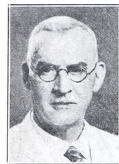


Charles M. Cotterman: Another Neighbor of Ours



C. M. Cotterman

Charles Mason Cotterman is a native Ohioan whom the *Journal* is going to talk about this month as an American who threw in his lot with the Philippines November 16, 1900, embarking at San Francisco on that day on the transport *Sheridan* with his family to come to Manila and take charge of the postal service, succeeding F. W. Vaile. There are few men in the islands

who will remember Vaile, Cotterman's lifelong friend, because he left Manila so long ago. But Vaile remained in the postoffice service, and died in Honolulu last January. On Saturday, September 3, 1927, he rounded out fifty years of service. There are staying qualities in that venerable department of the government; something of the homely virtues of its founder, Benjamin Franklin, clings round it still.

Coming to the position of director of posts in the Philippine government so early, and staying so long, it is Cotterman who is recognized as the father of the insular postal service, mail and telegraph. Though the service had been functioning, it was not widely extended, as he extended it, and it had not been put on the excellent administrative basis where he placed it for all time. Such a service, as everyone knows, requires forms in dozens of varieties. Cotterman had no technical personnel to aid him in devising these. He devised them himself, had the Spanish translations inserted, and many of the forms he originated are still in use.

In fact, the postal service stands as he built it; the one apparent change being the discontinuance of stamps in payment for telegrams. This innovation is a convenience, an improvement, like the one effected only recently, the taking of telegrams over the telephone. But on the other side there is this to say, a telegram with the required stamps affixed and cancelled was a complete voucher in itself. There was the message, there the stamps, and there should be the money. Cotterman was inveterate in seeing that the money always was there; defaulters had short shrift under him, and the color of their hair made not the slightest difference. He built up an honest and capable personnel by his constant vigilance. Loyalty was required and loyalty was repaid. It is continued, now that Cotterman has long been out of the service; it is credential enough for any man down on his luck temporarily, to have been in the bureau of posts at some time.

He shall not want. That is the other side of a man's stick, as Goldsmith says, in duty. Along about 1907, the Postal Savings Bank was inaugurated. More forms to make, more books to keep, more personnel to select and train.


Forbes was greatly for this, encouraging juvenile depositors with prizes. The forms went to the schools, the American supervising teachers explained their use to the teachers, inducing them to save and promote thrift among their pupils. It was a universal campaign, with the education bureau as an indispensable ally. Yet how chimerical it seemed—savings, in the Philippines of that day!—a Philippines lately torn by prolonged revolution, a Philippines of low wages, immaterial overseas trade. Teachers receiving P15 a month were asked to save. Moreover, they did save; the witness knows some of them who saved a peso two a month, withdrawing all once a year to advance it against rice crops, and he knows that by this seemingly impossible means these teachers amassed modest competences that made them landowners and proprietors.

Now the bank is solid. It has been having another campaign, with the result that its deposits are P7,000,000 and it has P640,000 to loan. It proposes to reduce its interest rate to 8 per cent; it has been 9 per cent. With the City of Manila it has P3,000,000; in loans on provincial property, P300,000; to provincial and municipal governments, more than P2,000,000. It has campaigned well, for seven million isn't far from half the insular revenues annually when the bank was started. Saving is like a lot of other things, an attitude of mind; it has been demonstrated that the Filipino can acquire this attitude, that he will save. The splendid work is now in other hands, but he who began it must not be forgotten.

Cotterman was born July 26, 1865, at Mansfield, Ohio. He is the Republican committeeman for the Philippines, and has gone to the United States to attend the convention; his birthday will come along, whatever the outcome of the convention, and he will be sixty-two. When he came, with his family, to the islands in 1900, he was thirty-four. We have seen his stalwart form bend a little with the years, just a little, and if we are bold enough to notice it we can tell that his hair is no longer as dark as it was nor as thick as it was when he was a youngish man driving with his children around the Luneta in the family carriage.

But of course he isn't old, only an oldtimer. Sixty-two isn't old, especially for a Cotterman; and Cotterman's mother died only last year, at the old home in Albion, Nebraska.

It was in 1878 that the Cottermans moved from Ohio to Nebraska, settling in Boone county on a homestead 70 miles from railhead and 17 miles from Albion, the county seat. In 1885, Cotterman took a job as clerk in the Albion postoffice, going to a like post at Norfolk the next year and to the railway mail service in 1887, where he remained until 1895. He was then made chief clerk of the railway mail service at Ogden, Utah, and advanced the next year to the same position in the larger and more important office at Portland, Oregon, where he and Vaile worked together. Vaile was in charge of mail



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transport matters in the Northwest, including Alaska, when he was detailed to Manila and sailed with the 2nd expedition. Cotterman was then given Vaile's work in addition to his own, but in April 1899 he was made assistant superintendent of the Pacific division of the railway mail service, headquarters San Francisco, and in November 1900 he was sent to the Philippines to relieve Vaile.

This meant the position of director of posts under the civil government formally organized and inaugurated July 4, 1901. He remained director of posts until December 31, 1913, when he resigned from the public service and went into business as the owner and manager of the Walk-Over Shoe Store, Escalota. He retains his interest in this store, but Frank W. Butler, his son-in-law, is managing it. Leo K. Cotterman, his son, manages the other important Cotterman property, the Philippine Acetylene Company.

A bent for mechanics runs in Scotch blood, even when it has long been American blood; mechanics, banking and trade, so there is no real incompatibility between the haberdashery on the Escalota, the manufacturing plant in Paco,



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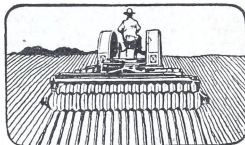
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and the director's chair in the Philippine National Bank, with which Cotterman père has been associated since 1922. He resigned and was off the board for a while, but was reelected in 1925 and has been vice president of the bank and member of the executive committee since 1927 and until his departure for America a few weeks ago for a visit, when he resigned. He was also president of the Binalabagan Estate, Inc., operating its own property, the big sugar central at Binalabagan, Occidental Negros. Cotterman believes in paying out and paying up, and as an executive official of the bank this has guided him in shaping the policy respecting the sugar centrals financed by the bank, of which Binalabagan is one.

He has been closely identified with the most constructive single enterprise in the islands, the rehabilitation of the Philippine National Bank and the salvaging of the sugar companies and major estates financed by it—all with a most favorable effect upon the bank and the sugar industry, as well as upon other local banks and Philippine industries as a whole. In 1915, Cotterman bought his beautiful home on Figueras avenue, Pasay. Here he is up betimes every morning, busy at the lawn, seeing about the poultry—something frugal, worthwhile, constructive. The community learned his worth long ago, and governors general relied upon it, particularly upon his executive judgment, always quickly reached, but not without deep meditation, and always sound. When the Cebu Portland Cement Company was getting underway and had the task of installing its plant and commencing operations, Cotterman was one of its directors, 1921-22. The result was a new industry of the first importance.

Leo Cotterman is following his father's footsteps in the banking business; young as he is, he has his father's steady temperament and for years has been a director of the Philippine Trust Company. Cotterman père is sought

by everyone, consulting him about everything and relying on his judgment, often his active aid. If one can't see him at his office, one makes bold to call at his home. He thought to make himself less accessible when the store was moved to the Masonic Temple building (another project he had much to do with, this fine office and store structure), and he put his desk in an obscure corner at the top of a narrow stairway. It was no use, he had to come down again and sit behind the easily swinging office doors. Men would seek him out, and he found that he didn't wish it otherwise, whatever the extra burden might be.

He of course was active in the organization of the chamber of commerce, where he has always been on the directorate, either as vice president or president. He is now a vice president. He has represented the chamber in Washington, and stood sponsor for Philippine business on travels throughout the United States totalling four trips across the continent. As this has been published before, it will not be enlarged on here; let it suffice that no man has worked harder for the islands or to greater purpose than has Cotterman. This year too, as always when he is in America, he will be upon the service of their majesties, the public of these islands; for he will be working and speaking in behalf of their business and welfare.

A final word, with malice toward none. It has been America's practice to choose governors general outside the Philippines. The practice is well established, the *Journal* does not quarrel with it, save that the impression should not be gained in the United States that men worthy and capable of filling the insular executiveship are not to be found in the islands. The practice may be a good one, but if it were abandoned, then it could be said that Charles Mason Cotterman, among others, is a man fully competent and equally qualified to be the governor general of these islands, the territory he has chosen to make his home.—W. R.



Alkan Building, Escolta: Fourth Story Added Since Picture Was Taken

For a long time after the walled city was built and the governor's palace was put straight across the street from that of the Archbishop, many of the royal governors preferred to live in the stone *convento* attached to the parish church of Santa Cruz, built by the Jesuits as a mission to the Chinese of the district. The governors enjoyed the cool breezes coming in across the swamps now converted into the beautiful and spacious Mehan Gardens and the late lamented Bagumbayan drive, widened, asphalted and recently rechristened calle Padre Burgos. Thus in commemorating new history, the city fathers have resort to the simple device of erasing the old memorials and writing new legends over them, to the lesser honor of the men they would remember and to no great public advantage.

Aside from the comfort of the Santa Cruz *convento*, the royal governors sometimes found it an advantage to be living at that distance from the Archbishop, with whose authority over disputed matters they were often in conflict; and perhaps the prelates, right at least part of the time, had, by the arrangement, more real elbow room.

Every royal governor had his personal escort, a company of halberdiers, *alabarderos*, never exceeding eighty men, some twenty of whom were mounted. For the most part they were veteran soldiers; and each man carried a halberd as a part of his military equipment, the halberd being a medieval battle-axe mounted on a seven-foot staff. These particular halberds had burnished brass trimmings; they flashed with imposing effect in Manila's sunlight.

A strong bamboo bridge crossed the Pasig at about the place the old Bridge of Spain used to stand. The Chinese who built the bamboo bridge were absolved for a stipulated period from taxes, so they had reason to build it well. The religious and military center of the city was the walled city, as it is today. Business was divided between Binondo on the north side of the Pasig, still the wholesale center, and the Parian, or Chinese quarter north of the river on a site now partly absorbed by the postoffice property and Plaza Lawton, partly by the ice-plant, and partly by Mehan Gardens and the network of streets traversing this section of town.

The Escolta: Main Street in Manila

By PERCY A. HILL

The Escolta is Manila's Main street, and has been for more than 100 years, or since the city was opened to foreign commerce and foreigners were permitted to reside in it and engage in merchandising. It is one of the most crowded thoroughfares in the orient and quite rapidly assuming a modern appearance. Though there are still types enough of the oldtime building, two stories, the upper overshooting the lower in true Spanish colonial style, modern business structures now prevail, rising from three to five full stories and boasting plate-glass fronts and the convenience of elevators. Mossy tile roofs sagging even the massive hardwood timbering which supports them are yielding the day to galvanized iron sheets which are less dangerous in earthquakes, cheaper, and infinitely uglier.

Of course the more ambitious buildings are roofed with tile or smeared over with sheets of concrete, but it makes little difference how they may be roofed, they are too high for their lids

to be seen. Yet they are not really high. The skyscraper will probably never find lodgment on the Escolta, destined no doubt to remain a Main street unique to Manila. It will always be just four rambling blocks long, always with Plaza Santa Cruz on the east and Plaza Moraga on the west, and always winding with the lazy curve of the Pasig.

Plaza Moraga. Why? It was Father Moraga who prevailed upon Carlos III not to abandon the Philippines, and Moraga was killed 308 years ago in a battle with the Dutch off Mariveles. As to Plaza Santa Cruz, the *Journal* has said before that here the British formally returned the Philippines to Spain, 1764, Don Simon de Anda acting for Spain, as his effigy and the inscription on the wall of the church facing the Escolta attest.

It is a curious street, curiously named. La Escolta, the Escort.

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