

Consuls in Manila: II—Arthur P. Blunt

By KENNETH ROMNEY, Jr.



ARTHUR P. BLUNT

One of the oldest consulates in the Philippines yet headed by one of the newest additions to Manila's consular corps. That, in brief, is the Consulate General's Office of the British Empire in Manila. Unlike the American consul, with whom we dealt last month, the duties of the Consul General Arthur P. Blunt are not limited to one particular field, but are almost endless in their extent. A gentleman who desires to secure a passport visa might precede a Japanese sea captain who seeks a bill of health for his vessel at some British port. The two might be followed in turn by a loyal British subject who desires that the consul, or his representative, be present at his forthcoming wedding. Unrelated as they seem, all of these fall under the broad classification of general consular duties that govern the business of the representatives

of His Majesty's government in the Philippines.

The duties are so multitudinous that the service publishes a ponderous tome, some 350 pages in length, in order that its representatives may know just exactly what is required of them. Consul General Blunt laughingly admits that he has never read it. After all, why should he? A man who has spent more than 30 years in the consular service, who has served his country longer than George V has occupied the throne of England, who has risen from a student interpreter to the rank of consul general and been made a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George is obviously well qualified to handle any consular problems presented to him.

Consul General Blunt came to Manila in March of 1935 from the highly important post at Nanking where his handling of difficult consular affairs won him not only the praise of his own government but the respect and admiration of all of the ranking officials of the Chinese government with whom he came in contact. The fact that he now finds himself occupying a post outside of the China service throws a most interesting sidelight on the history of the British consulate in the Philippines. Opened about 90 years ago, the consulate originally handled routine business and was staffed by merchant consuls, a practice which is still followed by many countries that maintain consulates in Manila. Some time later, however, the organization was changed. Instead of a prospective consul being allowed to take any one of three examinations, depending upon the branch of the service he wished to enter (and, incidentally to remain in) there was only one general examination and the applicant chose his service after being accepted. Coincident with this, the merchant consuls were abandoned and the office was staffed by members of the Japan service.

In 1933 Japanese armies set up the puppet state of Manchoukuo and Great Britain placed a member of its Japan service at Mukden. To

compensate for this, the China service was commissioned to supply the consul general at Manila. Consul General Blunt finds himself outside the China service where he had served for 29 years. In addition to his station at Nanking, he has served at Peking, Ichoy, and Shanghai, as well as having been the captain of a Chinese Labour Corps unit during the Great War. He was made a member of the coveted order of St. Michael and St. George in January of 1923, shortly after being raised to the rank of vice-consul. Pleasant as his associations in Manila have been, he confesses he will go on a year's leave in March and quite frankly admits that he does not know whether he will return or not. That he will, is unquestionably the hope of all who know him and have come in contact with him during his 11 months as a member of our foreign consular corps.

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