

A LETTER FROM FAR LUZON

Ode C. Nichols, an old Iola Boy Writes an Interesting Letter to the Register
—A Good Description of the Habits and Customs of the People of the Philippine Islands.

Salsona, Province of Ilocos Norte,
Luzon, P. I. December 20, 1900.
Hon. Chas. F. Scott,

My Dear Sir and Friend:—Some time since your letter came to me and in that letter you were so indiscreet—as to ask that I send you something for your paper. Now it occurs to me that in that request you displayed the fact that you were more courteous than wise, else, perhaps, you for the time being, did not realize that you were placing your readers in a position to have thrust upon them—in all probability—much of the same sort of thing that has for the past two years stared them in the face from the columns of every paper at which they chanced to look. A funeral notice, if confronted a sufficient number of times, becomes a joke, how much more of a joke then must the thousands of columns of stuff appear that is sent out from these islands? But I shall take the liberty of pouncing down upon the owners of the names appearing upon your subscription list with something that perhaps all have not seen or heard of before. As a matter of course I decided to comply with your request directly I read it and at once began to look for a suitable subject, and now that I have had an opportunity to see municipal government as conducted by natives, now that I have seen many of their ceremonies, it occurs to me that it might, even yet, be news to the people of the States to tell them something of the way these people celebrate our national holidays and I will inaugurate it by making the seemingly broad statement that whenever or wherever you see a Filipino that does not love to get out in his best clothes in a parade ordemonstration of any sort six days out of the seven in a week, whenever you see a native who doesn't love pomp and ceremony—you can put it down that he isn't a Filipino at all, and a search of his pedigree will reveal the fact that he is half Chink (Chinaman) one quarter of his blood has at some time past been imported from Ceylon and the other part missing. These people certainly love a ceremony, and they never fail to participate in one when the opportunity presents itself.

They celebrate the days set aside by the Church ("the Church" here means Catholic) which in the course of a year includes one for each of the Saints, "Natividad" or Christmas, New Years,—fasts and feasts. They observe the day upon which the particular church building in which they worship was thrown open for the worship of God celebrate it and innumerable others. These, however, have nothing to do with the national or political feature, and now that the American soldiers occupy the towns and cities of the Island and afford efficient protection, now that, under American protection, loyal natives are elected by the people in good old American way and use their power, in most every instance, justly and wisely; now that they are beginning to taste of the great measure of sweets contained in the big word, liberty, the definition of which they are just now beginning to comprehend; now that conditions are as they are they find themselves confronted with the pleasant duty of celebrating our national holidays. And they do not do the thing by halves, either, but in order that I be the more clearly understood, I must classify the people.

Heretofore I have had much to say concerning the people of the interior districts but I am not now dealing with this sort. This province (Ilocos Norte) is probably enjoying the highest degree of civilization to be found on the island and the entire country outside of the foot hills and mountains is in a high state of cultivation. This being the case there are as a matter of course, many educated natives here, men and women who have not only been to Manila, but have traveled some, people who have a high conception of morality and a vivid conception of justice together with a desire to advance, to see general conditions bettered, to see the masses elevated and to be instrumental in accomplishing, or assisting in the work of accomplishing, this end. This is an ambition that is certainly commendable and it exists bountifully right here. It must not be forgotten, however, that these people are to a certain extent, following the traditions and customs of their ancestors handed down to succeeding generations for many hundreds of years and these things are not shaken off in a moment, neither are they forgotten in a day. But the fact exists that there is a slow but certain change coming over the people. Customs are being modified to meet modern requirements, and the people themselves are scarcely aware of it. Aside from this they were born with a love for pomp display, ceremonies and matters super-

sticial—a love for that which makes a great show out of small canvases and causes the masses to stand, fixed and in awe. These are not the breech clothed people of the Pampanga valley or the head hunters of Baler. They are not the raw, dog-eating, live frog eating element of this mixed people, but are to a surprising degree, intellectual ambitious, aspiring and just.

I shall try and take you with me through the observance of Thanksgiving day, 1900. I was stationed at that time at San Nicolas, this province, a town of 20,000 people—I was on the verge of saying beings, but that wouldn't do for I saw at once that dogs would come under that head and when I realized that the grand total under that head would probably run up to 1,000,000 I decided to say people—in any town in this country "when the dogs go on parade" there is no room for the people in the streets.)

I chanced to be in command at San Nicolas on the day preceding Thanksgiving, having recently arrived in this province from the dense dirty wilderness of woe in the Pampanga valley, when the President (or Mayor as we say in America) came and asked permission to have the band play at the un-Christian hour of 4 o'clock a. m. on the following day. I did not see any particular reason why the band should not play, if it could, and I said so. All during this day I had heard drums. There seemed to be many of them and all seemed to be working over time at the hands of strong men who seemed to be at odds with the world at large and were taking it out on the dry Caribou hide stretched over the head of a drum that very much resembled a kraut barrel. Many times during the day one or more of these drummers passed my shack and I did not shoot, for I supposed as a matter of course that there was a reason for it and I found out afterwards that I had made a good guess for I asked the President during the afternoon and he told me that it was the custom that whenever there was a day to be celebrated, to put their drummers out on the day previous to patrol the town beating their drums so as to keep the matter concerning the morrow fresh in the minds of the people. Well, they did it with a vengeance; and the only surprising feature to me is that while keeping the matter fresh they did not at the same time breed murder in the heart of some fellow who was inclined to look upon life as a joke. But some how they didn't, which fact permitted them to finish their day's work, then sleep for a few hours so as to be stronger for the duties of the following day which called them from their homes just prior to 4 o'clock and sent them out with their ponderous drums to give the peaceful, slumbering inhabitants a nightmare of the first magnitude. There never was a time when I could lead myself to believe that I was ready to get up, neither was I on this morning. But when one is placed in a position where he is responsible for the holding of a garrison he is apt to be more alert. So it was with me, and it seemed that I had scarcely fallen asleep when San Nicolas was attacked from the south. I tried while bucking on my pistol and working the loading bolt of my carbine, to estimate the probable number of the enemy, but I had come to but one conclusion so far and that was that they were shelling the town with light artillery and I bolted down the ladder and plumb into one of those large drums supported by a native who had come to my house to remind me that "This is the day we celebrate." He was not alone. He had help, plenty of it, and at close range, six of them—and the town hadn't been attacked at all—it was Thanksgiving day. And while I was figuring on whether I ought to kill five or six native drummers or invite them to take a rap at me with their sticks for my lack of familiarity with customs of the town in which I held the honored position of "Commandante," the band approached, playing—and it wasn't a bad attempt either—"The Stars and Stripes Forever," and the celebration was "on." The drummers lost themselves in the darkness in all directions, but the sound of their discordant instruments kept on "reminding" me. I climbed my ladder, dressed and sent a box of cigars down to the members of the band. They were too many for me, however, and I had to send another to have them go around.

Reckon you never saw a Filipino band? No? Well this one had eighty-two "performers". I doubt if there is a native in San Nicolas who can't take a piece of bamboo and give some sort of music out of it. I was invited to go with the band and I did so. I noticed, too, that the native police force 100 strong were there and in line with their Springfield rifles and balos. This body was followed by the vigilantes, men who draw no salary from the city but who are available for defensive purposes whenever the conditions require it. There were 200 of these. The fire department filed by next with their buckets, two joints long—of bamboo. They halted and the President felt about until he found me and I was escorted to a position with the city officials at the head of the column and we started. I never have been able to ride over the path over which I walked that dark morning, though I have tried it often. I do know that we walked a great distance, made many turns and many stops but the band did not stop playing for a moment, neither did the change selections. The leader seemed to be of the opinion that he was doing well enough and he let it go at that. I was told that it was a compliment to me to be out at this hour enlisted in this cause. I afterwards learned that it was the jailer who told me this and I don't know whether he was talking shop or not. I hope he wasn't. Anyhow I had the satisfaction of assisting in the movement that spoiled many a good morning nap, and at daylight my condition of mind was much improved by a good breakfast and at this particular time I noted the fact that all was quiet. The people had undoubtedly been sufficiently "re-minded" and the drummers had ceased their labors in order to give them a rest in which to "strike in" and it did, as was proven when I stepped into the church, a part of the day's program being mass in honor of the day, and the plaza in front of the church contained, I believe, the entire population of the place, outside of those who had gone early and had gotten inside. Far away toward the front of the immense church were the stars and stripes, accompanied by fifty natives in uniform with rifles. The service was in progress and as the priest moved about in front of the gilded altar, lighted by many candles, this guard went through every movement prescribed for in drill regulations except "load" and "fire" and in doing so many a beautiful tableau was set for the eyes of the audience. Thus was the day for the offering of thanks begun.

Upon leaving the church the vast throng assembled on the plaza in front of the "Presidencia," a massive building of crude masonry, erected so long ago that even the oldest inhabitant has no recollection of when it was built. Little, if any, history was handed down to these people and their traditions are limited. The plaza, a beautiful plot of ground about four times the size of an American city block, had been elaborately decorated with palms and ferns and grasses, such verdure would, I fancy, turn the heart of Adam and Eve green with envy. On the whole it revived the picture of paradise that grew up in my mind out of storied old me long before I knew the art of reading. I might call it the picture of paradise that mother gave me while yet she rocked my cradle, the picture that will go with me to the grave. Elaborate arches of bamboo had been constructed through which were woven palms many feet in diameter, and ferns many of which were ten feet in length. Clinging vines and graceful grasses were interwoven with bunting and flags. Every part, every stick of timber of which the stockade was built was covered with shrubbery, while here and there on the plaza beautiful, decidedly inviting, coves were constructed so that the weary might rest and the thirsty might drink, as water pure, was supplied in abundance.

The "Presidencia" was a solid mass of greenery. Few flowers were in evidence as this country produces but few. From the mud-daubed balcony of this antiquated structure the city officials and other citizens delivered addresses to the people in the Ilocos language. I don't know what they said but I frequently heard the words "vea los Americanos," which was invariably followed by storms of applause. Native public speakers here are not selfish, not one bit of it, for when a speaker stood up he at once commenced to talk, he continued at it until he had finished and without the assistance of the ever convenient "Now therefore," "Now in conclusion," etc. He said his little say and sat down just in time to get his head out of the way of the descending fist of the next speaker as he came down with his initiatory gestures. Whether it was loyalty, patriotism or curiosity that held these thousands of people I am not able to say, suffice it to say, however, that the crowd did not scatter. It not only stayed, but grew as the hands of the clock in the big church tower crept toward the mid-day hour. From my "den" well back on the balcony I watched the faces of those nearest me on the ground below, and was able in many instances to anticipate applause by the countenances of the listeners. One cannot do this by listening to the speaker as their language is peculiarly constructed. The inflections and accents are different from ours and at the time you fancy that the speaker is

making a strong point and working up to a climax in his speech that will cause the multitude to roar like a thunder cloud—well at this particular time you are deceiving yourself for the chances are that he is now very pathetic and docile, but wait—wait until he leans over the balcony, lowers his tone, checks his cadence; wait until he drops off from the two hundred and twenty words to the minute to about forty; wait until the breathing of the multitude becomes stilled in the effort of the thousands of listeners to hear the man before them; wait until all is still then—the hands of the speaker dart into the air straight above his head and he says "Viva la—" something, I don't know what, but it is apparently just what the crowd loves, and here is where the storm is unleashed and for a few moments one is apt to wonder why it was that he did not carry life insurance. This speaking concludes with the noon hour and each family return to their respective homes where they feast elaborately.

On these occasions a public dinner (or lunch as our metropolitan populace call it) is served for municipal and military officers. This feast is invariably gotten up to please the American guests who may be present, and it is as nearly as possible cooked and served according to the American custom. The ranking army officer present is the principal guest of honor and occupies a seat with the President at the outside curve of the large horseshoe shaped table at which the guests are seated. Soup, made by Papias, and fish is served, followed by many other styles of cooked fish. Then chicken and roast "vacca" or beef of native cattle appears and goes by you in single file until you have probably counted twenty different styles, many of them gotten up in a manner that not only gladdens and surprises the heart and stomach of a "hungry hiker," but would throw our American connoisseurs into ecstasies. There is bread made of rice flour, sweetened with native sugar, egg plant and other vegetables before your "table de hote." Pickles and salad of many shades and varieties; many glasses and cups are before each guest, and many waiters carrying large bottles of native wines and keep—or try to keep—them all full. Coffee, cigars and cigarettes are served simultaneously, and as glasses are tossed off, as the blue fumes from good tobacco go ceilingward toasts are made in many languages, glasses touch edges and there is a general feeling of being at ease and satisfied. These dinners are never attended by the native women—women here are not public characters. I have never attended one of these dinners or heard of one attended by an American officer at which there was not a toast proposed and drank to "Our Mothers."

Cheering from without takes us from the table and we bring up on the balcony from which we see as large, if not a larger, crowd than was there in the morning. These people have had speeches, they have had their dinner and now they are in the middle of a good time of another sort. Native struggles with native for mastery as in olden times gladiators struggled with beasts in the arena. Now, however, there is no bloodshed. I would call it a game of wrestling match, yet it differs from our style, in that the participants do not throw each other but strive to keep the opponent from touching the ground for a given length of time. Blindfolded boys, many of them in a bamboo pen, whips in hand, are waiting for the termination of the contest in progress. It is finished, and all eyes are turned to the blind boys. They move about the enclosure whipping before them, to all sides of them, afterwards whipping each other, but not severely. From their actions one infers that there are snakes in the enclosure as the boys break away from every slight sound and bound in an opposite direction when touched by a companion. At first one fails to see the "Thinness of this" but that is to be revealed in a second more when a large, well lanked native hog, poor as Job and as mad as a hornet, darts into the pen and for a moment has things all his own way. He does a world of bluffing but doesn't seem anxious to fall to and devour any of the available prey before him. The facts are he is not mad, but scared, and his haughty spirit gives way to that of a martyr as the boys lightly whip him and each other, about the pen. The game is that the boy who succeeds in touching the porker with his whip most frequently is awarded a prize and another is given to him who holds and ties the swine. There are many ridiculous features to this game of blindman's buff, with a bluffing porker as the objective object.

The squeal of the bound and imprisoned porker dies away and your gaze follows that of the crowd, onto the octagonal track constructed around the plaza and upon which many natives mounted upon horses, are doing "stunts." This is a riding ring and men are contesting for a prize. These people have a seat, all their own, and I fancy the peculiar position is the result of conditions such as small ponies, poor saddles, poor roads and

lack of knowledge of the arts of maintaining equilibrium and overcoming friction. They sit the saddle firmly, however, only they lean far back, the legs sticking to the front and out, while the arm not engaged with the rein rests on their lap. Many of these ponies are well gaited and many riders ride gracefully. While these things are before us American soldiers are playing base ball upon the distant plaza. Natives are kicking a ball of closely woven rattan; eight can play, four on a side, the object being to prevent the ball from touching the ground without the use of the hand and it is wonderful the degree of accuracy with which a native will judge a ball that seems to be coming down behind him—but let it come, that's where he wants it—for he leans forward, kicks as though he were endeavoring to kick the back of his own sacred head off—but he don't; he kicks the ball and the game "goes on."

Far up the street to the left six men ride six caribou up to the string tied across the street. I look down and there is another string stretched across, the first in front of our balcony, and men apparently very busy and talking much, are arranging for a race. These six caribou are entered in a race, but of course all are not to run, notwithstanding the fact that they are all on the starting line. The reasons why all are not to run are obvious to all who have seen handled or heard of a caribou. They are apparently a cross between a sea turtle, a catfish and a cow. The hoof is like tortoise shell, their skin like that of a catfish and their form like that of a cow, a large cow of coal black hue that can stay under water—and loves it, too—for many minutes. A caribou's idea of heaven is a hot sun, nothing to do, plenty of shade and muddy water a mile deep in which to float. It takes longer for a caribou to make up his mind as to just what to do than it took the state of Kansas to tire of the Populist party, and after having arrived at a conclusion it takes him longer to do it than it takes the Democrats to elect a President. These are some of the reasons why all of the caribou you see up yonder are not going to run. But the natives, who are onto every curve of the caribou's ponderous physique, have reckoned well and have a sufficient number out of which to secure two runners—no, that is the wrong word—I mean creepers, for when one witnesses a caribou race one is impressed with the idea that the idea the animal himself has of it is, that the first one over the finishing line is to be shot at sundown, for they come ambling along, half rolling rocking, creeping along, manifesting a willingness very few steps to withdraw from the race altogether. But they can't, for they are mastered by man, at least they think they are for the time being, and it takes too long to change their mind about it once they have started, so they finish, weak and apparently groggy, to be rewarded by having all the muddy water they want in which to wallow until time to go to the rice field tomorrow.

While stationed at another post I owned a chicken, a nice plump bird—someone was so indelicate as to suggest that the bird, if it could have talked, could tell a few things about the operations by which it became my property—but why gossip about an innocent chicken. It was mine and on the 4th of July I was so indiscreet as to wager it against another bird on the result of a caribou race—that is, it was to have been a race but the brute that cost me my fowl couldn't see it

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Over-Work Weakens Your Kidneys.

Unhealthy Kidneys Make Impure Blood.

All the blood in your body passes through your kidneys once every three minutes.

The kidneys are your blood purifiers, they filter out the waste or impurities in the blood. If they are sick or out of order, they fail to do their work. Pains, aches and rheumatism come from excess of uric acid in the blood, due to neglected kidney trouble.

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in that light and while the other waddled along to the finish the rider of the obstinate animal that cost me a good dinner, was working overtime with a bamboo slat on the hide of the racer that wouldn't run. Thus it was that I learned much about this particular class of races.

An archery contest was in progress at the far side of the plaza. Some natives, professional cocoanut gatherers, were seen on the left edge of the crowd trying to climb a greased papia pole. This is a trick put upon them by the American soldiers and it breaks the heart of a professional cocoanut gatherer that the thing exists that baffles his skill to ascend. I have heard it said that these fellows can climb any sort of greased lightning that would dare come close enough to earth to permit them to take hold of it and certainly they are remarkable climbers. But in this pole exercise they have learned that they had been "reckoning without their host." An American soldier with a bucketful of oil and a barked papia pole can furnish an obstacle for climbers, compared with which a streak of greased lightning is a spiral stair, carpeted and sandpapered.

Many women and girls with large baskets on their heads, filled with bananas, oranges, tobacco and cocoanuts were passing through the crowd. Small nude and semi-nude boys pitched copper pieces of money at a pebble. They were gambling, but after having watched them many times I am unable to figure out who, if anybody, wins, or what particular feature decides the thing. Old men and young men stroll the plaza and neighboring streets with a game sack in their arms petting and admiring it. But there are no fights allowed in this province, owing to an order issued by General Young in October. Nevertheless these people cling to the bunch of fighting feathers, and it is sport indeed for both old and young to get together, each with his brag bird, somewhere in the shade where they talk it over from the time the sun rises until it sets, with an occasional relief in the monotony of two of them taking their chickens by the tails and "sicking" them onto each other. They sometimes let them pick each other's eyes out just as a diversion, when they are taken in arms again as an American mother would hold her first born. Once in this haven of absolute protection both birds crow as though each had vanquished the other in a bona fide fight. A wit among the soldiers once remarked that a Filipino would catch cold if he failed to wear a rooster on his arm.

The sun is sinking now and many small ponies are flying around a race track which bounds the plaza and resembles the "make-believe circus ring" that I have helped build many times before I had arrived at the dignified age when I could wear a pair of suspenders and own a pocket in my trousers for money that I did not own. Their races usually concluded the program, that is the daylight part of it, but there is more to come, for always on the evenings following a holiday or "fiesta" there is a ball given which is attended by municipal officers, army officers and their friends. The men here do not trouble themselves to see that the ladies have a way and means of getting there, but they get there just the same. The crowd begins to assemble about 7:30 p. m. A bunch of five or six men enters the room which is usually the largest room in the "Presidencia" with a polished mahogany floor. Directly a half a dozen bare-ankled, sandal-footed girls appear and drop into the most convenient seats. The orchestra, which in this instance, consisted of about twenty pieces, the greater number being reed instruments, take seats at the end of the hall. No one is introduced to any one, that is a waste of time in this country. The orchestra plays a waltz and you single out a girl that looks

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The Engineer

Leaning from the cab window does more with his ears than his eyes. The "rumble and grumble and roar" of his engine are to him articulate speech, and a false note in that jumble of sounds

would catch his ear as quickly as a discord would strike the ear of the leader of an orchestra.

He thinks more of his engine than himself. That is why he neglects to notice symptoms which are full of warning. The foul tongue, the bitter taste, sour risings, undue fullness after eating are but symptoms of dyspepsia or some form of disease involving the stomach and organs of digestion and nutrition. In time the heart, liver, lungs, or other organs are involved and the engineer has to lay off.

Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery cures diseases of the stomach and organs of digestion and nutrition. It purifies the blood and builds up the body with sound healthy flesh.

"I used ten bottles of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery and several vials of his 'Pleasant Pellets' a year ago this spring, and have had no trouble with indigestion since," writes Mr. W. T. Thompson, of Townsend, Broadwater Co., Montana. "Words fail to tell how thankful I am for the relief, as I had suffered so much and it seemed that the doctors could do me no good. I got down in weight to 125 pounds, and was not able to work at all. Now I weigh 160 and can do a day's work on the farm. I have recommended your medicine to several, and shall always have a good word to say for Dr. Pierce and his medicine."

Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets cure constipation.