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### THE PHILIPPINES IN OUR TIME

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*“When a people has prosperity, education, moral sense, and civil liberty, it will allow itself to be ruined rather than surrender these.”*

—GNEISENAU, 1807, *Pertz*, I., 322.

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Spanish and English Systems Compared—Influence of the Roman Church—The Yankee in Manila

**T**HROUGHOUT the nineteenth century Spain's administration of the Philippines remained practically what it had been in the previous three centuries. The commerce of the Islands improved, as did that of Cuba, not so much because Spain herself had profited by experience, as that her very impotence and corruption permitted the laws of the mother country to be violated almost with impunity. The loss of her great South American Empire, in the first quarter of the century, caused her to attach considerable importance to the fragments that remained, and her constant need of money inclined her to forgive almost anything in a governor who could ease the financial strain. Throughout this century the Philippines were regarded as a colony from which foreign influence should be excluded, even Chinese. Tobacco was treated as a Government monopoly, and the natives were compelled not only to plant a given amount, but to sell it to the Government at twenty

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per cent. below its market value. The Filipinos were nominally free, but had to pay a heavy poll-tax, to submit to forced labor fifteen days in the year, and further to aid the Government by paying a heavy tax upon everything within reach, from a cock-fight to a mortgage. Yet with the best intentions in this direction Spain could not, any more than China, exclude the influence exerted by the progress of British commerce in the Far East. The Filipino, the Chinese, and the Creole merchant saw trade spring up wherever a British Governor made his residence, and only the Spanish priest and official desired to check this influence. Within this century Singapore and Hong-Kong became neighbors to Manila, and each of these ports was soon swarming with busy merchantmen—achieving more in ten years than three centuries of Spanish rule. Hong-Kong was originally regarded by the British Government as fit only to throw away. Unlike the Philippines, she was saved to the Crown not by the religious fanaticism of a missionary priest, but by a commercial instinct strong in British public sentiment. The United States did not dream of ultra-marine expansion in 1841, but her trade with China and the Philippines bore favorable comparison with that of England. Her tea-clippers raised the credit of the Stars and Stripes throughout the eastern world. Before the Civil War and before protectionism had laid its withering hand upon American shipping, the skipers of Salem and New York commanded ships that were better built and better manned than those of any other country; and what is more to the point, they earned handsome profits for those who ventured their

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money. American merchants worked hand in hand with those of England in building up Anglo-Saxon prestige from Tokio to Calcutta; and in the days when I first visited those waters (1876) no commercial house enjoyed greater credit in China and Manila than Russell & Co.

At the same time the administration of Manila was a by-word for inefficiency and corruption; if it had a rival in this respect it was the Portuguese Macao. And yet the Spaniard might with some plausibility reply to such a charge by pleading bad government at home—that Spain gives her colonies the best administration that can be evolved at Madrid. This absolves her at home, but does not satisfy those who suffer from her colonial rule. If there is a general law to be drawn from the study of universal history, it is that sooner or later the land falls to him who can best make use of it. In the struggle for the good things of this world the strong have been successful, because strength generally goes with discipline, moderation, and certain rough manly virtues. The strongest man cannot long remain so if he indulges in debilitating practices; if he fails to control his temper and other nervous forces. It is so with an army, and, above all, with a nation.

The Spain that conquered the Western Hemisphere was a nation bred up to the exercise of public liberty. The Spain that drove out the Moors had been reared in a political atmosphere where the ruler governed not by divine right alone, but by consent of the governed. In tracing the progress of Europe through the dazzling reigns of such despots as Charles V. and Louis XIV., and through the French Revolution, to these days of

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newspapers and stump speeches, we must not imagine that all this is merely evolution from absolutism to popular self-government. On the contrary, the glories of these monarchs rested on the ruins of local liberties which they had ruthlessly trampled underfoot. It was the generation reared in liberty that fought the battles of despotism under the name of religion. The Spanish warriors who dared every danger of the western world went forth in the name of the cross, little dreaming that the Church whose symbol they bore aloft was helping to forge the chains of their subsequent slavery. The money that flowed from the new colonies made the Spanish monarchy of Charles V. and Philip II. brilliant in the pages of history, but the result was at the expense of Spanish liberty. All the gorgeousness of the Escorial could not atone for the suppression of the Spaniard's ancient rights to vote supplies and control expenditure.

The Church did heroic service in stimulating warlike energy and administering colonies of Indians, but in the long run it has shown itself unequal to the task it undertook with so much energy four hundred years ago.

There was a time when the England of Queen Elizabeth offered a certain rough analogy to the Spain of Philip II. Elizabeth committed acts so arbitrary as to satisfy the most loyal supporter of absolutism; she sent eminent people to the block or to the rack with no more let or hindrance than a Grand Inquisitor. Outwardly she appeared to be tyranny personified, and her people apparently submitted with the acquiescence of servility. In Spain, on the other hand, the old forms

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survived, and the monarch moved in a cloud of priests and lawyers. Compared to the capricious and passionate Elizabeth, Philip II. exhibited the outward appearance of a monarch heavily hedged about by limitations, religious and legal, constitutional and local. But here these analogies end. The power of Philip was military, founded upon a large standing army and the strongest navy of his time. In addition to having the Church as his ally, he was in a position to enforce obedience to his will by military force alone, if necessary. At one time it seemed as though his mailed fist could reach to any corner of Europe to crush a heretic or a rival monarch.

Queen Elizabeth, on the other hand, had not a single regiment or naval squadron on which she could rely to carry out an act which her people might deem unjust. When the Spanish Armada threatened England, her queen could do no more than invite the cooperation of her yeomen and sailors in saving her throne from destruction. Tyrants cannot count upon enthusiastic answers to such invitations. The tyranny of Elizabeth was not the tyranny of Philip. Elizabeth committed occasional acts of tyranny in a long reign characterized by shrewd regard for English liberty and constitutional law. Philip II. permitted an occasional liberal action in a reign of monotonous despotism and fanatical cruelty. When Elizabeth went forth as queen the people hailed her with enthusiasm and cheerfully subscribed handsomely for her enterprises. The Spanish monarch died without knowing that his people could laugh or dance. They obeyed, and he asked no more.

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Spanish rule has lasted wonderfully long, with all its abuses. In the Philippines it has been almost exclusively Church rule, and from that rule we Americans can learn much, for the Roman Catholic missionary priest makes government the study of his life. He does not go for a short term of years to enrich himself at the expense of the natives and then return to enjoy his gains at home, but as a rule he spends the best years of his life at his post; he at least understands the temper of the people he is governing, and can avoid the costly mistakes made by amateur administrators.

If the English colonial official is to-day a highly efficient public servant, it is because he learns his duties, and when he is appointed to a Government post he understands that he will secure promotion, will be well paid, and, after a certain number of years, will retire on a pension. In a general way the colonial official resembles the Spanish priest of the Philippines, barring certain obvious differences. The white official expects to support a wife and family, the priest has not this worry on his mind. The white official must think of educating his children, of placing his sons in a career, of getting husbands for his daughters. All these cares the priest ignores.

But the colonial official, more than the Government servant in any other kind of work, must of necessity be in a position to exercise daily, personal authority and influence over people who must obey; and yet whose obedience is worth little unless it is yielded willingly. The Spaniards have had four hundred years of colonial experience, and yet they have failed. Are we

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to conclude that we too must fail? England, in 1783, was forced to retire from this country—yet her colonial greatness may be said to have commenced with that notable year.

England has had plenty of colonial checks—she has committed more blunders than any other nation could have repaired and still survive. She has had formidable insurrections to suppress; her colonial fighting has been almost interminable. Spain, on the other hand, has enjoyed comparative quiet in her colonies for nearly three centuries. If ever a nation had a free field for colonization it was Spain in her early days: and she has failed hopelessly.

Did she fail because of the Church, or in spite of the Church? That question will never be decided. The bulk of evidence would point to the Church as the agency that held the natives loyal to the civil administration long after the home Government had ceased to be formidable. It is noteworthy that the priests of the Philippines have occupied the isolated stations of that country successfully, and have done so without any great show of military force. The whole internal administration of the colony has been practically guided by priests, and while many abuses are laid to their door, the remedy lies not in immediately abolishing the priesthood, but in gradually reforming abuses and building up a colonial civil service that shall do all that the priests have done, and do it better.

If the priests are bad in the Philippines, it is a sign that the Government at home has been bad. No one has aught but praise for the Roman Catholic missionaries in China, notably the Jesuits near Shanghai.

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Why should priests of the same Church be tyrants at Manila and angels of mercy at Hong-Kong?

It is of prime importance that at the beginning of our colonial career we impress the Filipinos with the superiority of our civilization to that of Spain. Our officials and soldiers should not merely be more honest, more courageous, they should also appear to the natives as in every way better worth copying. The American official should speak Spanish, and at least one or more of the native languages.

During the war the soldiers of the United States were so shabbily dressed, that, in general, they suffered by comparison with the 13,000 Spanish prisoners who strolled about the streets of Manila. The natives and others who desired to assist our Government in administering the country, were not favorably impressed by American official dignity. Our troops were mainly volunteers, and while most of them had fought bravely, the bulk of the officers were men who owed their positions to political influence, and were not fitted to occupy administrative posts, least of all in a new colony. Many of them were ignorant of military practice and neglected their men—consequently discipline was lax. The American volunteers whom I saw about Manila resembled anything rather than the warriors of a great nation—and the fault was not theirs, but that of an inefficient military administration at Washington.

The natural thing for an honest government to have done was to have called in the assistance of Americans who had lived in the Philippines; if that were impossible, then to have called in the aid of such as were at least familiar with that part of the world in general.



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In 1898 I could find but a single American consul who had been a year in the Far East, and not one who knew any language but English. The men who officially represented us in Chinese waters at the outbreak of the Spanish War, were not only of no official value, they were in most instances disgraceful to the community that sent them forth. Notable exceptions, such as John Fowler at Cheefoo, do but emphasize this national scandal.

At the very outset, therefore, we impressed the Filipinos with the worst rather than the best features of our civilization. To them our army was a mob of very brave and very shabby men; our officials were coarse politicians who could drink much whiskey and knew nothing of the country or its language. The result is what might have been anticipated.

The Filipino, of all the natives of the Far East, has a character which endears him to me. He has in his blood a suggestion of the chivalrous Japanese; the dignity and hospitality of the unspoiled Spaniard; the ferocity of the Malay and the secretiveness of the Chinaman. In America we have been pleased to caricature him as a man half negro, half monkey. That is far from the truth. Filipinos are highly intelligent creatures, and our fault has been to suppose that we can rule such people by force alone. Other nations have failed at this game, and it is for us to profit by their example.