

Out of the Mouths of Babes and Fools

"Libel," says a popular living writer, "offends because it is false; satire, because it is true."

Nicholas Roosevelt undoubtedly offended by the statement (reported by a local weekly to be contained in his book) that Filipinos are children. For that and similar declarations, he was made game of, read, cursed, and burnt in effigy. It also cost him the vice-governorship of the archipelago.

Is it libel? or is it satire?

Evidently, such a statement can have no reference to the physical or physiological aspect of the race; for, while some members thereof indeed bear faces as grave as the face of a child, there are not a few (occupying university chairs and other sinecures) who can boast the wrinkle and twinkle of St. Nicholas himself, whom we make so bold as to consider a type of corporal mellowness.

Coming down to the mind, then, can it be contended that people here, taking them by and large, are adult, full-grown, mature? Can they—as one who could not, innocently asked—put two and two together without help? Hold up the mirror of culture, which is conversation, and look therein for the answer. Does not Addison's description of the gallant conversation of his age hold true of this time and this people? Do not people habitually utter by way of colloquy, 'shallow commonplaces and vapid compliments'?

Consider the Arts: how many of your acquaintance could speak for half an hour about music, or painting, or the drama, without betraying crass ignorance? How many have any idea of architecture or sculpture or poetry? Has anybody heard of the Humanities?

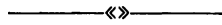
Or, turn to Science: could you find a dozen whose knowledge of history may not be traced to the antiquated fiction known (and sworn by, it would seem, in America to this day) as Wells' *Outline of History*? Does not your most serious-minded acquaintance speak oracles of philosophic what-not learned by rote out of that piece of unmitigated journalism, Durant's *Story of Philosophy*, which was never for a moment taken seriously by anyone who knew anything of the subject? Which one among those you know, not being compelled by the need of bread and butter, has any acquaintance with biology, physiology, geology, chemistry, astronomy? How many can intelligently and with pleasure follow the affairs of the world at large?

Could anybody translate a column out of a French newspaper without perpetrating monkey-talk? Or begin a song by Heine without entire innocence of its import? Finally, could you, by the extremest stretch of memory, think of one who can talk with glowing enthusiasm and firm conviction about his Religion?

Whether this be asking too much or expecting too little, the problem may be simplified still further. We can always turn to that flower of English culture, John Ruskin, for a truly simple test. "A well-educated gentleman," he tells us, "may not know many languages,—may not be able to speak any but his own,—may have read very few books. But whatever language he knows, he knows precisely; whatever word he pronounces, he pronounces rightly... (An uneducated person) has only to speak a sentence of any language to be known for an illiterate person: so also the accent, or turn of expression of a single sentence, will at once mark a scholar. And this is so

strongly felt, so conclusively admitted by educated persons, that a false accent or a mistaken syllable is enough, in the parliament of any civilized nation, to assign to a man a certain degree of inferior standing forever."

You have but to apply this simple test to verify that the mass of so-called English-speaking classes in the Philippines, and particularly in the universities of the Philippines, speak anything else but English, and are anything else but educated. The whole country is a vast nursery of stunted minds, with here and there a pair of seeing eyes timorously peeping out. The charge of libel will not lie.



To Those Who Write

Will those persons who intend to write for our future issues kindly bear the following remarks in mind:

1. That it is not the office of the Editor to correct manuscripts. His business is to read all the matter submitted, to make judicious selections, and (what is most painful to both Editor and Contributor) to reject matter unfit for publication. Too often have we been accosted—by young writers who doubtless mean well—in this wise: "Here's a story I wrote last night. It's not so good. You'll have to correct it. Won't you?" If we had a heart of stone, these things would hardly cause any trouble. But we have not. How, then, could we refuse? Should we be justified in turning them down thus: "You have nerve! You know your story is not good, and yet you would give it in! Correct! Indeed! Do you imagine we have nothing to do but read your story and try to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear?" That, certainly, would not be proper. For we

want to give every encouragement to our well-intentioned budding storytellers. To avoid, therefore, any further occasion of perturbation of mind on this account, we beg leave to recommend, to our younger and more inexperienced writers especially, that they submit to the Editorial Staff only such compositions as they can look upon as the satisfactory result of their *best* efforts.

2. That the plots of the stories written ought to breathe a Catholic spirit. We do not mean to substitute for detective tales, adventure stories, sporting incidents and the rest, a new kind of story, devoid of all excitement, tame and vapid, and dripping with sirupy sanctimoniousness, and then call it the expression of the Catholic ideal. Heaven forbid! 'Twould be doing an ill-service to Catholicism so to parade it under false colors. The Catholic spirit is manifested in a story when the principal character or characters are made to act as good Catholics would