

In his ostracism he has little correspondence — "They treat me more than humanly" — Roads to *civilized forest* — "I lack nothing except my freedom, my family, and my books" — About the Tagalog language — Photo of a Subano — Blumentritt and the Ilongot language — Philological disquisitions — How is Loleng?

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Dapitan, 15 February 1893

Mr. Fernando Blumentritt
Leitmeritz, Bohemia, Austria

My very dear Friend,¹

By the mail of the 8th February I received your letter from the hands of the Politico-Military Commander of the District. I did not answer you by the same mail for lack of time. I thank all² of you for having remembered me from that peaceful city whose remembrance is not erased from my memory. Do not be surprised at my silence, for since the loss of my liberty, for reasons of delicacy that you can easily understand, I have suspended my correspondence with persons who do not write me. I should have liked to write you in German so that I may not forget altogether that language, but as you have written me in Spanish,³ I believe I ought to answer you in the same language so that the letter may follow the same route.

¹He always addressed him "friend and brother" but as the letter had to pass through the censors, he dropped "brother" as it might be interpreted in its Masonic meaning. Blumentritt was not a Mason. (Retana)

²He alludes to the members of Blumentritt's family.

³Blumentritt used to write him in German.

You are anxious to know *how* I am and frankly I do not know what to tell you. If I should tell you that I am very well and they treat me a little more than humanly, perhaps you would not believe it, because you would imagine that there being prior censorship, my manifestation could be forced. However, that is the truth. I would cut off my hand first rather than write an untrue thing. This is one of the minor inconveniences of prior censorship: Even the truth appears suspicious. I am well indeed, *anima corporeque* (body and soul). Dapitan's climate suits me better than that of my home town and very much better than that of Manila. This climate is most temperate. I live with the Governor.⁴ However, I spend the greater part of the day on my lands where I have ordered built a little house amidst fruit trees (*artocarpeas*, *theobromas*, *sansonias*, etc.). I am engaged in clearing my lands in order to plant coffee and cacao which thrive well, despite the fact that the lands are hilly and stony. I probably have some 16 hectares bought from different owners who had abandoned them. They are situated along the seashore, inside the bay of Dapitan, so that you can mark on the map the part between the town and a little more toward the south of the cove of Taguilog or Talaquilog. *C'est là où sont mes possessions!* (It's there where my properties are!) I am becoming a farmer, because here hardly, very hardly, do I practice medicine. I have already cleared a part of the forest. Although it is stony, it has however good views, beautiful steep rocks. I am opening roads to make a *civilized forest* with well traced paths, with steps, benches, etc.

When I receive a camera I shall take different views and send them to you. In short, in order to be happy, I lack nothing except my freedom, my family, and my books.⁵ Of these three

⁴ More properly, politico-military commander of the district. During the Spanish régime, the chiefs executive of districts, which were not regular provinces, were called politico-military commanders.

⁵ Rizal's library at one time was composed of about a thousand items but now it is reduced to some five hundred without a single item dealing with the Philippines. The greater number of the books deal with general ethnology and anthropology, and medicine, and works of Goethe, Schiller, Balzac, Zola, Jovellanos, Prevost, etc. It seems that the family has been exploited and the most choice books either disappeared or were destroyed in Hong Kong. In 1906 the library consisted of some 500 volumes that Mr. José Ma. Basa, a Filipino resident at Hong Kong and a great friend of Rizal, kept for a period of twelve years. These 500 volumes arrived at Manila in June 1906 and *El Renacimiento* (No. 19, June) in giving the news proposed that they be bought and preserved as a sacred thing. (Retana)

things, the easiest to obtain is the last — the books; but mine are far away and I have read all that I have been able to get here. I have the *Von Fels zum Meer* (some loose sheet), *Universum* (some pamphlets also), Chamber's *Edinburgh Journal* (2 vols.) and other works. For the scientific life here is my former professor, the cultured Jesuit, Father Francisco P. Sánchez, whom you already know.⁶ Nevertheless, I am very far from the incessant and indefatigable scientific life of civilized Europe where everything is discussed, where everything is placed in doubt, and nothing is accepted without previous examination, previous analysis — the life of the societies of linguistics, ethnography, geography, medicine, and archaeology. But on the other hand, I am nearer nature, I hear constantly the song of the sea, the murmur of the leaves, and I see the continuous fluttering of the palms stirred by the breeze.

I am working for some days now on a grammar of the Tagalog language, but an original grammar, *sui generis*.⁷ However, as I have no books here on linguistics, many times I find myself hard up. My grammar of comparative languages by Bournouf is in Hong Kong — I do not know anymore in what shelf — so that my work goes on slowly. Moreover, the clearing of my lands distracts me at present. Make yourself easy for when my camera arrives, I am going to take photos of Subano types.⁸ I have known them here and really they are a peaceful people, very honest, industrious, and faithful in their transactions, according to what they say. Here there is a young man by the name of Agyag who returns to his settlement tomorrow. He is of gentle character, humble, and reserved.

I commend your work on the Ilongot language and I am wishing to read it. I too am learning Bisayo and I am begin-

⁶For his scientific works. Blumentritt has translated or published an abridgement of some of the ethnographic studies of Father Sánchez, making them known through the principal technical reviews of Europe. (Retana)

⁷He alludes to a work entitled *Estudios sobre la lengua tagala* that he dedicated to Fr. Sánchez. Shortly thereafter he conceived the plan and he began to carry it out, of writing in English a *Gramática tagala comparada* (Comparative Tagalog Grammar). He informed Dr. Rost about it. In a letter that I have, Dr. Rost said to me that, judging by his impressions and considering Rizal's knowledge, the new work of the illustrious Tagalog promised to be notable. Dr. Rost, who died in 1896, shared with the Dutch Kern the enviable fame of possessing Malay and the languages derived from it. (Retana)

⁸The Subanos constitute one of the most interesting tribes in Mindanao. The great ethnographer Blumentritt has published some studies of that tribe which, like his works, are excellent. (Retana)

ning to speak it a little with the inhabitants here. Could you give me the linguistic or ethnological reason for the change of the Tagalog *i* into *o* in Bisayo? The passing of the palatal sound to the labial or viceversa, to what is it due? Is it the result of a mistake in the reading of the punctuation of the characters of writing? In the Bisayan language I see traces of names of more primitive forms than in the Tagalog, notwithstanding that the Tagalog conjugation contains in itself not only all the forms of the Bisayan but also others. Which of the two was older? Are both branches of a trunk that has disappeared? That is what I am going to inquire into, because I distrust greatly the Malay.

Loleng⁹ must be a little young lady now. I try to visualize as a *junges Madchen* (young lady) the little girl that I saw running behind the coach to bid us goodbye; however, it is hard for me to do so. It is natural that she will find Spanish more beautiful and more useful than Tagalog.¹⁰ The continuous reduplications in certain tenses render our language ugly; but the Tagalog, when well spoken, can be as valuable as any other language. It has a great wealth of words to express affection and the activities of everyday life.

With greetings to Frau Rosa Blumentritt, Loleng, Fritz, and Kurt.

Your friend who embraces you,

José Rizal

⁹ Blumentritt's daughter named Dolores. In the Philippines the pet name for Dolores is Loleng (Tagalog version of Lola, Spanish). She was given this name by her father who, though a Bohemian by birth, has been for many years a Spanish-Filipino at heart. (Retana)

¹⁰ Rizal, during his stay at Leitmeritz, gave Loleng some Tagalog lessons. She already knew Spanish, taught by her father who speaks and writes eleven European languages. (Retana)