

Harry Man's Recollections of Life in Manila during the Spanish American War

The following description of life in Manila during the Spanish American War was written by Harry Man and published in the Chartered Bank's company magazine; 'Curry and Rice' Volume 1, No. 5/6 July – September 1931. Harry Man was born on 25 April 1873 in Rangoon, Burma, the second son of Edward Garnet and Catherine (Matthews) Man. He married Nora Fanny Mathilda Loeck on 12 July 1909 in Hamburg, Germany. They had four children: Eleanor, Frank, Morgan, and Henry. Harry died on 19 January 1936 at No. 31 Hyde Park Gate, London and his ashes were interred at St Margaret's Church, Halstead, Kent. The following description of Harry was written by a member of the bank on the occasion of Harry's retirement and published in "Curry and Rice".



HARRY MORGAN STOWE MAN, a short man with an extensive Christian name retired from the Bank's service on 30th June [1934] when he held the position of our Agent in Hamburg. He was born in Rangoon nigh 60 years ago and was educated at Rugby. Before joining Head Office he paid a visit to Rangoon where his father, to keep him out of mischief, found him a position as a "Chotah Wallah" in Messrs. Gillanders, Arbuthnot & Co., the firm of which our esteemed Chairman is now a senior partner. He joined Head Office on 1st November, 1895, after wandering half round the world in a windjammer. His first appointment was to Manila early in 1898 where he walked right into the Spanish-American War, his graphic experiences of which he described in an article in "Curry & Rice," Vol. 1., No. 5, July 1931. His further Eastern service was chiefly in China, Cochin¹ and otherwise and he closed his Oriental career in 1922 when he was Agent in Tientsin. In 1923 he was sent to Hamburg on special duty and appointed Agent there in 1924 just in good time for the inflation period, when the Mark reached the giddy height of billions to the £ sterling and then vanished in smoke. Mr. Man was also stationed in Hamburg for some five years prior to the War and there met the charming lady who became his wife. His cheerfulness of character, courtesy of manner, rare gifts as a host and his

unbounded hospitality, have surrounded him with numerous friends the world over. He has the pen of a ready writer as his contributions to this Magazine have proved, and for some years he compiled the financial articles for the British Chamber of Commerce Journal in Hamburg. He is an accomplished linguist and equally at home in French and German. He excelled as a tennis player and was taking part in tournaments and winning trophies at an age when most of us would have long since abandoned our rackets to their presses in perpetuity. Mr. Man has now taken up his residence in this country [England] and his many friends at home and abroad, as well as those members of our service who had the privilege of working with him, will unite in their expressions of good wishes for many happy years of well merited retirement. *Prosit ! Lebe wohl !*

¹ He was also stationed at Saigon and Yokohama.

CURRY AND RICE.
LIFE IN MANILA DURING THE SPANISH-
AMERICAN WAR 1898-1899.

By Harry Stoe Man

I joined the Bank on 1st November, 1895, received my orders for the East the middle of December, 1897 and left London on the 31st of that month on the old P & O "CHINA"¹ for Hongkong en route for Manila.

I arrived in Manila the middle of February, 1898, and was met by the Accountant, Mr. Archie Stewart. The Staff in Manila in those days consisted of Mr. R. W. Brown, Manager, Archie Stewart, Accountant, with H.A.S. Thompson, senior Sub-Accountant and myself, the junior. The Chartered Bank occupied the ground floor of a one-storied building at the corner of a square, at the end of the "Escolta," the leading street of Manila, and was also quite close to the River Pasie which ran through Manila out into the Bay. It was a fine bright airy Office, the various rooms and departments being divided off by wooden screens. Above the Office was the "Tiffin Club", a most pernicious place and the ruin later on of several of its members.

The Philippines at that time were still under Spanish rule and life in Manila was easy going and quiet. The Spaniards were charming, courteous people who seemed to prefer to leave everything till "to-morrow" which was not absolutely necessary should be done to-day; their motto evidently being "manana."

I was living in "Conception" a short drive from the Office, with Mr. R. Toovey, head of W. F. Stevenson & Co. To get to the bungalow, one had to walk through a godown full of hemp and copra the smell from which was so overpowering that it quite spoilt one's appetite for meals. The bungalow was surrounded by godowns, and no fresh air ever came near us. The heat was therefore overpowering, and one was also tormented by insects, large and small,— in fact, I have never been in any country since, where the creeping life was so numerous and so aggressive.

Nothing disturbed the peace and quietness of the place until the beginning of April when relations between the United States of America and Spain became so strained over the sinking of the U.S. battleship "MAINE" in the harbour of Havana that war was finally declared, and on 20th of that month the U.S. Naval Squadron in China, which was at anchor in Hongkong, moved out to Mirs Bay near Kowloon to await further orders.

The Spanish Fleet consisted of two or three small protected cruisers of about 2,000 tons each, besides a few antiquated gunboats of no fighting value. The Government in Manila had, however, given out that the island of Corregidor at the mouth of the Bay of Manila was so well fortified, with up to-date armament, that no two war fleets of the world would be able to pass through into the Bay, as there was only one entrance which was narrow and dangerous to navigate. The Spanish Fleet was anchored in the naval base at Cavite, just inside the bay opposite the island of Corregidor.

The populace were therefore undisturbed and went about their work as usual.

At 5.15 on the morning of 1st May, 1898, the whole town were startled by the roar of heavy gun firing, and I can still remember Mr. Toovey rushing into my bedroom shouting "Get up ! The American Fleet is in the Bay and is bombarding the Spanish Fleet." We at once hitched up our Carromatta (small buggy) and drove down to the English Club on the Sea front. It was just getting daylight, but the whole town was in a commotion, the native population decamping to the hills with all their goods and chattels, the man taking his prize fighting cock under his arm and the wife following with the children and the household utensils. From the Club one had a fine view over the bay right to Corregidor about four miles across the water. Through the haze we could see the black hulls of the American ships, blazing away at the poor little Spanish Fleet anchored at Cavite. The Club soon filled up with other Britishers, and it was an extraordinary sight to see the members sitting in long chairs, with a whisky and soda by their side, watching the fight through glasses. About midday, the onesided fight was over, as all the Spanish ships had now been sunk. It was rather a pathetic sight to see the blazing hulls, with huge columns of smoke rising from them, suddenly turn turtle and disappear. The American Fleet consisted of heavier ships, about three times the size and more powerfully armed, and was commanded by Admiral Dewey, his flagship being the "OLYMPIA." (below)



We were wondering whether the Americans would come across the bay and blow Manila to pieces, but we learnt from the British Consul that Dewey's instructions were only to destroy the Spanish Fleet and then await instructions. We were also told that the English Club was marked on the American plan of Manila as British and would not have been touched.

The poor Spaniards in the town were deeply disappointed that the fortifications of Corregidor had not been strong enough to keep out the American Fleet. But, as a matter

of fact they were in a hopeless condition, and the money voted by the Madrid Government to be spent on strengthening the island had gone into the pockets of the officials.

The Americans then took possession of Cavite, the Spanish naval port at the mouth of the bay, and remained there waiting, instructions. The next day, we watched boats from the fleet grappling for the cable to Hongkong, and very soon after the Agent of the Eastern Telegraph Co. informed us that the cable had been cut and Manila was cut off from communication with the outside world. The Blockade of Manila then commenced in earnest, and very soon we were without ice, flour and meat. Our meals seemed to consist of chicken, a weird kind of substitute for bread, and beer of which fortunately there was a large supply in Manila. Once a week we had work to do in the Bank when the weekly steamer from Hongkong arrived with mails. The rest of the time was spent drinking at the Tiffin Club during the day and at the Manila Club in the evening. I seemed to spend a good part of the next few months (until August) in attending burials at the cemetery of one's friends who had died either from typhoid or abscess on the liver the result of too many visits to the Tiffin Club.

During the first week, the British, French, German and Japanese Governments sent cruisers over to Manila to protect the interests of their various nationals, and in consequence Manila Bay became quite animated with the various men-of-war coming and going. The American Fleet remained, however, at Cavite consolidating their position. The British Government sent the cruiser "Immortalité," commanded by Captain Edward Chichester, a fine old sea dog and a good friend of Admiral Dewey's. To help pass away the time Admiral Dewey gave leave for a cricket team from the "Immortalité" to come ashore and play the British Club at cricket. It was very difficult to find a piece of ground suitable for a match, but we managed to pitch stumps between two graves in a disused old cemetery. The match turned out to be not so much a test as to which side could record the greatest number of runs, but which side had the fewest casualties. I remember well laying out the best batsman from the cruiser. I bowled him a terrible wide which broke in at right angles from the wicket, hit him on the knee and displaced his knee cap. He was laid up for weeks after. The match was finally abandoned, as most of the players got hurt and we never played cricket again.



HMS Immortalite

At the end of May, I received a letter from the Bank in Hongkong saying a telegram had been received from Head Office allowing me to act as special correspondent of the "Daily Mail" for the time the blockade lasted. At the same time, the newspaper's representative in Hongkong wrote me asking me to send him a letter once a week giving any interesting news and information about life in Manila which he could forward to London. I wrote about six letters in all and after the occupation of Manila, the "Daily Mail" sent their own representative over and I was presented with a cheque for £50 for my services.

As the Spanish Government had refused to surrender Manila to the Americans, the latter decided to take it by storm, and for this reason a number of transports arrived from the States conveying American troops. At the beginning of July, an ultimatum was sent to the Spanish Governor saying that if the city was not surrendered by 1st August the American forces would take it by storm. This caused consternation amongst the inhabitants, and we neutrals wondered how we should be affected. It subsequently became known that an arrangement had been come to between the opposing forces that, in order to save Spanish honour, some blood must be spilt. It was therefore arranged that a company of Spanish soldiers would fire on the Americans from the "Polverine," the old powder magazine, just outside the city on the shores of the bay. As soon as that had been blown to pieces, the Spanish flag on the citadel of Manila would be hauled down, and the American troops, which would march round from Cavite, would enter the city without any further opposition.



The Wharf at Cavite

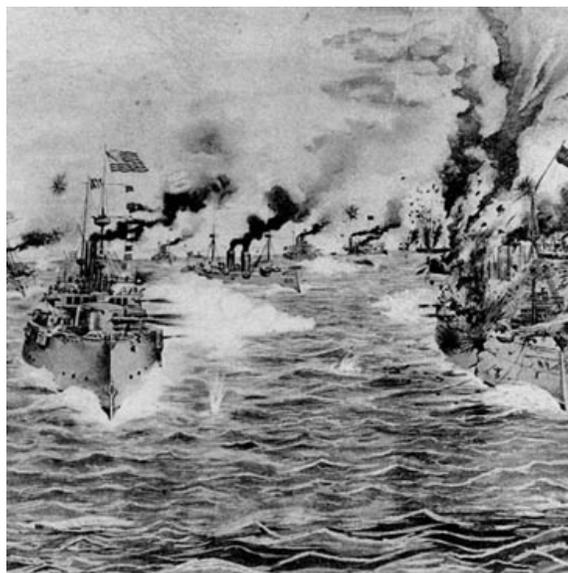
As, however, it was unknown what attitude the native population would take up during the bombardment or whether they would start pillaging and sacking; for precaution's sake, Mr. Brown, our Manager, decided to move the contents of the Bank's treasury on to

the British cruiser Captain Chichester kindly agreed to keep our dollars until it was considered safe to open the Bank again. Being the junior, I had the job of transporting the boxes of silver to the cruiser. I left the river at 7 a.m. with two lighters heavily laden with boxes of dollars, each box containing 5,000 dollars. The lighters were towed by a tug, but as it was the middle of July and the Typhoon season, it was no joke steaming across the bay over to Cavite with a high sea running. The worst part was getting the boxes on board the cruiser; the lighter was brought alongside, a plank connected it with the ship along which the boxes were slid into the ship. The lighters were jumping up and down from the swell, and it is a wonder to me now that we never lost one of these heavy cases overboard. Anyhow, the transshipment lasted the whole day, and I got back very wet and tired at 10 p.m. I was given a good meal on board fortunately, as, when the shipment was concluded, I was taken into the wardroom and given the finest dinner I had had since I left Hongkong in February. It was grand to get a really cold whisky soda again.

The British Consul gave notice that, for safety's sake, it would be advisable for all British subjects to leave the city before the bombardment, and for this purpose several small coasting steamers were chartered, on board of which we all should go, and the steamers would then lie off Cavite until all trouble and danger was over.

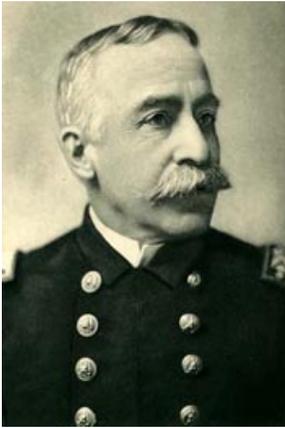
Mr. Brown, our Manager, decided to remain on shore as it was his duty to stick to the Bank, but he sent the rest of the staff (three of us) on board the mall steamer "Salvador" which was full of British subjects, men and women, and we steamed across to Cavite on 20th July, 1898, and waited there for further developments. The other foreign Consuls also hired small steamers for their nationals, but they did not join the British in Cavite, but steamed quite to the other side of the bay under the protection of their respective men-of-war.

H. M. S. M. (To be continued.)

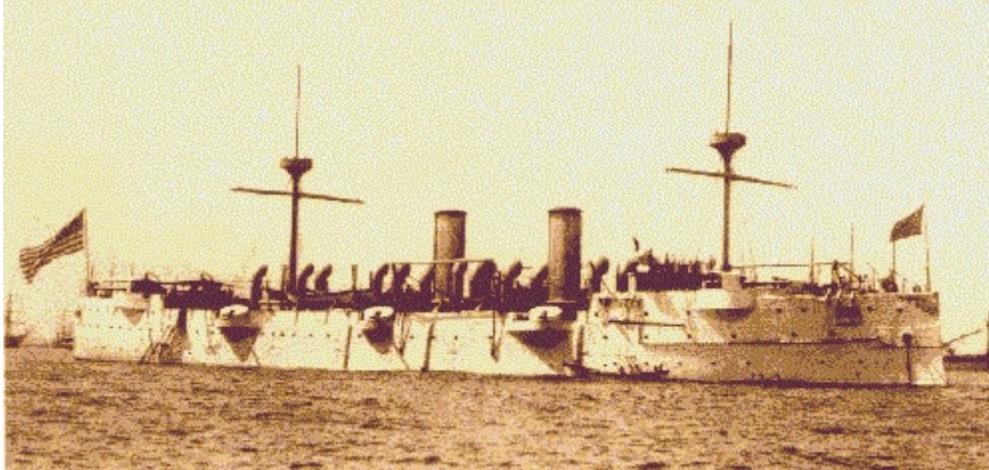


PART II.

My first article in the July number of "Curry and Rice" concluded with the advice that the Staff of the Bank— with the exception of Mr. R. W. Brown, the Manager—had been sent on board the small chartered steamer "Salvador" to be out of the way during the bombardment of Manila.



We steamed over to Cavite, along with three other steamers, and anchored in the bay close to the American men of war. We were allowed to go ashore during the day, and we spent our time feeding and watching the Spanish naval prisoners who were confined behind high barbed wire nettings in camps behind Cavite town. They were nearly all in rags and were not having a very pleasant time of it. During the summer months, large numbers of American troops had been brought over from the States and were encamped along the bay in the direction of Manila. Now and then we were invited on board the American transports for lunch, which was greatly appreciated, and we did full justice to the fresh food and cold drinks. The American commanders in chief, General Wesley Merritt, of the land forces, and Admiral Dewey (left), of the naval forces, gave the Spanish Government notice that, if the City of Manila was not handed over by 1st August, they would bombard the port on that day. As nothing had happened up to the evening of 31st July, great preparations were made for the bombardment next day. At 6 a.m. on 1st August, I was up the mast of the "Salvador" and through my glasses watched the American fleet steam out of Cavite Bay in single line ahead with their battle colours flying from each mast head. It was a fine sight to watch the fleet steam slowly across the bay to take up their positions in front of the City of Manila, the flagship "Olympia" leading, followed by the "Oregon," "Baltimore," "Concord" and two other small cruisers, the names of which I have forgotten. The "Olympia" anchored off the "Polverine" (Powder Magazine), and the other cruisers took up positions in front of the City of Manila, as far as the entrance to the river Pasiq where the Fuerza de Santiago was. I have omitted to mention that, on 31st July, the Spanish Governor General left Manila for Hongkong in the German Cruiser "Barbarossa," leaving his Second in Command to haul down the Spanish flag and hand over the City to the Americans.



USS Baltimore

At 10 a.m. the bombardment started, that is to say the “Olympia” fired at the “Polverine” which had first fired at her, as prearranged. The other ships never fired a shot, as there were no decent guns on the forts to fire at them. The “Polverine” was blown to pieces, the company of Spanish soldiers, who were inside, being all killed. The American troops, to the number of about 20,000, who had marched round from Cavite and taken up their positions just aside the city, now marched on, first hoisted the Stars and Stripes on the ruins of the “Polverine” and then proceeded into the city without opposition. The Spanish flag was then hauled down from the main batteries and the Stars and Stripes run up. The fleet in the bay fired a Salvo, and Manila was now an American possession.

We English in Cavite Bay cheered lustily, but many Spanish ladies on board our ships, wives of Britishers, fainted at the sight of the Spanish flag being hauled down.

We remained out in the Bay for another week before we were allowed ashore, as the Spanish regiments had to be disarmed and an American police force inaugurated. We noticed a big change in the city. Instead of the quiet, peaceful happy go lucky rule of the Spaniards, one had now the hustle and bustle of American life, and the poor Filipinos felt quite at sea to commence with.

I had to go back to H.M.S. “Immortalité” to bring our dollars to the Bank, but fortunately the typhoon season was over and the job was not such a dangerous one as taking them to the ship. It was very interesting watching the change in the city and seeing the Spanish rule being gradually changed over to the American. We used to watch the Spanish regiments from the districts march into the Citadel to be disarmed, the soldiers throwing down their rifles on to a large heap, and the officers would kiss their swords before flinging them on to the heap with the others,— rather a sad sight.



The Battle of Manila Bay in full swing

The cable was relaid and communication to a greater extent was allowed with the outside world, but the city for months after was under martial law. Police duties were carried out by an American regiment appointed for that purpose, and the men on patrol were fully armed with rifle and revolver. I remember once an old buffalo (carcbou) taking fright and stampeding along the "Escolta" with his owner, a Filipino, tearing after him trying to stop him. The police soldier on duty, instead of trying to stop him, simply put up his rifle and shot the poor animal dead, much to the grief of the owner whose whole possessions in the world were invested in that buffalo.

On my return to Manila after the capitulation I moved from 'Conception " and went to live with J. B Reid, of Ker & Co out in St. Anna, a village about three miles from Manila. It was much cooler and pleasanter there than in Manila itself, but it was rather unpleasant at night going home after dark. One was challenged so often by the police. At Paco bridge half way out, were the American outposts, and one had to have one's head out of the window of the "Caromatta" ready to answer the challenge of the American Sentry who would shout: "Halt, halt, halt" in rapid succession, and if you didn't answer him by the third shout, your driver would be shot dead. Fortunately, that never happened to me, but several poor native drivers, who were not quick enough to answer paid the penalty. The Sentry would then examine your buggy and ask for your pass, and if all was well, would let you go. At the other end of the bridge was the native Sentry as the American forces, up to the outbreak of the trouble with the Filipinos, stopped at Paco bridge. The native Sentry would then shout out, but we used to reply "Inglese" (English), and we were passed through without hindrance. The natives could easily distinguish between an American and an Englishman, and they gave us no trouble all the time we lived out in St. Anna. They much preferred the British to the Americans.

The American soldiers were paid in green backs, which, however were of no use to them in the native bazaars, as the Chinamen preferred the local silver dollar. The Chartered Bank was then appointed the Fiscal Agent for the American Government, and a rate was fixed monthly for the exchange of American notes into silver dollars. Then came a busy time for us in the office, especially at the end and beginning of the month the office would be flooded with soldiers coming in to change their money. The American soldiers were fine strapping fellows, armed to the teeth with rifle, bayonet and revolver and about 150/200 rounds of ammunition in belts round their waists. There they stood at the counter, with their toothbrush stuck behind their ears, their rifles on the counter fully loaded, generally pointed at you behind the counter.



The funny questions they would ask, too; where could they buy boots, shoes, shirts, soap, etc., in fact, we were bombarded with such like questions in the office. I remember once three fellows standing at the counter with the muzzles of their rifles pointing at me; they came to the general counter, not the cash department; so in a languid way I went up to them, as I spent most of the day answering questions and had no time for ordinary work. I said: "Well, what can I do for you, please?" To my astonishment, the man in the middle said: "Excuse me, Sir, but can you tell me the name of the Prince of Wales' daughter who married the Duke of Fife?" (King Edward VII. was then Prince of Wales). "My pal here and I have got a bet of GS5. on it. He says it was Princess Maud, and I said it was Princess Louise (left), and seeing an English name on this building, we have come in to ask." I said to him: "This is a Bank, not an 'Enquire Within' Office, but I think you have won your bet," and they went out quite happily. On another occasion, a soldier rushed in to Mr. Brown's, the Manager's, room, planked down a silver dollar on his desk, right in front of his nose, and said: "Look at what your god darned Bank has given me!" It was a bad coin which probably he had got in exchange for something he had bought in the bazaar. Without saying a word. Brown, who was a big hefty chap, got up, took him by the scruff of the neck and the seat of the trousers and literally threw him out of the office. The man never came back, even to ask for his dollar.

In addition to being in the office all day, one had to take one's turn on night duty with the Volunteer Fire Brigade. The Spanish Fire Brigade was a very primitive one, consisting of a hand pump and a few buckets. As the foreign import firms had large sums invested in the Bazaar, it was to their benefit to have an up-to-date fire brigade of their own. A "Merryweather" steam fire engine was imported and a proper Fire Brigade instituted. All the Staffs of the foreign Import firms were members, also the Staffs of the two British Banks, Chartered Bank and Hongkong Bank. It was interesting work, except when one had night duty, which was rather strenuous, on duty all night at the fire station, then at 6 a.m. rushing home, bath and a change, and then back to office at 8.30. Fortunately, during my time there were no serious fires, but we were a very efficient brigade.

At the beginning of 1899, the relations between the Americans and Filipinos became very strained. The latter thought that the Yankees had come to the Philippines to turn out the Spaniards and then leave the islands to the Filipinos to govern alone. This was never the idea and bitter feeling between the two countries soon arose which finally ended in hostilities. I remember well the outbreak of hostilities. It was a Saturday night, about 10.30 p.m. Reid and I were reading on the verandah of our small house in St Anna when we heard a terrible outburst of firing right round the American lines. The Americans were making an advance and were driving back the Filipinos. The ground floor of our bungalow, which was built on stone piles with living quarters on the first floor, was soon crowded with refugees. Women and children came pouring in to seek protection from the Americans. Our servants had all bolted and there we were with about 200 people on the floor below us. Bullets began to come through our verandah. Our lamp was smashed to pieces and the ceiling torn away. As it was becoming too dangerous to remain longer, we slipped over the wall and went next door for refuge to Johnny Macleod's house, a large building, the ground floor of stone piles, the upper part of wood. The house had one great advantage, it lay parallel to the road and did not lie in the line of fire so much. It was more protected than our little bungalow. Macleod's house was also packed full of native refugees; in addition, he had most of the white residents of the district taking shelter with him. We all remained on the ground floor, looking through the barred windows and watching the native soldiers retire as they were being driven back by the advancing Americans. At 6 a.m. we saw the first advance guard of the white troops coming up road, then a small company of men with the Colonel commanding the regiment on his pony and the rest of the regiment behind him. In Macleod's garden was a flagstaff with the Red Ensign at the top, but as it was a very hot sultry morning with no wind, the flag was not moving. Presently we heard a shout from the Colonel: "What flag is that!" We yelled back: "British!" Then came an answer back: - "For God's sake, open your gates and give us water!" In no time we had large, empty kerosene tins full of water, which we took to the gates and doled it out to the parched and perspiring troops who gathered round us in numbers all asking for a drink. The Colonel (Colonel King of the Oregon Regiment) came into the house and had a whisky soda. He told us that the Americans had had some serious opposition, but the Natives had been driven back with heavy loss. The American advance guard had now got beyond our village which was in their possession, and it would be safe for us to go into Manila, as long as we were back in our homes before dark.

It was no joke, walking nearly four miles to town in the heat of the day, on an empty stomach, seeing the dead and dying all around. Just outside our bungalow was a poor native, with the top of his skull blown away, breathing his last. We put a plantain leaf over his head to keep the flies away, and when we got back in the evening, he was still lying there, but dead. All down the road to Manila were dead natives lying under their nipa (matshed) shacks where they had been caught firing on the Americans. Most of the shacks had been burnt, and you saw the half roasted natives underneath. We got to the Club all right, feeling very faint, and were able to get a meal which revived us. The natives in our village, however, soon returned, lured by the high prices paid by the American troops for foodstuffs, and life soon resumed its normal course. Shortly after

the Filipinos gave in and peace was restored. It was a very one sided show after all. The Americans with their up-to-date weapons of war fighting against half clad Filipinos with antiquated arms and no big guns. A good many were only armed with the "bolo," a nasty long knife.

In April, 1899, the strain and privations of the past twelve months began to tell on me, and my eyes, being my weak spot, became affected. I went to see the Bank's Doctor (Dr. Donelan), but as he hadn't been out of the islands for over 20 years and knew nothing about eyes, he advised me to go to Hongkong to see a Doctor there. A relief was therefore obtained, and I left for Hongkong and saw Dr. Jordan, who was the best eye doctor there. He advised me to go home to see a specialist. So Mr. Whitehead our Manager there in those days, arranged that I should go home on sick leave, and I left Hongkong in June per the old P. & O. SS. "Britannia."² Mr. Keenan kindly came to see me off. The rest and change on board soon set me up, and on arrival in London the specialist announced that there was nothing wrong with the eyes, but that I only wanted a rest. I was therefore given six months' holiday, worked for another six months in Head Office, and finally returned to the East in July, 1900.

H. M. S. M.
(Concluded.)

¹ CHINA: 7,912 gross ton; 500 x 54; Harland & Wolff, Belfast, 1896; Australia service; 480 passengers; sisters: ARABIA, EGYPT, INDIA, and PERSIA; broken up Osaka 1928.

² The BRITANNIA was a 6,525 gross ton ship, length 465.7ft x beam 52ft, two funnels, four masts (rigged for sail), single screw and a speed of 15 knots. There was accommodation for 250-1st and 160-2nd class passengers. This ship was one of five sister ships known as the "Jubilee" class and at the time of building were the company's largest, fastest, longest and most expensive ships, a distinction which they held for only four years. Built by Caird & Co, Greenock for P&O Steam Nav. Co, she ran aground on her delivery voyage in the River Thames on 18th Oct. 1887. Undamaged, she started her maiden voyage on 5th Nov. 1887 when she left London for Colombo, Melbourne and Sydney. In 1894 she ran aground in the Suez Canal but was refloated. Between 1894-95 she was chartered for six months to the British Government for trooping, and in 1907 carried Prince Fushimi of Japan on a state visit to Britain. She was broken up at Genoa in 1909.