

Pioneers Club in Manila Uniquely Helpful

The invincible volunteer and regular soldier "of the days of '98" has made his last stand in Manila in a curious place called the Pioneers Club in a backstreet of the downtown district. In the absence of old soldiers' homes in the islands, this is the best he can do. One or two "Dewey" men, who were with the fleet in the Battle of Manila Bay, and hundreds of volunteers who helped with the occupation of Manila August 13, 1898, then garrisoned the city and took part in the drive against Aguinaldo under Lawton, Wheaton and MacArthur, are members.

"We are only half-Americans now," they say. "Because we are in the Philippines we only get half-pensions."

Most of the members, after the Philippines were pacified, did all their remarkable native ability allowed them to do in the tasks of the civil government that followed the military régime. They were linemen, they were small post-masters in dangerous points in the provinces, they were foremen in the building of roads and bridges. Not for a full enlistment only, but perhaps two, many going from the volunteer state regiments that came to the islands first, to the regular ones organized later, did the United States have their services as soldiers; and after that their services in civil life. If they remained in the Philippines, it was because they had established families here that honor bound them to look after.

After 30 years they found themselves, one by one, out of employment. What they were able to do, they had taught Filipinos to do; in small their lugubriously tragic lives illustrate Spengler's doctrine of the "decline of the west."

It was in May a year ago that they organized their club. It costs a dollar to join, 25 cents a month for dues. Meals cost a quarter too, if you have it, and if not, no matter—the invitation is, "Sit in and help yourself." On the club walls, a room about 40 ft. by 50 ft., are lithographs of Washington, front wall, under the flag and the bunting, Lincoln and Roosevelt, side walls, McKinley, back wall; and another chromo shows all the presidents down to McKinley, he effulgent in the center.

There is a Filipino boy to keep the place clean. There are partially filled shelves of worn books, others of old magazines.

P. E. McGuire, of Robinson, Ill., was a leading organizer of the Pioneers Club. He has a little clothing factory, McGuire's Shirt Factory. He came to the Philippines in 1899 with the 6th U. S. Artillery. For disability incurred in service he has been drawing a pension of \$60 a month.

But who is this, clumping up the stairs with two rough canes? Is it not a man you knew a few years back as rather a well-to-do contractor and builder? It is, sure enough! But how changed! They help him to a chair, facing a broad open window. He sits still, statuesque . . . "the broken soldier, kindly bade to stay." He looks straight out of the window. There is nothing to see, save with the mind's eye.

But here is a man of "First Expedition" fame, one of the men who arrived at Cavite June 30, 1898, who as a civilian first tried pearling, then lost all he made in pearls and shell in an effort to modernize the Philippine fish industry. Not one of these oldtimers could ever be anywhere in the islands without taking hold of something to better it.

There is little but cheer at the Pioneers Club. E. B. Bartholomai, one of the organizers, has volunteered as the cook. Of French ancestry, he is a natural cook. He came to the islands in March, 1899, with the 22nd U. S. Infantry. After the campaigns he traveled the islands as an optician and did well enough until his health failed and he couldn't get around any more. He has sprue aggravated by diabetes, or perhaps diabetes aggravated by sprue. He can't, of course, eat the meals he cooks; he keeps up on milk and cooks for the others—about the most wholesome and appetizing meals in town.

No center of patriotism under the flag glows brighter than this. Age has made monks of these men, necessity has made them a monkish community sharing what they have in common. Their resourcefulness amuses, the base of a chandelier converted to the purposes of a cuspidor.

The club has an old-fashioned "pitch" game, in which the winner takes a nickel from all the losers—2½ cents more for every "set". A game usually involves 7 or 8 men and consumes at least 2 hours. The chief subtlety in playing "pitch" is to throw the "game" point to the bidder, if he is already set, away from him if he still has a chance to make his bid, and generally, to the low man; and in every "pitch" game, in this game it is old Parker, there is some cunning fellow who usually preempts the "game" point and therefore wins most of the time.

Parker's twinkling eye is one thing you remember about the Pioneers Club. He scans the newspapers carefully and arbitrates disputes: when Cleveland's second term ended, how much Fitzsimmons weighed when he beat Jim Corbett at Reno, everything rather recent and important. Parker even knows that Cleveland was a gold-standard man. "And I am, too," he says. "And we'll get the worst of it at London, too—we never lost a war nor won a conference." You watch and see.

"We!" And such a sentiment, in such a place! "We never lost a war." The man they seated toward the window hears, shifts his eyes but can't, being paralytic, turn his head; his eyes go back to the vacant window. Oldtimer A. W. "Deacon" Praultch is the Pioneer's president. The club is careful of its treasury and husbands the common hoard to the best advantage. Praultch would of course see to that, and so would the others.

Enter the Agrobiologist

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Here then is a problem looming in the all too near future which has received little or no attention from the Government or the public—or from the farmers themselves. The result of an enormous governmental effort to put our industrial workers back into jobs has been thus far but fractionally encouraging. Our industrial producing capacity still easily outdistances our power to consume. There is serious doubt as to whether a 35-hour week with a \$14 or \$15 minimum wage, will prove to be anything more than a preliminary step in restoring 12 million or 15 million industrial workers to adequate consuming capacity.

Many things may happen in twenty years. But one of the things that seems least likely to happen is that we shall develop appetites which will demand anything like the quantity of foodstuffs that our agricultural establishment will be able to turn out before that time. And it is perfectly obvious that the transfer of 10 million men—or even half that number—from the farms to the cities may produce an unemployment crisis far more serious than anything we have yet contemplated.

The progressive shortening of the week in industrial pursuits would naturally lead to an insistence upon shorter hours on the farms. But when it is realized that one-seventh of the effort now going into agriculture could produce all we are producing now, and further, that we are already producing far more than we can use, it is clear that a very substantial percentage of our farm population must seek other pursuits unless an unwontedly generous public is willing to support them indefinitely in their chosen "way of life."

The fact that we can supply our agricultural needs with a fraction of our present effort should not cause apprehension any more than the fact that our industrial capacity is far greater than our present ability to consume its products. Both developments indicate a rapidly increasing control by civilization over the natural environment. But these developments are a challenge to our ability so to organize our economy that we may secure their advantages. We are not meeting that challenge by sitting around and waiting for a drought or some other destructive event to bring cheer to the farmers not affected, or to inject new life into the commodity markets. Nor does it seem altogether sensible to attempt to achieve the same ends by deliberately destroying a substantial portion of our crops.

To meet the challenge intelligently we must consider what steps must be taken by the farmers to approach the larger yields suggested, the part of the government in helping or hindering this development, and the various means of meeting the human problem involved in such a reorganization of our agriculture as seems inevitable. These aspects of the matter will be discussed in a later article.