

Cebu News  
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# A SOLDIER'S SOLUTION.

*The Striking Letter of a Missourian Who Has Served  
in the Philippines, and Who Urges that We Should  
Let the Natives Govern the Islands.*

SIR—My people have been Americans for two hundred years. I have an honorable discharge from the United States army, which shows that I fought in a number of engagements in the Philippine Islands. I speak as an average American who has done his full duty in the matter, and earned a right to discuss the Philippine question. In my judgment the greatest difficulty under which our people labor is their inability to get at and realize the facts.

We can leave out of the discussion Palawan, the Sulu Islands, and Mindanao (except its northeast corner, which is Christian "insurgent," and making common cause with the other "insurgents"), which are inhabited by Mohammedans and heathen, to whom our Government has accorded local self-government, and with whom we have no contention, they having no relations with the Christian Filipinos with whom we are fighting in the other islands. This leaves Luzon, Leyte, Samar, Panay, Negros, Cebu, Bohol, and islands immediately about them. In all these war is being constantly waged, and there is the Filipino question. We can leave out of this discussion, too, a few thousand of Negritos in their mountains, who occupy about the same relation to the Filipinos in numbers and importance that the red Indians do to us. There are also a few Chinamen just as there are in California. The rest of the people are seven millions of Chris-

tian Malays, and it is with them that we are fighting. They are not only Christians, but very devout Christians, with a church in every hamlet. While they are not enlightened like the Americans, they are probably better civilized than our ancestors were the day William Shakspeare married Ann Hathaway, certainly surpassing Shakspeare's neighbors in school facilities, as they have a school in every village, poor though it is. They wear suits of clothes, live in houses suitable to the climate, till the soil, carry on trade and commerce, and to some extent manufactures. They have a lesser percentage of illiteracy than certain States in the Union that I could name. Except the city of Manila, which they had surrounded, they had, when Manila fell, conquered from the Spaniards, without anybody's aid, every foot of land in the Philippine Islands, except the towns of Baler and Iloilo, which they subsequently took without any help from us. This is the point you must fix in your minds. It will be seen by this that Spain had nothing to sell to us, and that if we wanted to pay twenty millions to anybody we should have paid it to the Filipinos, who had conquered the country, and freed themselves. That is what had happened. Such are the people.

Those who are best disposed to them frequently inquire, Can they govern themselves? I do not know why any one should ask such a question. It is no longer a question. By the 4th of July, 1898, they had full possession of the country everywhere except Manila. Our war with them began on the 4th of February, 1899, seven months afterward, during which time we did not pretend to govern outside of Manila or Cavité, except a few rods out where our sentries stood. During this time they

governed, undisputed, all these islands. I have seen and talked with men from nearly every island of any importance. There were no disputes, no troubles, and no confusion any more than we have had at home in the last few months, and, in fact, I think even less. They held their capital at Malolos, with their President, Administration, Congress, army, and organized government until about the 1st of April, 1899, making nine months of self-government. That fall they still retained everything except the railroad as far north as Tarlac, Manila, and the country immediately adjacent—Iloilo, Cebu, and a few points in Negros—so that they had over a year of self-government, and I never heard a soul say that it wasn't entirely satisfactory. Of course, they can govern themselves. They did so. Besides, Abraham Lincoln says: "Any nation can govern itself better than any other nation can govern it," and I think he is right.

How did we get into the fight with them? We had Manila and Cavité. They had the rest of the islands and a government of their own which they asked President McKinley to recognize. He refused to do this, friction ensued between the sentries of the two armies, and one night one of our sentries fired on theirs and precipitated the war. This done, Gen. Otis refused to make any treaty with them unless they made an unconditional surrender, which they wouldn't do, and probably never will. We have spent a couple of hundred million dollars, sacrificed several thousand valuable lives, saddled ourselves with a standing army of one hundred thousand men, and, as far as I can judge from what I read and what I hear from my old comrades still in the islands, are no nearer conquering them than we were the day the first shot was fired. To

sum it up, what is the Filipino question, then? It simply is this: Shall seven millions of Christian and civilized Malays govern themselves or be governed by the Americans? To any man who wants to be honest or fair, there is **only** one answer to such a question.

What should we have done? We should have retained the Bay of Manila as a naval station, given the Filipinos their independence, notified the rest of the world to let them alone, required them to pay us that twenty millions, and to grant us some trade privileges, and to have let us had possession of a few of the principal seaports for a term of years until the conditions were fulfilled. What should we do now? We should do what is right. We should do now what we should have done then. A great nation like ours can afford to do right without any danger of being laughed at. We ought to withdraw our troops to the principal seaports, declare a truce of ninety days, let Aguinaldo get his Congress together again, appoint commissioners to treat with their commissioners, and settle with them on some such reasonable and honest terms. In view of the trouble we have made, we should assist them, if necessary, with our troops, to restore order and put the islands back in the peaceable and reasonably well-governed condition they were in when we so foolishly and criminally refused to recognize their Government. At least this is an opinion of an average American who loves his country and fought for her flag in those islands.—John Hammill, of Kansas City, Mo., in Harper's Weekly.

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