

**'Mr. Conner Begins to Doubt,' *Chicago Record*, October 4, 1899.**

One morning soon after Mr. Washington Conner forwarded his first formal report to the Bureau of Benevolent Assimilation a white man came out of the Kakyak house and stretched his arms lazily in the warm sunshine.

The man wore duck trousers, low shoes, a soft shirt of negligé' pattern, and instead of a collar he had a handkerchief loosely knotted around his neck. On his head was a native straw hat, dished downward to shade the whole face. The face' by the way, was the face of Mr. Washington Conner, and it may be added that it needed a shave.

The missionary had intended to shave himself three days before, but every morning he awoke to a tropical languor and said: "Oh, well, tomorrow." Besides, the Kakyaks did not mind. What was the use of keeping up appearances if the appearances served no purpose? This was the question Conner asked himself. The act of shaving involved labor, and he was very glad to avoid it. In one hand Mr. Conner carried a cigar. He had been smoking a great deal ever since the first week of his arrival. The climate seemed to encourage the use of tobacco.

In his other hand was a paper-covered novel. He had been trying for a week to get beyond the second chapter, but he was compelled to admit that he was becoming too lazy to read. The weather was not conducive to any kind of prolonged exertion. Now that the rainy season was well past, the sun shone with steady vigor and the heat was of midsummer fierceness.

Conner had held out for the proprieties as long as possible. Reluctantly at first he laid aside his coat and began to lounge in his shirt sleeves. Then the binding collar and the suffocating cravat were discarded, for the sake of comfort and because Eulalie had begged him not to be ridiculous.

He learned that white trousers and soft shirts were more sensible than woolen garments and a starched front.

His own straw hat with its rigid framework and preposterously small brim easily gave way to a native hat of light weaving which was not a burden to carry and was a better protection against the pitiless rays of the sun.

Conner's face and hands had taken on a deep tan. One day Eulalie put her little hand alongside of his and said, with an exclamation of delight, "Aha, you are getting to be as brown as I am. Another year and you will be a Tagalo."

She was so pleased at her own suggestion that Conner could not forget it. He had to admit that he had compromised on several points, and had permitted himself to be governed more or less by his environment.

Instead of inducing the simple islanders to adopt the American costume, he had permitted Eulalie to coax him into the slovenly habits of her people.

Mrs. Kakyak and Eulalie still managed to escape the civilizing corset, while the

missionary himself, who had started out to be an exemplar, practically had adopted the native dress. In fact, Washington Conner had a very striking resemblance to a Tagalo as he came out of the house that morning and drowsily regarded the landscape. The rudely-woven hat, the white nether garments and the loose shirt were of Luzon and not of Ohio.

Could it be possible that the great missionary, who had come to assimilate the Tagalos, was being assimilated by them? To answer this question would be to forecast the outcome of this slow narrative, but the reader has a right to his own opinion. It is a poor rule that will not work both ways.

If the national administration had appeared before Washington Conner all of a sudden, as he stood in front of the Kakyak house, there is no doubt that the administration would have been shocked and the missionary would have been ashamed. The administration in Washington supposed that Conner was wearing the garb of a college professor and was lecturing to the Tagalos for at least eight hours every day on the beauties of American civilization.

Conner realized this, and often said to himself: "I wish the administration would come down and try it for awhile."

It is very easy for a people living in a cool and bracing climate to outline the duties of their fellow-creatures who happen to be down nearer the equator. For at least a century the people of the northern states have been telling the people of the southern states: "Why don't you get up early and stay out late and develop your resources?" And the southern people have replied: "Why don't you trade climates with us?"

Washington Conner began to be of the opinion that probably there was some truth in the old theory that climate had a large influence on the habits of a people and of an individual. Before leaving the United States he had been full of high resolves and eager for work, and now that he was in the summering heat he had fallen in with the indolent habits of the Kakyaks and was ready to excuse himself for every neglect of duty. He remembered having read that many authors who are nominally industrious in a temperature of 50 degrees are little better than sluggards when they arrive in Italy, and that instead of holding to their work they lie in the shade and look up at the sky.

There was further analogy in his experience at home. He remembered how, every spring, he made large plans for the summer. He decided to go on long bicycle tours, tramp across two or three states, camp out for a month, or do something else equally positive and enterprising. Then when the long sultry days came and the trees stood motionless and the heatwaves trembled above the white pavements, he discovered that there was no fun in doing anything that called for heavy exertion, and all the elaborate plans were easily forgotten.

He reflected further that the late autumn back in Ohio was a season for overcoats, tippets and gloves, that there was a tingle in the air and that a smashing game of football was the favorite diversion of the season. To any one living in Ohio during the autumn months, with a good frosty air as a steady tonic, all labor seemed agreeable, no doubt. Mr. Conner told himself that if he were back in Ohio and thoroughly warmed by his morning portion of buckwheat cakes and coffee, nothing would seem more plausible and feasible than the

scheme of benevolent assimilation. But inasmuch as he was in Luzon and not in Ohio, and inasmuch as the hot weather had taken all the Ohio starch out of him and the fruits of a month's labor were not manifest, it may be said, in all candor, that the missionary was beginning to have his doubts. It seemed to him that he could better understand why the soldiers who enlisted for service in the Philippines had been so anxious to return home, instead of remaining in the jungle to further the glorious work of assimilation.

The Americans did not seem to be happy in the Philippines and he doubted if the Filipinos would be happy in the United States. The two races were so different that now and then he wondered if the same kind of government was suited to both of them. He did not give expression to his doubts on this subject because that would have been treason, but he had doubts just the same.

And sometimes, the situation being so complex and puzzling, he feared that the policy of "benevolent assimilation" was not the way out of the difficulty. And sometimes when he fell to meditating on the subject he had to confess that, after all, he didn't exactly know what benevolent assimilation" meant. He wondered if the administration knew. It didn't seem to him that these Filipinos could ever be induced to take up with the Ohio way of doing things. As far as that was concerned he hadn't been doing things in the Ohio way since arriving in Luzon. So he had to wonder who was being assimilated, anyway.

