

## IX

### *PROGRESS OF THE WAR*

Occupation of Luzon—Extent of American influence—  
Apathy of the ignorant peasantry—Professional criminals  
—Misguided patriots—Dangers of travel—Diplomatic  
policy advisable—Unthinking optimism dangerous.

MY departure for South Africa, soon after February 1, 1900, ended my work in the Philippines. During my stay in the Transvaal, I heard no word of the developments in the Philippines. While in Hongkong, en route to South Africa, I sent back a letter from which I extract the following. On returning to the United States in September, and reviewing the records of our experiences in the Philippines subsequent to my leaving them, I was, more than by all else, impressed by the fact that so many of my letters might have been written, with almost equal appropriateness, at any time within those months. This letter might have been written on September 12 just as well as on February 12:

"HONGKONG, February 12, 1900.

"With the exception of the southern half of the eastern coast and the central strip of the southeastern peninsula, the island of Luzon is now nominally occupied by the American forces. I say 'nominally occupied,' because a considerable area, particularly the northern, is but thinly garrisoned and, so far as I can learn, American influence extends only about as far as a Krag will throw a bullet. The occupation is unquestionably a forcible one. The stories of cordial welcome to the troops, of festivities and entertainments, have some foundation in fact, but they are generally misleading.

"There are Filipinos who are tired of war and there are those who have never been keenly desirous of war. There are the passively indifferent, the stolid and the timid. These more or less cordially welcome anything which presents a possibility of quieter conditions under which they can go on with the dull and petty round of life to which they have been accustomed and which they very much prefer. As one becomes used to physical pain and it becomes endurable, so do such limited lives as those of many of the Filipino peasantry become more or less callous to political tyranny and oppression. Some become roused to a measure of activity by a hope of better things, but the fever soon passes and they sink into the usual helpless apathy and, out of policy, seek to

ingratiate themselves with a new ruler in whom they see little or no improvement over the old.

"There remain two classes. Officially, we hear little of one and much of the other. There are the veritable bandits, the ladrones and tullisanes, who may be called professional criminals. The class has existed for years in the islands and has held a recognized status. It is made up of men of criminal tendencies, depredators and sometimes murderers. It is impossible even approximately to estimate their number, but they are not to be counted by thousands. They may number some hundreds, but it is probable that comparatively few of them are encountered by the American forces. They prey upon their own people and upon the estate-holders as they always have. Their number has undoubtedly been augmented by the disturbed conditions of the life of the island.

"The other group consists of those who have been and still should be called 'insurrectos,' 'rebels,' 'insurgents,' or any other term which fits their particular operations. I am not sure that the inconvenient title of 'misguided patriots' would not be the most fittingly descriptive. As an army of such, the Filipino organization is disintegrated and, to some extent, disbanded. But the greater number of those who constituted that army, though many have returned to their homes and taken up some part of their

normal life habits, still retain their guns, and the best information available leads me to an assurance that they keep in very general touch with each other throughout the island. Many of the islanders are subdued, but it is not at all established that they are pacified. The evidence is strongly in favor of wide-spread dissatisfaction, with some unsuccessful effort at concealment of the real feeling.

"The headquarters view is, as it always has been, an optimistic one. I do not find it well supported by the facts. Old residents tell me that five years ago, and back of that, one might travel in entire safety throughout the islands, meeting cordial and respectful courtesy everywhere. There was but a minimum of danger from bandits or anybody else. To-day I find few army officers, no matter what their view of the question and the situation, who do not advise strongly against travel through any part of the islands without ample military escort. The American troops are still energetically scouting throughout a wide area and the reports of attacks on outposts and pack-trains and scouting-parties are still frequent. My letters of the past months have indicated just this condition and the probability of its indefinite continuance unless it finds solution through other than military processes.

"The final solution is undoubtedly nearer than

it was six months ago, but I have urged my belief that the full determination of the matter lay along political or diplomatic lines rather than through any channel of military operations. I see no reason yet to change my views. I believe that an indefinite continuance of the present policy can have no other meaning than an equally indefinite continuance of more or less active hostilities. The proposal to constitute, by military edict, all who do not accept and accede to the military terms a class of outlaws to be shot or hanged by scouting-parties commanded by more or less irresponsible junior and non-commissioned officers, is a proposition which is almost as brutal as it is un-American.

"Whether the Filipino resistance to American occupation has been an effort toward a direct end, that of national independence, or, as I believe it has been, but a means toward an end, that of relief from political and monastic tyranny, abuse and oppression, there has been resistance and it has had an aim and purpose. It has affected hundreds of thousands, and many thousands have given property and life for the accomplishment of some more or less clearly defined and understood end. It is beyond the bounds of reasonable assumption to hold that such a people would at once cease their struggle and extend a loving and honest welcome to their conquerors. It is equally unreasonable to claim that a man who was yesterday a patriot,

whether clearly intelligent or blindly led by others, should become to-day a member of the criminal class, an outlaw to be shot or hanged on sight.

"After seven months of experience, observation and investigation in the islands, it is my contention that the adjustment of the trouble here can be effected only through diplomatic and political channels. I believe that this is as true to-day as it was months ago, and I believe that it was as true then as it is now. The Filipino people want something, that is evident. They are not fighting and dying for the fun of it, or for the excitement they find in the simple fact of an armed resistance. Their desires are legitimate from the standpoints of humanity, civilization and democracy. I believe that the United States may make up its mind to a more or less active row out here until these people get something more than vague assurances that when they stop 'kicking' they will get something which somebody else thinks is good for them."

With this chapter I leave the story of our military operations in the Philippines. We have been fighting for eighteen months. The account of any one month is the account of almost any other month. The end is not yet, and competent observers are frank to say that they cannot see the end. Optimism is a far

more satisfactory state than pessimism; but if a thinking pessimism realizes a serious situation and faces its facts while an unthinking optimism fails to do either, I shall prefer to be ranked with the pessimists, though naturally gifted with a fairly cheerful disposition.