the ratification of the Treaty of Peace? It should not be forgotten that the report of the outbreak of hostilities was furnished by those who exercised a censorship over all telegraphic dispatches from Manila. I do not for a moment mean to imply that the censors were guilty of deliberate fabrication. The American soldiers gave their version from their own point of view. A Filipino, with equal sincerity, might have given a directly opposite version. Reasonable, fair-minded persons recognize that there are al-

ways two sides to a story. The Filipino version has not yet been given. But lest I should be charged with a one-sidedness similar to that of which I complain, let me quote the Congressional speech of Senator Tillman, whose reasonable view of the case I hereby adopt as my own:

"Mr. President, what caused this last battle of Manila? The reports which we received through our newspapers all come from American sources. They charge that the Filipinos wantonly attacked the American army, and that that army had a right to defend itself, which nobody assumes to deny. But when we recollect that the telegraph lines from those islands are in charge of the American commander there, or of those whom he designates to control them, it is natural for us to suppose that nothing would be let out under the censorship which has existed for the last three months or more that would be in the slightest degree derogatory to the good faith or the honor of the American army there. Time alone will tell whether this battle was provoked by the Filipinos for purposes of their own or by the Americans for the purpose of endeavoring to sway men in this Senate to ratify the treaty and change the status. I recall one of Æsop's fables in which a painter had depicted a lion lying on his back prone beneath the heel of a man, and when he showed the painting to the lion the lion said: 'Yes, you painted that; but if you will let me paint it, the situation will be just the opposite.'"

What then is the reason for this war in the Philippines? Is it because—as is alleged—one or more Filipinos crossed the American lines at an hour when they were forbidden to do so? This would furnish a wholly inadequate reason for offensive action. If a Filipino acted in defiance—either in ignorance or wittingly—of an order given by the United States Commander, however unwise or uncalled for or provocative that order may have been, the American soldiers acted within their legal rights in punishing the offender. And if the Filipino army, believing that an attack was being made upon it, rushed to arms, the American soldiers were within their rights in offering a complete and effective resistance. But why should America then take up the offensive? If, as stated, the Filipino army was promptly driven from its intrenchments, there could have been no necessity, in military tactics, for a continuance of the offensive for a pe-

riod of now nine months, unless some other motive actuated the United States Administration.

Is it, then, that the war is pursued because the Filipinos will not agree to the form of government by which the United States *intends* to govern them? This assuredly cannot be so, for the simple reason that the United States Administration has never given a definite expression of its intentions with regard to the Philippines, nor formulated any concrete method or system of government for the islands. As far as I know, up to the present no attempt has been made officially to discover what the Filipinos are or are not prepared to accept. If the Administration had stated its terms definitely and clearly to the Filipinos, and if the Filipinos had refused absolutely to accept such terms, then the policy of force would have become at least *rational*, even if no moral right existed. But as matters now stand the Filipinos can hardly be charged with rejecting that which has never been proposed.

Let me, therefore, try another hazard. Is the "mailed fist" turned against us because—as President McKinley alleged—we have "assailed the sovereignty of the United States" in the Philippines? If the Filipinos *had* assailed American sovereignty they might with justice claim that they were right in assailing a sovereignty the scope and meaning of which had never been made clear. But the truth of the matter is that the Filipinos were not aware that the United States claimed sovereignty over the Philippines. Such a claim would mean that the Philippines had already been annexed by the United States, and from first to last the Filipinos never understood that America came to the Philippines for purposes of annexation. On the contrary, we understood that the intervention of the United States was solely with the intention of putting an end to the intolerable misrule of Spain—a misrule which was declared, and I concur in the declaration, to be a blot upon civilization. "I speak not," says President McKinley in his message to Congress of the 11th of April, 1898, "of forcible annexation, for that cannot be thought of. That by our code of morality would be criminal aggression." We, Filipinos, take that deliberate declaration of pol-

icy as the word of one whose word is his bond, and who will not alter his policy or shift the position without at least giving notice to those whom it may concern. Consequently, if there has been no annexation there can be no sovereignty, and if there is no sovereignty, then that which does not exist cannot have been assailed. If, however, it is urged that the President's declaration referred to Cuba and Porto Rico and not specially to the Philippines, then the reply is that that which, by any "code of morality," is "criminal aggression" in the Eastern hemisphere, is equally criminal in the Western. There are no circumstances, geographical or political, which could possibly alter the case in reference to the Philippines. That which "cannot be thought of" in the Caribbean Sea, is equally unthinkable in the Pacific Ocean. Indeed, there would be much more excuse for the "forcible annexation" of a neighboring, than for a remote territory.

What, then, is the *casus belli*? No one, as far as I can discover, seems to know; or, if the knowledge is possessed by any one, it has never been made public. In the meantime, in the absence of this knowledge, the Filipinos are simply defending themselves against what seems to them a meaningless—but what the President has declared to be a "criminal"—aggression.

Now in the name of humanity and civilization—in the name (I say it with all reverence) of God, is it not incumbent upon the United States Administration to state definitely what its intentions are in reference to the Philippines before it can expect the Filipinos to bow humbly and submit to—they know not what? This surely must be done before the Administration can with reason, to say nothing about righteousness, enforce its hitherto unexpressed will. Is it any wonder that our people should regard with distrust the professedly philanthropic but vaguely expressed intentions of the United States? "I would rather," says Senator Mason, of Illinois, "resign my seat than treat a dog the way we are treating the Filipinos." I make no comment as to the justice or otherwise of this opinion. But if such an opinion can be held by an American statesman, what must the opinion be of a Filipino whose jaw has just been smashed

by an American bullet! Under these circumstances it seems to me to be vain, and I think it is also somewhat cruel, to talk of "peace," and "charity for all," and "liberty of opportunity under the Stars and Stripes." These vague, ethereal abstractions give very little solid assurance to a people who, for three hundred years, have struggled for liberty, and whose faith has received many a rude shock at the hands of a professedly civilized, Christian nation.

I cannot profess to a knowledge of statecraft, but certainly the conviction is forced upon me that the present attitude of the United States Administration with regard to the Philippines requires explanation. Recent official utterances show that the Administration intends to "subdue the Filipinos by force before discussing the future government of the Philippines." I cannot believe that this is the policy of the American people as a whole. Can it be that the erstwhile ally, whose soldiers fought and died practically side by side with the soldiers of the Union, is to be subdued before the form or nature of its government is to be even discussed? Can it be that the American nation—the greatest apostle and exponent of liberty and of the people's right to self-government—is now going to forsake the goddess whose giant statue stands guard at its front door? Can justification be found for a policy which would subdue a foreign people by force and then discuss the nature of its future government with the surviving remnant? Such a "discussion" might be liable to the charge of being somewhat one-sided! What would have been the reply of the American patriots of 1776 if George III had informed them: "We intend to subdue you by force before we discuss the future government of your country?" A noble chapter in history records the reply, and in that chapter will be found ample condemnation for a policy which would ignore the principle that "All just powers of government are derived from the consent of the governed."

Ever since the Declaration of Independence the American people have, with justice, claimed to be the freest people in the world. But those only are free who are prepared

to grant the same freedom to others which they claim for themselves. The first principle of liberty is liberty to others. Those who deny liberty to others are not free; they are bound by some sordid or other consideration which has a stronger influence upon them than the love of true liberty. "Those," said President Lincoln, "who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and under a just God cannot long retain it." But it is contended that this policy of the Administration is chiefly "for the good of the Filipinos," and that the underlying motives dictating this policy are purely philanthropic. We have also been assured that a continuance of the war will result in the "terrible destruction of the property of our people and the loss of numberless lives." This latter statement is perfectly true, and is no doubt meant as a kindly warning, but is it not an unguarded admission on the part of those who have proclaimed their intention of "doing us good?" To wreak "terrible destruction" on our property, is that for our good? To batter the bravery and self-respect and independence out of us, is that also for our good? By no possibility can you with one hand do good to a people, who are striving for national life, if with the other hand you take from them their liberty. Philanthropy, as soon as it takes the form of coercion, ceases to be philanthropy. Good intentions, if made known through the agency of "shrapnel," are liable to suspicion. If the people of America wish to really help us, the first thing they must say to us is, You shall be free. They might then counsel us how best to use our freedom, and so by precept as well as by example they might lead into national life, with "the golden wand of Liberty," a people who have been cruelly oppressed, but who have dreamed and worked and fought for liberty for upward of three hundred years. But instead of the "golden wand," are we to have the cannon's roar and the sheen of steel—thrusting upon us that fatal philanthropy which will only reach us after our blood has reddened many a Pampanga marsh?

It is certain, therefore, that however good the intentions of the Administration may be, its peculiar form of philanthropy does not

commend itself to the Filipinos. What, then, constitutes the moral right of America in annexing the Philippines? I do not inquire into the constitutional right. That is a question which the people of America are well able to determine without the assistance of foreigners. Presumably moral and constitutional right are synonymous, but in any case I prefer to confine myself to the question of moral right.

I pass over the assertion that the Filipino army consists only of a small section of rebel malcontents. That charge was made against the American patriots of the Revolution. It has been made against the leaders of every movement since nations began to free themselves from tyrants and dictators. It cannot be regarded as a reason for war; it is only an excuse. Besides, the charge has been fully refuted by the Administration in its decision to send 75,000 troops and 45 warships to the Philippines.

But in his address to the Tenth Pennsylvania Regiment, delivered at Pittsburg, President McKinley is reported to have said: "The Philippines are ours by purchase." By purchase from whom? From the vanquished enemy which we helped to conquer! Who was the purchaser? Our ally and comrade in arms! The oppressor, who had ceased to own us, sells us to our friend! Our friend, who had accepted our aid, buys us from the conquered foe who no longer had a title! No. The transaction, so construed, would not be defensible. The payment of the \$20,000,000 might—I do not say that it would—be so construed by an average Filipino viewing the transaction along the barrel of a rifle—a Filipino unacquainted with the moral grandeur of a nation capable of producing a Washington, a Jefferson, an Abraham Lincoln. But I am happy in the thought that there is another and a better explanation of those twenty millions. I have always regarded the transaction as the act of a generous victor seeking to, in some measure, recoup a defeated, bankrupt nation for the loss of its colonial possessions. But since I am informed by the highest official authority in the United States that the transaction *was* intended as a purchase, I may be permitted to remark that in no sense can a

transaction be a *purchase* if one of the parties thereto is *compelled* to accept the other's offer; and that if the Philippines are to be purchased they ought surely to be purchased from their natural owners, the inhabitants, and not from a vanquished usurper whom they helped to conquer.

But the right to annex the Philippines which has recently been urged by the Administration is that order must be restored and maintained. The opinion—not only implied, but forcibly expressed—is that it would be "criminal for America to withdraw her troops from the Philippines." That anarchy and bloodshed, a veritable "Reign of Terror" would immediately result under the "ferocious" despotism of Aguinaldo! Whence this change of opinion? When America went to the Philippines the "ferocious" Aguinaldo was aided, encouraged and furnished with arms in the war against Spain. Admiral Dewey declared that "he knew well the Filipinos and the Cubans, and that the Filipinos were a far superior people." Other prominent Americans declared that the Filipinos were more capable of self-government than are the Cubans. The only fault found with Aguinaldo was that he was "too young and amiable" to make a good leader. These were the acts and the statements of men of honor and independent mind. Whence, then, this change of opinion? Have the Filipinos changed, or has the change taken place in the mind of the Administration?

When America embarked upon the humane mission of freeing Spanish possessions from cruel oppression, her energies were directed against an actual state of things—against conditions which really did exist. Consequently her moral right of interference was never questioned. But in the Philippines the Administration is directing its energies against not an actual but a hypothetical state of things. The war is to be pursued not to put an end to conditions which already exist, but conditions which, in the opinion of certain persons, may ensue. The circumstances are therefore wholly different, and the moral right rests solely on a matter of opinion expressed, in most cases, by those who are in the service of the

Administration. Besides, in order to put an end to Spanish misrule, annexation was not necessary; it was "not to be thought of;" it would be "criminal aggression." How then does it come that in order to provide against a hypothetical Filipino misrule annexation becomes a sacred duty and its avoidance would be "criminal?" Is it a crime to annex Spanish possessions and a crime *not* to annex Filipino possessions, in order to put an end to in the one case actual, and in the other case imaginary, misrule? Was there ever a moral weather-cock more accommodating?

The Filipinos cheerfully admit that the United States Administration is under moral and legal obligation to see that a stable government is established in the Philippines. But does that obligation necessitate annexation? The Filipinos are as anxious for stable government in the Philippines as is America. How does the Administration know but what the Filipinos are prepared to yield anything and everything required by America in order to fulfil her pledge to Spain? Has any attempt been made to discover what the Filipinos are or are not prepared to yield? The only barrier to peace and stable government is the present meaningless war. Terms, equitable and sufficient for all purposes, could be obtained by negotiation. Why then continue the war? Warfare for the sole purpose of vindicating the prestige of a country's arms is not, as far as I know, sanctioned by either morality or honor. War can only be justified when national honor or rights are in peril, and when all other conceivable means have failed. Have the proper—have any means been tried? I am sure our people are reasonable. I am equally sure that they have no desire to disown obligation or to deny just rights. But unfortunately, like the rest of mankind, they are human. And being human it is naturally hard for them to yield the first point. It is always easier for the great and the powerful to be magnanimous. But surely it ought not to be beyond the ability of statesmanship to find some method of bringing both parties to an amicable understanding. Where there's a will, a way can

always be found. If some intimation were given, even unofficially, that overtures for friendly negotiation would not be rejected, a considerable advance in the desired direction would be achieved. Why should there be a frigid demand for "unconditional surrender?" Such a demand is easy to make, but it is hard for human nature to comply therewith, even if wisdom so dictates. Such a demand ought only to come from the one who has been guilty of no fault in motive or act against the other. Will the Administration claim that all its servants in the Philippines, from the greatest to the least, have pursued a course of conduct "so icy-angelic, so snowy-seraphic" as to leave no cause for complaint, no ground for misunderstanding, on the part of the Filipinos? Surely there have been faults on both sides. This is an admission based solely on the fact that human nature is not immaculate. Altho I am doing everything in my power to bring about peace, I could not and would not counsel our people to surrender "unconditionally." Better to have death with honor than to bow the head at the expense of self-respect and legitimate pride. And even if America succeeds in the *material* conquest of the Philippines, there will never be a *moral* submission on the part of the Filipinos. The Government of the islands would then be minus those "just powers" which are derived solely "from the consent of the governed." Will the great republic of the West thus become a dictator?

Why not negotiate? If negotiations fail, it will then be time enough for war. True, in the past our overtures of peace and goodwill were not received in a hearty manner by the Administration. But let that pass. It cannot be undignified to do what righteousness and honor demand. Who will help me in the cause of peace? Could any cause be worthier the genius of the statesmen of a great nation?

In placing this statement before the people of America, I beg to assure them that whatever its demerits may be it is the outcome of a sincere desire for peace and for an honorable settlement of the differences and difficulties of the Philippine question.