

**'The Songs of a Country,' Chicago Record, August 19, 1899.**

Although the Kakyak family of the Tagalo tribe of the island of Luzon did not show a ready disposition to take up with American methods, put on American garments and adjust their daily life to a new code of American morals, it must be said for them that they were deeply interested in what the missionary had to say regarding America. Having become American subjects they naturally felt a curiosity as to the kind of government which had taken forcible possession of them. And as Mr. Conner had told them that they must become "assimilated or take the consequences they wanted to know a great deal about the people of the United States, whom they were not supposed to imitate as closely as possible.

They were inquisitive. They asked many questions. They obtained a large amount of information. Yet such is the perverseness of human nature and so deeply set is all insular prejudice that these Tagalos were not being convinced that the American civilization was any more desirable than the kind they had known in the island of Luzon.

And here we may point out some remarkable facts. Every person in the world, unless he has an extra-judicial temperament and had traveled long distances in a fair-minded search for truth, judges the universe by the standards of his own half-acre. The salesman in a Broadway furnishing store haw-haws at the farm hand shuffling along the unaccustomed street. The proprietor of the country restaurant snickers at the city youth in white flannels who comes in to get a bite of lunch, and never for a moment questions his own general superiority over the young man from town. In Italy there are people who sleep eight in a room and never bathe and seem perpetually glossed with olive oil, who look out above their dusty casements and have an amused contempt for the American tourists tramping the streets below. If you would know the scalding truth about the British, ask a rural politician who has never stepped across a state line. And so the instances might be multiplied. The Kakyak family was just about as hide-bound and opinionated as the average family in the United States and that is why there was no willingness to admit that Mr. Conner as a type of man was nobler than any Tagalo who might be named. When the Kakyaks submitted to his authority they did so under protest, just as the colonial fathers fed the Hessian troops in order to placate the invader and not invite further calamity.

Because the family was so interested in America and asked so many questions, Conner was somewhat deceived as to the real situation. He forgot that the Kakyaks might be interested in learning of the peculiarities of a foreign tribe and still have no desire to adopt those peculiarities. All Americans like to read about those African kingdoms in which the belle of the village wears a ring in her nose and falls in love with the young man who can kill the largest game. Americans read of these savage customs and yet they are not impelled to adopt them. In America the village belle continues to wear the rings in her ears and she falls in love with the young man who draws the largest salary.

The reader will therefore understand that the Kakyak family might be willing and anxious to learn all about America and still have little inclination to be Americans. Something that happened while the family was camping out on the river bank may illustrate this point.

It was late in the afternoon and the family, according to custom, was squatted on the mats in the open air,

Eulalie and the guitar. Conner, the missionary, was seated flat on the ground with his back against a tree. Eulalie sang something from Carmen. Conner did not recognize it.

"It's from 'Carmen,'" she said.

"Oh, indeed?" he said. "Grand opera! I remember now that before coming out here I read that you Tagalos are very good musicians--that you rather go in for high-class music."

"Oh, yes, we love music," replied Eulalie. "You will find either a harp or a guitar in every Tagalo house."

"That's rather in your favor," said Conner. "At least, it isn't to your discredit, but I'm inclined to believe that any nation that is too much given to music doesn't do very well in a business way. Music and moneymaking seldom go together. Very few musicians become wealthy. In America that is our principal objection to music. We think it's all right as a diversion for women, but an able-bodied man ought to be out doing something practical. Now if the Spaniards had spent less time playing the mandolin and more time at target practice we wouldn't have whipped them so easily."

"Ah, but music--it is such a comfort," said Eulalie. "It is the food of the soul."

"Oh, it's all right in its way," said Conner, as if he were conceding something.

"Have you ever heard our Filipino national hymn?" she asked.

"I don't see how the Filipinos can have a national hymn," said Conner, frowning. "We do not recognize the Filipinos as a nation. I suppose you refer to the piece of music written by one of the rebels and officiously termed the Filipino national hymn."

"That is what she means," said Mr. Bulolo Kakyak, with a warning shake of the head at his daughter. "She forgets that we have renounced allegiance to any Filipino government and are trying to be good American subjects. Hereafter, Eulalie, if you wish to sing any national hymn, you will sing the national hymn of the United States."

"But I don't know it," she said.

"Then I have no doubt that Mr. Conner will teach it to you. What is it like, Mr. Conner?"

"Well--you see, as a matter of fact we haven't any regular national hymn," he replied.

"We have several patriotic songs that are quite popular--'America,' for one, but that is adapted from 'God Save the Queen' which is British. Then we have 'The Star-Spangled Banner,' 'Hail Columbia,' 'Yankee Doodle' and others, but not one of them has been formally adopted as a national hymn. I don't know why we've never agreed upon a national hymn. I suppose it's because we've been too busy."

"I think it very strange that the United States, which, you say, is the most powerful and progressive nation in the world, has no national hymn," said Mrs. Kakyak, with a

suggestion of sarcasm.

"Come national to think hymn of it, I believe 'The Star-Spangled Banner' is our national hymn," said Conner. "Yes, I believe they do call it our national air."

"What is it like? asked Francisco. "I don't sing very well.

"I mean the words."

"Well, let me see. It begins 'Oh, say, can you see?' try it.

"Oh, say, can you see, by the morn-er-by the dawn's early light. What so proudly we hailed at the starlight's last gleaming; Whose-eh--"

"And the--"

He stopped and shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't remember it," he said.

"Well, I'll declare," said Mrs. Kakyak. "There's a patriotic American doesn't know the words of his national song." She seemed rather pleased by his failure.

"I assure you that very few Americans know the words of that song," said Conner. "I remember we had a concert on the boat coming over, and there was only one American aboard who remembered all the words."

"Shameful!" remarked Eulalie.

"Oh, I don't know, Eulalie," said the missionary. "You must remember as it is among the Latins and all people of more southerly climes."

"When we are assimilated you are not going to deprive us of our music, are you?" asked Mr. Kakyak, as if alarmed.

"Bless you, no! We will permit you to retain your love of music, but we hope to induce you to take up American songs."

"Then you do have your own songs?" asked Eulalie.

"Why, I heard the American soldiers singing a song when they went through the valley below," interrupted Francisco. "It was the only song they seemed to know, and I thought it must be the national hymn. It was something about 'a hot time.'"

"Oh, I know that," said the missionary. "Yes indeed! That's the most popular song in America. Let me have the guitar, Eulalie. I'll see if I can't pick out the chords and sing it for you. I use to play a little when I was in college."

He plucked awkwardly at the strings until he found the semblance of an accompaniment, and then sung as follows, in a strained tenor:

"When-you-hear-the bells go ding-a-ling-ling

All bow down and sweetly we will sing;

And when you hear that song

In the chorus all join in--

There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night!"

The Kakyak family listened with quiet amazement.

"What a remarkable song!" exclaimed Eulalie.

"Nothing does it mean?" asked little Patricio.

Nothing in particular but it is supposed to be enlivening," replied the missionary. "It is one of the many coon songs which are so immensely popular in my country. I suppose about three per cent of the population in the United States goes in for Wagner, Brahms, Tschaikowsky, Gounod, Verdi and Mascagni but the other ninety-seven per cent likes the coon songs. You don't see anything else in the music-store windows. I'll sing one of them for you. It will give you some idea of what you must take up with, now that you are going to be like us." And he sung:

"I guess I'll have to telegraph my baby;

I need the money bad; indeed I do-o-o!

For Lucy am a very generous lady,

And I can always touch her for a few,

I find the Western Union a convenience, No matter where I roam:

I'll telegraph my baby,

She'll send me ten or twenty, maybe;

Then I won't have to walk back home."

"Isn't that the weirdest thing you ever heard?" asked Hrs. Kakyak, looking at her husband.

"Here's another that was spreading like wildfire about the time I sailed," said the missionary.

"Hello, my baby! Hello, my honey! Hello, my rag-time gal!

Send me a kiss by wire; Honey, my heart's on fire!

If you refuse me, honey, you lose me;

Then you'll be left alone.

Telephone and tell me I'm your own!"

"These seem to be lullabys," said Eulalie. "They are addressed to a baby."

"In my country 'baby' is a term of endearment addressed by a young man to the object of his affections," said the missionary.

"It sounds rather mushy to me," said Mrs. Kakyak,

"Why do you call them coon songs?" asked Mr. Kakyak.

"Well, 'coon' is a familiar and slangy synonym for plantation negro, of whom we have several millions in our country. We get most of our songs in America from the illiterate type of country negro."

"But I should think that in the process of assimilation the negro would be compelled to take his songs from the white man," said Mr. Kakyak,

Mr. Conner hesitated a moment before explaining.

"The negro is not yet fully assimilated," he said. "It will take time."

"But you say you are imitating him," insisted Mr. Kakyak. "I thought that the darker race always took a secondary place and was dependent on the Caucasian, receiving instruction from him. That's what you have told us. Yet now you confess that you get your songs from the negro. Who was it said, 'Let me write the songs of a country and I care not who makes the laws'?"

"You do not understand," replied the missionary. "We may borrow our popular songs from the negro, but in the important matter of handling the dollars we are still on top, and will continue to remain there."

"Even when the negro has become assimilated?" asked Mr. Kakyak.

"Well, we are not going to assimilate him to that extent."

"Sing us another of the songs of your country," said Eulalie. "I think they're awfully foolish, but they're rather interesting,"

"I forgot to tell you that in acquiring the coon songs you must also learn to do the cake walk," said the missionary.

"What in the world is a cake walk?" asked Mrs. Kakyak.

"It is a sort of friendly contest between several persons or several couples to determine who or which can walk the most gracefully. We vary the ordinary method of locomotion

with a great many eccentric steps and postures, and the results are really surprising. I'm afraid you don't grasp my meaning. just give you an idea of what the cake walk is like."

He arose and extended his arms, looked upward at the sky and walked to and fro in front of the Kakyak family, his body thrown into a backward curve, his legs closed and unclosed like two jacknives.

"What do you think of it?" he asked when he had stopped and was wiping his moist brow.

The Kakyak family was convulsed with laughter. Eulalie had put her head to the ground and was writhing in the giggles.

"Oh--Oh--Oh!" she shrieked. "Of all the idiotic things!"

"Do they really do that in your country?" asked Mr. Kakyak, looking keenly at the missionary as if suspecting a joke. "Of course."

"Well, well, well!"

