

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XIX.

TORONTO, JULY 22, 1899.

No. 29.

AMONG THE FILIPINOS.

The papers are full just now of pictures of the Filipinos. So Pleasant Hours must have some too. We heard a coloured preacher last summer state that Providence had a brilliant future in store for the people of those islands, for had not the great Apostle of the Gentiles written an Epistle to the Philippines? The brother in black was a little astray as to the fact, but we doubt not was perfectly correct in his prediction. It is strange how little most of us knew about the Philippines till the searchlights of Dewey's ships were turned upon them. The principal idea suggested to the present writer by their name was that of Manila hemp, which, when he went to buy a summer swing, he found, on account of the war, had doubled in price. A brief resume of what is known about these islands may be of interest to the readers of Pleasant Hours.

The Philippines are the most northern group of the Indian archipelago, stretching a thousand miles from north to south, and six hundred miles from east to west. They make almost a continuous link between the great islands of Borneo and Formosa, and form the eastern border of the Chinese Sea. They almost equal in extent the empire of Japan. There are over fourteen hundred altogether, but many of these are little more than bare volcanic rocks. Nine of them, however, are large and wonderfully fertile islands.

Luzon, the most considerable, has an area of forty-one thousand square miles, and a population of about 6,000,000. The others aggregate about 60,000 square miles, with about 5,000,000 more of population. Luzon is exceedingly rugged, although its mountains nowhere exceed 7,000 feet. Some of its volcanoes are still active, issuing dense volumes of smoke and steam and sometimes lava. One of these, at the extreme south, serves as a continual beacon to navigators.

The volcanic soil is exceedingly fertile, producing rich crops of rice, wheat, indigo, tobacco, coffee, cotton, sugar-cane, bread-fruit, oranges, and citrons. The mountains and plains are clothed with magnificent forests of palm, bamboo, ebony, mahogany, and other valuable woods. Tobacco has long been a Government monopoly, 20,000 hands being employed at Binondo in the manu-

facture of cigars. Gold, copper, iron, and coal are among its mineral resources. The principal rivers are the Apari and Pasig, both of which are navigable for vessels of considerable size.

THE PHILIPPINES WERE DISCOVERED by Fernando Magellan in 1521. He was subsequently killed on one of them. In 1564 the cruel bigot and persecutor, Philip II., sent a fleet which captured Cebu. Six years later Luzon was subdued, and Manila proclaimed the capital. Two hundred years later Manila was captured by the British, but was ransomed at a cost of \$5,000,000. Of the population, about 7,000,000 are Romanist, 1,500,000 are pagan, and nearly 1,000,000 Mohammedans.

The general character of the islanders exhibits, in a striking manner, the ruinous effects of sin, and manifests the failure of Romanism as a moral force. For among those people we see much licentiousness and drunkenness, witchcraft and idolatry, lying and stealing. But yet the same people are naturally endowed with qualities, and present traits which, under the sanctifying influence of the Gospel, should make them a great blessing to that part of the world. For instance, they are grateful, sensitive, and hospitable, have a most remarkable aptitude for the fine arts, being

"THE ITALIANS OF THE EAST."

Though commonly accused of indolence, they are a great improvement over all the other branches of the Malay race.

The priests testify of their liberality in giving for the erection of churches and the support of religion generally. Hardly a town is without its band of music and they delight in using their talent in the service of their superstitions. The ladies are also very musical; the harp is their favourite instrument. In their simplicity they are very credulous, and mix the Divine name with most profane

and foolish things. They still retain many of their old heathen customs, but in a modified form and tinged with Romanism. The word Evangelio, "Gospel," is by them employed to signify a small bag made of cloth, containing a scrap of paper with the first fourteen verses of the Gospel of St. John in Latin. This is worn by nearly every woman and girl, hung around the neck for an amulet, the idea being that it wards off sickness. These people live on simple food, chiefly rice and fish, and dress in light clothes. The Spaniards have introduced bull-fights, but the natives prefer their own cock-fights. These latter are the general pastime on Sundays and all feast days.

The principal and all-absorbing amusement of the natives, in fact, what may be called their national sport, is

COCK-FIGHTING;

and his fighting rooster is as much, if not more, an object of solicitation and care to every Filipino as his family itself. In Manila there is a large building, of bamboo and nipa, erected solely for this diversion, and the uproar which arises from it every Sunday afternoon can only be compared to that heard at a league baseball game at home. A native so unfortunate as not to own a fighting cock would be an object of scornful pity to his neighbours, and it is difficult to walk the streets in the native quarter without stumbling at every few yards over a pair of feathered combatants, having a trial battle under the watchful care of their owners.

The population of Manila is about 270,000, including natives, Chinamen, and Europeans; the Chinese forming a very large proportion. Naturally, of the Europeans, the greater number are Spaniards, and there is also a large colony of Germans and Swiss, the Englishmen and Americans are in the minority.

There are churches on every corner, of all sizes and descriptions, generally in a state of dilapidation owing to earthquakes; and also an English

club, which includes most of the Americans among its members.

PICTURESQUE

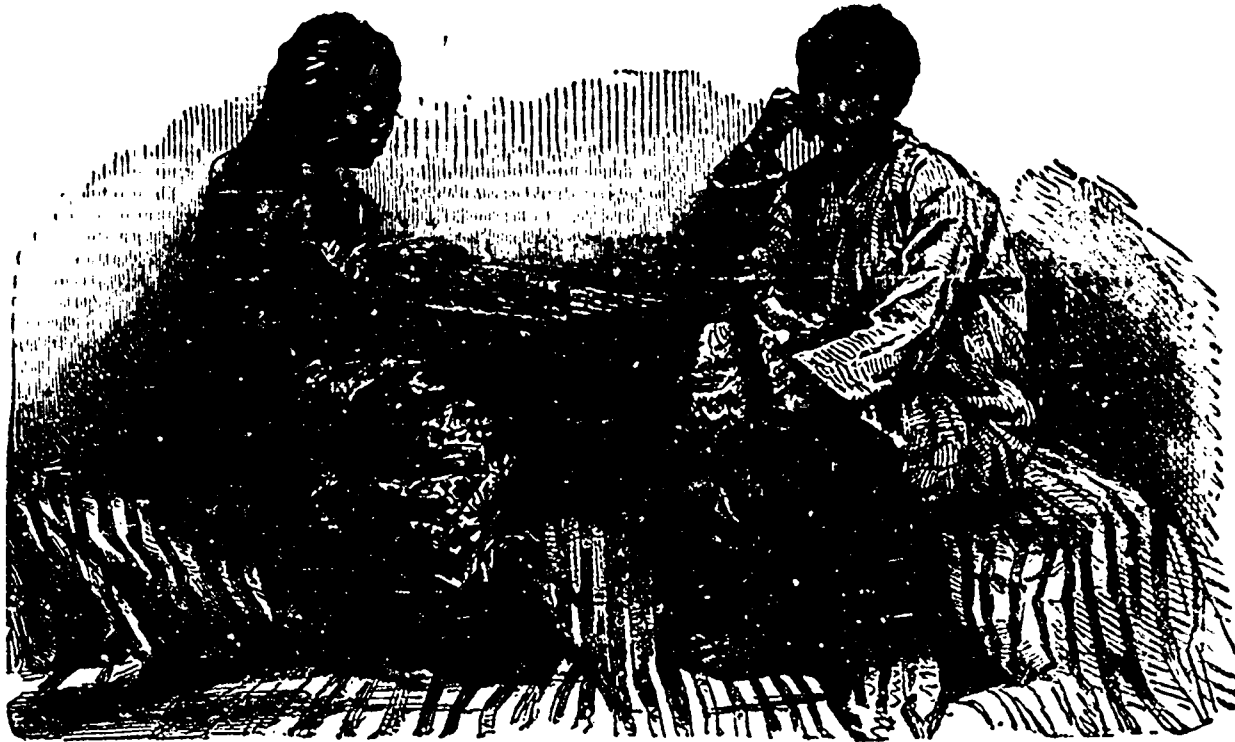
as life may seem in the islands to one who has never tried it, with these strange scenes and people, and the airy, luxurious ways of living, there is a sense of monotony and loneliness about it which can not be overcome by one from northern climes. Out of the track of the great steamship lines, the islands are seldom visited by "globe-trotters," partly on account of their reputation for cholera, typhoons and earthquakes, and a new face was seldom seen in the little Anglo-American colony. No form of outdoor recreation except driving could be indulged in from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on account of the deadly heat, and horse back riding, tennis, etc., could only be undertaken early in the morning or late in the afternoon, and even under these conditions the exercise was too violent.

Not more than one-third of the arable land in the valleys of Luzon has been brought under civilization. The mountains are rich in the most valuable timber to be found anywhere in the world. While some of the valleys have been denuded of the forests, Spanish official obstruction has effectually spared the valuable trees in the interior. It is not a bad thing that it required about two years' effort and a large fee in order to get a license to fell a single tree, and a heavy duty before it could be exported.

TAXATION.

The native had to pay tax on every thing, the paper on which he wrote a letter, the buffalo that ploughed his fields, his chickens, and even upon the eggs they laid. The governors monopolized the trade of their districts. They fixed their own purchasing price, and sold, of course, at current market rates. No conscience was shown by any officer in his rigorous exactions from the natives. The expenses of legal proceedings were so enormous that many a wealthy man was ruined by a single case of litigation.

In the present rebellion more than 10,000 men, women and children were massacred by the Spaniards. Men and women were arrested merely on a suspicion expressed by a single individual, thrown into prison without even the formality of a hearing, and allowed to remain there for years without a trial. There was no such thing as trial by jury, no writ of habeas corpus, no right of appeal. When the United States troops took Manila there were 2,900 prisoners



NATIVES OF MANILA.



NATIVES OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.



STREET ARCHITECTURE, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.