

OUR FIGHT FOR THE PHILIPPINES.

The Perils That Confront the Soldiers of Major General Merritt--Some Queer Facts About the Islands Uncle Sam May Acquire.

Bear Admiral Dewey may well repeat the famous words of Marshal MacMahon, "J'y suis; j'y reste"—"I am here; here I shall remain." He has Manila at his mercy and when re-enforced by 15,000 troops under command of Major General Wesley Merritt, the new military governor of the Philippines, and by the cruisers Philadelphia and Charleston and the formidable monitor Monterey, no force the Spaniards have at their disposal will be able to dislodge him. Our soldiers, however, will be face to face with many perils. The climate is said to be worse than that of Cuba. The heat is almost unbearable to an unacclimated person, deadly fevers are prevalent in Manila and the bubonic plague in epidemic form prevails at Hongkong, only 600 miles from Manila, and at several points in the Philippines. This disease, according to accepted reports, is more fatal than yellow fever and preys with particular violence upon unacclimated strangers. Trifling earthquakes are of almost daily occurrence and now and then one of tremendous force kills hundreds of people. Then there is the simoom that sweeps over sea and land, leaving death and desolation in its wake.

The American troops, with Dewey's example before them, will not shrink before such perils. They are strong and brave, and their leader, Major General Wesley Merritt, is a soldier of experience who knows the magnitude of his task, but is fully competent to carry it out successfully.

The Experience of Consul Elliott.

Isaac M. Elliott of New York, who was United States consul at Manila two years ago, tells some interesting tales of the climate and of Spanish misgovernment in the Philippines. Spanish officials in the Philippine capital, alarmed at the growth of American trade in the islands and determined to stamp it out, were angered by Elliott's vigorous defense of American rights. Spain asked for his recall, trumping up the charge that he was aiding the insurgents. The administration, unwilling to offend the Madrid foreign office, transferred Elliott to La Guayra. Two months after Consul Elliott set sail from the Philippine capital the colonial officials had driven from the islands the last of the American commercial houses. This was the house of Warner, Blodgett & Co., which had built up a great business, the profits of 1895 amounting to \$234,000, and the money handled in the cash department alone amounting to \$4,000,000.

Heavy taxes had to be paid by the last American company into the overflowing private purses of the corrupt Spanish officials, and these taxes increased as American sympathy with the Cuban insurgents increased Spanish hatred of Americans. Extraordinary fines were levied. The collector of customs at Manila receives three-fourths of the fines he collects for the government, and the New York Sun says it is a matter of record that the customs official who helped to drive Americans out of the islands put away \$78,999.09 into his own pockets in 22 months. The law provides that an importer must pay a fine of \$100 for every article listed in the invoice found in the cargo. Once the American company paid a \$100 fine because one cobblestone out of thousands was missing in a cargo.

A Robbery Foiled.

The most high handed attempt at robbery was made the summer before Consul Elliott left the Philippines. One afternoon a customs official called at the company's office and handed a bill for \$22,855.15 to Blodgett, saying that it must be paid within 24 hours. Some smuggled goods had been found in the suburbs of Manila, and the customs collector concluded he could not make \$25,000 in any easier way than by charging the smuggled goods against the American ship Esmeralda. Even had the company been disposed to pay this fine, the money could not have been had within 24 hours, for the following day was Sunday. The order, which was from the supreme court, gave notice that if the fine was not paid the company's property would be confiscated. Spanish colonial officials had used this method of destroying the business of foreigners on more than one occasion.

Blodgett went at once to Consul Elliott's residence, and when he had briefly related the story of the new Spanish outrage the two went down to the cable office. Admiral Carpenter was then at Yokohama with the Asiatic squadron. The consul wrote a short message to the admiral and handed it to the operator. The message was in cipher. "Send assistance," it read. "American interests in peril. Elliott."

"Send in English, Carpenter," was the answer received by the consul a short time afterward. Elliott could not understand why Admiral Carpenter wished the message sent in English, for he knew that the admiral must understand the cipher. But the consul hastened back to the cable office and wrote out a second message in plain English. An hour later Governor General Blanco's secretary called at the consulate and said that Blanco wished to see the consul at once. Elliott went over to the governor general's residence. Blanco handed him the second message he had left at the cable office.

"I am astonished, sir," exclaimed Elliott, "that a consul's message has been held."

"I am sorry it had to be done," replied Blanco, "but you see we couldn't let that go. It might cause some unpleasantness between your country and mine."

"But no government has a right to hold back a consul's message, and if this message is not sent at once I will report the fact to my government." The consul then produced the bill presented to the American company by the customs official and asked by what right an officer of the government could trump up such a charge. Blanco said he was sorry that there was any misunderstanding between the company and the officials, but the "embargo" was according to law, having come from the supreme court, and he could do nothing about it.

General Blanco's Backdown.

"Then I shall take the first steamer for Hongkong," stoutly replied Consul Elliott, "and return with the American squadron to protect American interests."

"I will look into the matter more thoroughly," said Blanco after a moment's thought. "See me again before you do anything." That evening Blanco sent again for the consul to tell him that the law had been looked up, and it had been found that the embargo could be raised. Warner, Blodgett & Co. never paid the fine of \$22,855.15, and Admiral Carpenter's hint about plain English saved the United States the cost of sending a fleet and getting into a tangle with Spain, but the petty robberies continued, and the officials found



SOME OF UNCLE SAM'S NEW WARDS.

new ways of injuring the company's business. The persecution grew so great that the company reluctantly decided to seek the protection of the British flag, and the American house of Warner, Blodgett & Co. became the British house of Warner, Barnes & Co.

Spain's misgovernment of her rich possessions in the east began with the massacre of the natives by their Spanish conquerors in the sixteenth century, has continued uninterruptedly for more than three centuries since and might have gone on hundreds of years more had not Spanish misrule on the American island of Cuba brought about a war for human rights between this country and Spain. In the faraway Philippines, a land of volcanoes, earthquakes and typhoons, Spain could carry out her iniquitous colonial system of government away from the eyes of the civilized world. Only when some traveler has returned to tell of the life of the islanders has anything been heard of the medieval government perpetuated in that wild country for the enrichment of the private purses of favored Spanish officials, and the replenishing of the public treasury, depleted by corruption at home and wars in the colonies.

Now that we are at war with Spain and our flag floats in the capital of the Philippines, Americans who have been in the islands are free to speak their minds. No one is better qualified to speak than former Consul Elliott, who was three years at Manila. During the last six months of his stay the consulate was guarded by six Spanish soldiers, and Elliott constantly carried two pistols and a cartridge belt. Because of his Americanism he was as obnoxious to the Spaniards of Manila as was General Lee to Havana's loyalists.

Corrupt Spanish Rule.

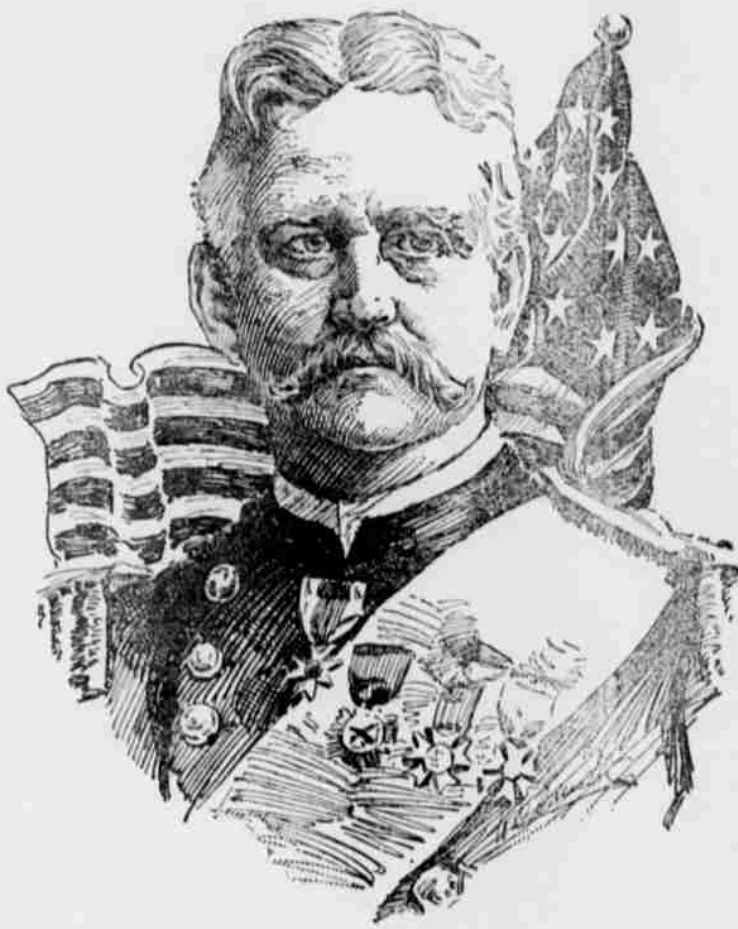
"Spanish rule in the Philippines is thoroughly corrupt," says Mr. Elliott. "The system of government nominally in operation is bad enough, but it is made many times worse by the officials from Spain who go to the Philippines for no other purpose than to make a fortune. The salary of the governor general is \$40,000 a year, nearly as large as the president's, but the salary is insignificant in comparison with the amount the officials steal. Weyler, on his return from the Philippines, had to his credit in the banks of London and Paris several million dollars, squeezed out of the people and the foreign merchants. General Despujol, who succeeded him, was an honest man, and it is related that he knocked down a Chinese merchant who came to him with a gift of bags of silver coins amounting to \$10,000. Blanco, who ruled the province while I was there, was also an honest man, but he had to carry out the laws."

"The Philippines cover more square miles of territory than most American dream of. Imagine the states of New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine transported to the China sea and cut up into 1,200 islands, ranging in size from one as large as New York and Massachusetts combined to little islets not large enough for a boy to turn a handspike on. Then put all the New York state people on the largest island, Luzon, with a city about the size of Washington for its capital, Manila, and spread the other 6,000,000 people about on the other islands. Now you have some idea of the Philippines. North and south the islands extend 1,200 miles, and east and west some 700 miles, and the archipelago is well knit together too."

"Who live there? Now you've got me. I was there three years, but I never was sure whether a man was Spanish, Chinese, Malay, Siamese, Negrito or something else, or all combined. I don't believe there can be found such a mixture of races anywhere in the world. Outside of the island of Luzon and one or two others, the population is divided between the Negritos and the Malays. The Negritos are dwarfish blacks, the original settlers in the islands some 500 years ago. The Malays swarmed in upon them from the south and drove them into the hills, so that now the coasts are held by the Malay tribes, who speak some 30 different dialects, and the interiors are held by the Negrito tribes, speaking some 200 dialects, perhaps more, for little is known of the wild, unexplored interior country on any of the islands, even Luzon."

A Very Mixed Population.

"Manila is a cosmopolitan city. The Spaniards, the rulers, number less than 5,000, and there were not 500 Europeans there when I left. Americans are seldom seen. The Chinese number 60,000. They are the small shopkeepers. Malays are as thick as Chinese. The great middle class is made up of some 50,



MAJOR GENERAL WESLEY MERRITT, U. S. A.
(Military governor of the Philippines.)

000 mestizos, the offspring of Malay mothers and Chinese fathers in the majority of cases, but Spanish blood runs in the veins of many of the mestizos. These half castes, superior in intelligence to the natives, are in a perpetual state of unrest. They have led all the revolutions in the islands and are the people who are expected to aid this country in taking possession of the Philippines. Some of their leaders are bright men, who chafe under the Spanish yoke and long for more humane rulers, or, if possible, independence.

"Everybody and everything is taxed. Spain draws an enormous revenue from the Philippines—how much no one knows. The annual budget, when I was at Manila, amounted to some \$15,000,000, and must have been increased since to help carry on the war in Cuba. But the amount squeezed from all classes of people by the thieving officials is many millions more. Let me read you some figures from a recent budget."

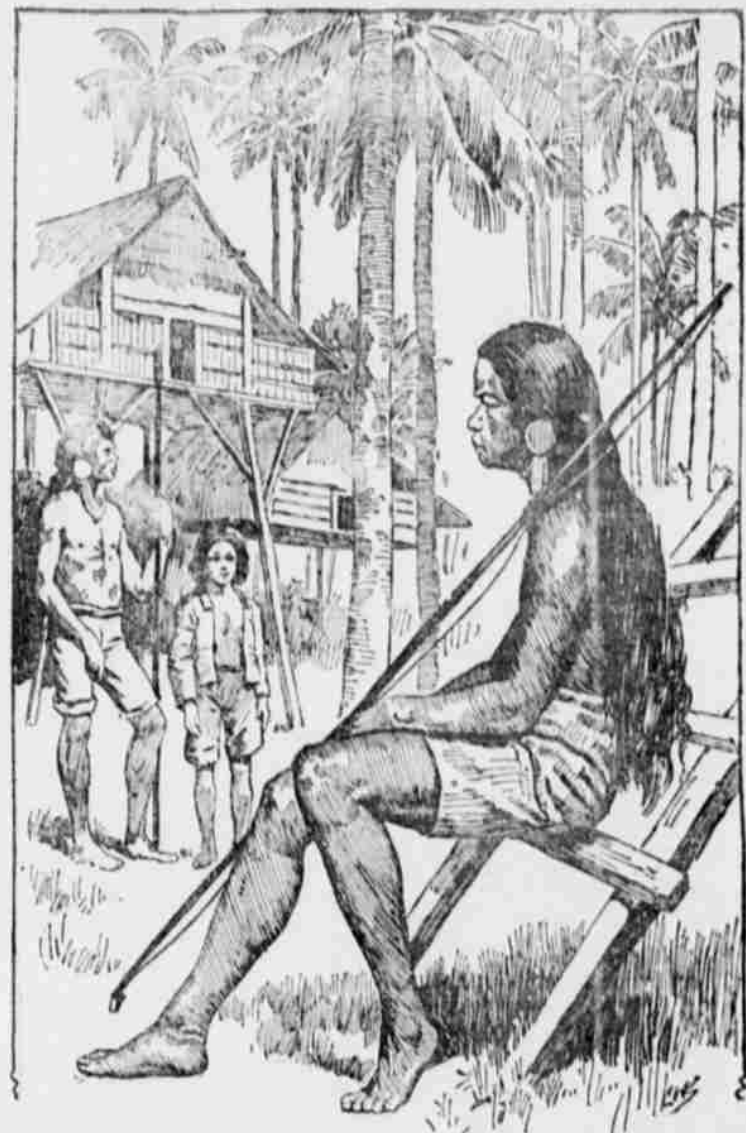
"The cedula personal, a 'document for identification,' must be carried by every person over 18 years old. The tax varies, according to age and financial condition, from 75 cents to \$25. The sum expected to be realized in this budget was \$4,401,629.25. The head tax on the Chinese was \$330,250. The tobacco tax on the Chinese was \$11,250, and on the other persons \$222,500. In addition to these personal taxes the natives must pay taxes for owning coconut trees and beasts of burden; for every wheel on their wagons they must pay \$1 a year; they must pay taxes for keeping shops, killing animals, running mills and oil presses, holding cockfights, owning fighting cocks and burying bodies."

"Cockfighting is the great national sport, and the budget estimated the tax on the sport at \$149,039. The opium contract was to realize \$483,400. From lotteries the estimated revenue was placed at \$591,893. All kinds of paper must be stamped—\$548,400; the convicts are hired out—\$50,000; the mint 'manipulates' the bullion—\$330,350; government land is sold—\$50,000. The natives back in the hills are taxed, but only a few thousand are reached by the collectors. The tribute from the tribes in this budget was estimated at \$12,000."

"Everybody in business must have a license, like our liquor license. I knew one druggist who paid \$1,200 a year for the privilege of doing business. His store was small. The foreign importers and exporters are forced to pay enormous taxes and fines. If they complain, the officials find excuses for confiscating their property and driving them from the islands. Nearly all the foreign trade is in the hands of the English, French, Dutch and Germans, the Spaniards not having the ability of the other Europeans. Ever since the islands were conquered Spain has fought the foreign merchants, framing the most absurd legislation to divide their profits with the government. The amount expected to be realized in business licenses in this budget was \$1,350,000."

A Possession Worth Holding.

"The United States, I believe, should hold the Philippines. The mestizos and the Europeans would welcome American control, and of course the Malays, Chinese and Negritos would be glad of any chance of escaping from their Spanish oppressors. We should, I believe, set up a provisional government in the islands, giving the control to the half castes, among whom are many capable



A GUIANGA WARRIOR.

men. Over them should be placed a few strong American organizers and executive officers. The foreign trade has been greatly injured by the insurrection of the past two years, but before the fighting began it annually amounted to about \$40,000,000. The exports of hemp, sugar and other products to the United States amounted to \$1,000,000 a month. Hemp is the most important product of the islands, the export amounting to \$8,000,000 a year, and we receive nearly all of it. The sugar export is nearly as large, but the quality is not good. The tobacco export amounts to about \$4,000,000, while about the same amount will cover the less important products—coffee, coconuts, cotton, pepper, quicksilver, ebony, mahogany, indigoes, cedar, saltpetre, coral, vanilla and medicinal barka.

"Ten years ago 164 American vessels were engaged in the Philippine trade, the number having doubled in five years. Now the number must be insignificant. The Philippines have wonderful undeveloped resources. The output of hemp, sugar and tobacco could be greatly increased under a civilized government. Coal and iron are there in great quantities, I believe, and might now be important articles of export had we taken the islands ten years ago. Now that the American flag has replaced the Spanish at Manila I look for a great future for the Philippines."

What Yankee Invention Would Do.

Manly R. Sherman of Los Angeles, Cal., is another American who has spent years in the Philippines and knows the country well. He has been in the employ of a trading company which has been buying indigo, camphor, sugar, spices and hemp in the Philippine Islands for 30 years.

"If the United States should take the Philippine Islands as a possession, they would have a most valuable piece of property. The possibilities of the Philippines as wealth producers can hardly be overestimated. The export in 1897 amounted to about \$30,000,000, and that in the face of the blighting oppression of the Spanish on every enterprise except tobacco and sugar. United States Consul Williams at Manila and I have discussed many times the agricultural possibilities of the Philippines under American push and with Yankee invention. I believe the exports from the islands might be increased to \$50,000,000 annually in a few years. There are nowhere in Central America land and water facilities that approach those of the island of Negros for growing coffee. The exportation of coffee in 1897 amounted to about \$250,000. It ought to have been ten times that amount."

"I am wondering in these days, when Uncle Sam is about sending troops from the Pacific coast to the Philippines, what the American boys will think of the climate over there. With the possible exception of some parts of interior India and Arabia, I doubt if there is any hotter climate than that of Manila. The islands reach within four degrees of the equator. The temperature is not so very high, but the humidity is. The most extreme care must constantly be exercised to keep one's physical condition properly toned all summer long. The hottest days in the year are in May and June. Fortunately a breeze usually springs up in the early evening, and that tempers the atmosphere so that one can get some sleep if he is properly fixed for it when midnight comes. The mean temperature at the Philippines is 72 degrees. In November the weather cools, and then for weeks at a time along the seacoasts it is about as near perfection as any one can imagine."

"For seven months in the year, from April to October, no one but the poorest laborer goes out of doors, unless compelled to do so, between 8 in the morning and 4 in the afternoon. In Manila the whole population rises at 4 and 5 a. m. and gets the work of the day out of the way before 8 o'clock. The houses are opened, servants clean up, merchants do their business and the school children are busy with their teachers. Then when Old Sol begins to shoot his darts down upon the country more perpendicularly the whole population goes into their houses and stay there until sundown. It is a land of siestas. Every one who can sleeps there all day long, and slumber there is reduced to a science. Business is suspended all day long. Even the men at the wharfs quit work for six or seven hours when the sun is highest."

"At sundown Manila wakes up. There is an opening of the heavy board window blinds and an exodus of people from their homes. The principal meal of the day is served at about 6 o'clock, and with the rich Spanish it is a sumptuous affair. Thereafter the whole population goes out for a walk. The cock-fights take place in the evening. The old theater is always crowded at night—especially Sunday nights."

Insurrections and Earthquakes.

"There are 10,000 Spanish regulars on guard in the islands. The insurgents last fall numbered about 46,000, of whom 5,000 were armed with good guns. The insurgents have a few good cannon cast from melted church bells and bits of metal that they gathered here and there. Manila, like Havana, has naturally been in control of the Spanish troops, and the insurgents have been carrying on a warfare 40 and 60 miles from Manila similar to that of the Cubans about Havana."

"In the summer of 1896 the order of the Katipunan was secretly formed among the Malays and Chinese. The purpose was to remove by blood the bondage by Spain. The members of the order were sworn by a oath across the left upper arm. With the blood which issued from the wound the initiate crossed himself and daubed his mouth and solemnly swore that he would spill the blood of at least one Spaniard every six months. The Spanish got hold of the plot. By trials that lasted an hour or two in some cases and 30 or 40 minutes each in most cases 4,700 of the persons suspected as being in the plot were convicted and shot to death. In the month of November, 1896, there were 800 executions on the outskirts of Manila. In one day some 75 men were stood up before a wall and shot."

"The earthquakes in the Philippines, especially on Luzon and Negros islands, deserve a special story by themselves. The whole group of islands is of volcanic origin. There are 70 volcanoes in constant eruption on the islands. The famous volcano Mayara is within sight of Manila. An earthquake occurs on an average of once every ten days. I have known small quakes to come at the rate of a dozen a day for a week at a time. About a dozen times a year there are shocks so severe that people will run about in fright and damage will be done to the buildings. The big bridge over the Pasig river at Manila has been so swayed by earthquakes twice during my residence in the city that it has been made unsafe for travel. In 1884 an earthquake nearly ruined the great stone cathedral in Manila, razed many buildings to the ground, rocked hundreds more, and 2,000 people on Luzon island were killed by falling timbers and walls. In 1890 the great earthquake occurred on Negros island. It has never been known how many people were killed then, but the number is estimated at 7,000. Almost every structure on the island was shaken down, and great gaps, yards wide and miles long, were cracked across the island. The quake opened seams in the earth from the seacoast and made passages from the interior lakes to the ocean. I suppose if such a quake should occur in New York city there wouldn't be one building left on all Manhattan island."