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## The "LET YOUR HAIR DOWN"

### Column

A European diplomatic official came to our office some weeks ago and told us that when he was in China he had sent in a subscription for this *Journal* and that he had found it very useful. He said that it had been recommended to him as containing from month to month virtually all the information about the Philippines that is of any importance!

We ourselves would not make any such claim as that, but the diplomat's remark shows that foreign interest in the Philippines is largely an interest in the economy,—the production, the trade, the finance of the country. That is, in fact, what "makes the mare go".

Everything else in a country,—its general conditions of life, its government and politics, its culture, its progress, its whole role in the world, is largely determined and limited by its production and trade. Knowing about that, the rest can be much more than merely surmised. An expanding trade indicates an increasing production, sound national finance, a strong government, a rising standard of living, an industrious, progressive, well-led, and happy people, and a development in all the higher arts.

IN reply to a letter of congratulation from the President of this Chamber on the occasion of the inauguration of the United States of Indonesia, the Hon. C. Tamba, Indonesian Consul General in Manila, sent the following:

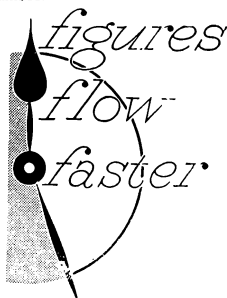
"I am deeply in your debt for the very warm sentiments expressed in your letter of December 29, 1949, and I have the confidence that we shall merit the trust you repose in us.

"The acquisition of freedom is merely one facet in the great endeavour of giving our people good government and the opportunity to live a full life in conditions favourable to national advancement and international amity. We mean well, and we are going to try hard to achieve our aims. If the world will stand with us—as in the past—and give us a helping hand, both you and we will enjoy the deep satisfaction of having participated in a fascinating, yet challenging, experiment. Your Chamber is in a position to assist us, and I am sure it will."

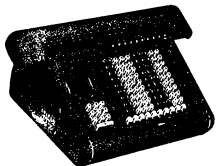
WE recently received a copy of the July-August issue of *Pacific Discovery*, published by the California Academy of Sciences, which contained a very interesting article entitled "Bamboo Literacy on Mindoro" by Harold C. Conklin, not the Dr. Robert J.

Conklin who, with Professor Marvin S. Pittman, was murdered in the Mountain Province late last year. Harold C. Conklin came here during the war as a young soldier and remained for several years because he is interested in anthropology and comparative linguistics and wanted to work with Dr. H. Otley Beyer. While here, he went out on a number of expeditions, one of them to Mindoro.

In the article referred to, he writes of the pagan Hanunoo group there which still writes the Philippine script which is "one of the remote descendants of the ancient Sanskrit alphabet", similar to the Indic scripts which survive in some of the other parts of Malaysia. The writing is done generally by scratching the syllabic characters on sections of bamboo.



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That any form of writing should be so long preserved by a jungle people, living in almost complete isolation, is surprising, and the question arises as to why. What have they to write about? What is it they wish to record or to communicate? In some areas more than 60% of the people are literate. What is it that is so important that in face of the very simple conditions of their lives, these people have retained and continue to practice the art of writing? Mr. Conklin's answer is — the *court-ship* between the sexes!

"... The incentive to learn the use of their ancient syllabary does not stem from a desire merely to preserve the old form of writing so much as it does from the interest taken by young people of both sexes in building up a repertoire of as many of the traditional love songs as possible."

Mr. Conklin explains that — "in order to retain the oldest songs and riddles, continual copying from one bamboo cylinder to another is necessary, since there are no rock inscriptions and the ever-present tropical weevils make the preservation of bamboo records for more than one generation impossible."

He states also that because of the "amazing simplicity of the script itself, it is possible to learn the entire syllabary within only a few weeks' spare time". There are only 48 basic and derived characters to memorize.



### "SANTO TOMAS"

"A true life saga of the courage and fortitude of a proud people!"

—Gen. Douglas MacArthur

Frederic H. Stevens' Memorabilia of civilian internment camps of the Philippines during the Japanese occupation. With a Foreword by General Douglas MacArthur.  
The reviews and comments on this 569-page book have been highly favorable.

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According to the authorities, "history begins with writing, as does civilization". Writing sprang from the need to assist the memory, — the first methods involving the use of sticks and stones, shells, notched sticks and knotted strings, beads (wampum). Then came drawings, paintings, and pictograms. Syllabic and alphabetical writing came still later. Generally, writing probably started with the recording of magical and religious incantations and spells, inscriptions on buildings and monuments, dynastic and priestly successions, military exploits, epic migrations and wars, laws and codes of law, letters between rulers and governors, treaty agreements, contracts

between great merchants, etc. All very important matters indeed!

But here these simple folk in Mindoro preserve their ancient writing merely to better make love. And who will say that that is not the most important business of all?

The editor, poor fellow, has to keep on writing on economic, financial, and business questions. But he couldn't write a love-song anyway.

"What makes you think that?" he asked. "I have written some pretty passionate ones in my time."

"Oh, yea."

"They were printed anonymously."

"Let's hear one."

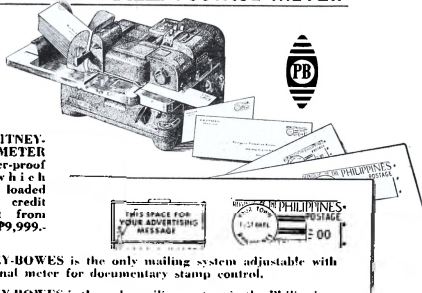
"My memory is not so good, but I'll give you a new one just to show what I can do. Here—"

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He sat down at the typewriter  
and after a while read the following:

"O lassie dear,  
You are still  
Near in my heart,  
Though long it was  
Since we did part.  
Did part..."

"For 'lassie'", he said, "substitute  
any of a half-dozen names."

"Funny, yea; and feeble," said  
the stenographer.

"Ah, so," said the editor. "Well,  
here's a love-song I defy you to  
laugh off. It came to me last night."  
And again he wrote on his typewriter,  
then read:

"O charming  
Little roly-polly  
Rogue,  
My little laughing  
Stumbling tot;  
On unsure feet  
You walk  
Straight into  
My heart."

"That's dedicated to my youngest  
grandson,—1/4 me and 3/4 Fili-  
pino, and I don't know what, but  
I do know that he and his genera-  
tion will be the men of the future,—  
unless government controls ruin the  
country for them... Do you see my  
interest?"

"Grandfatherhood is sacred," he said  
as he put the cover on his typewriter.  
"Let no one accuse me of spoiling  
the Philippine climate!"  
The office was respectfully silent.

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