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## CLOUDS

Our political horizon does not show the peace that we all desire.

Mr. Manuel Zorilla takes a trip to England or to Bordeaux and immediately, the ministerial press announces the trip, proclaiming at the same time that such a move does not worry the government at all.

On our part, we should be glad that there had been nothing to fear. We would even go farther, and praise the statements of Mr. Sagasta, assuring Congress that since the trip does not obligate us to interfere in the international conflicts of Europe, the government should be able to reduce the services that represent superfluous precautions, in order that by so doing, it can decrease the contributions which weigh heavily on this unfortunate nation.

It is true that Mr. Sagasta, skillful man that he is in the manipulation of words, said later that he had not meant his statements to express an official policy or promise. He had only expressed a simple, private opinion of his own which some day and in the future might bear fruit. This means that what he said was only a passing remark.

For meaningless remarks, there is no one like Mr. Sagasta.

It is very hard in fact to go beyond this stage. Every-day the future becomes more and more nebulous.

Even without counting on the weak opposition of Mr. Canovas, the deceptions which at every step inspire the policies of Mr. Sagasta and which are convenient only to himself will come to an end, because they accomplish nothing good for the nation whose goal is to advance the rights of

democracy rather than favor those who try to choke them.

The persistent and growing agitation to organize a third liberal party is an important symptom to diagnose the difficult situation which the coalition encounters. A strong conviction is growing that the fulfillment of Mr. Sagasta's promises which he made when he was in the opposition no longer lies in his hands.

The weakness of some and the duplicities of others produce unfortunate circumstances which are not lost on Zorilla followers. In view of these events, Providence seems to show the way to the fulfillment of inscrutable plans.

Besides the darkening clouds in the interior, others appear in the international situation.

The German press gives an account of the presence in Germany of a Moroccan mission. It seems certain that Morocco will cede to Germany a port between Melilla and the frontiers of Argel, perhaps to satisfy Germany's ulterior motives and those of the French Arabs.

The efforts of Germany to isolate France led hitherto to a policy of gaining our friendship, but now, Germany seems bent on creating difficulties for us in our colonial policies.

Should we block the progress of Germany's policy? Should we allow it?

For our part, we would like to sound the cry of alarm.

## THE FILIPINO FARMERS

We commend the efforts of the Minister of the Colonies to encourage agriculture in the Philippines. We have proofs that such a policy is being carried out in the activities of the council, com-



missions, and committees and in the number of plans being drafted. We recommend, nevertheless, that he consult the farmers also—those who are in direct contact with the soil, those who, with their own capital and labor make the soil productive and who put into practice the methods that science or experience dictates.

They should not be forgotten, nor should their hands be tied or rendered incapable of work, a step that is being unfortunately done now. It is not enough to issue Royal decrees and dictate opportune means but decrees should be complied with in a forceful manner.

The Filipino farmer does not have to struggle with plagues and natural calamities alone but with petty tyrannies and bandits as well. It is true that against the first, he is allowed some measure of defending himself but against the latter, he is not always safe. We shall explain.

After floods, locust pests, poor harvests, etc., the landlord has to contend with the constable of the place, who deprives him of workers when these are taken away and pressed for work on roads, bridges, etc. He also contends with the Civil Guard who detains them on different alleged violations of regulations, like not carrying their personal cedulas, or not saluting properly, or because they are under *suspicion*, or perhaps, for no reason at all. The Civil Guard then keeps them to clean the barracks and by thus keeping them away from work obliges the landlord to seek the good graces of the officer or be deprived further of his carabaos, his oxen for days, in spite of all protests, until these are returned much later. Although these acts of violence are almost always committed without justification and outside the duties of the Civil Guard, work may be delayed three or four days only, although sometimes, for weeks until the animals either die or are lost. All these happen when the Civil Guard transcending the boundaries of his district or province goes out to commit abuses and then returns to his district where the same quarrels with the landlord, the same abuses of power are resumed.

Sometimes it is not the constable nor the Civil Guard who is indirectly responsible for nullifying the policy of the Minister of the Colonies. A judge or an official from the capital of the province who is displeased with a farmer, urgently calls such and such a laborer or laborers. The unhappy man takes a two or three-day trip to the capital, apprehensive and disturbed. He spends all his savings; he presents himself to the official; he waits but is told to return the next day; he returns and waits again, only to be asked later by an angry judge, some difficult and obscure questions which he could not answer. The unhappy man, it is true, may free himself of charges, but on many occasions, he proceeds from there to jail where he emerges later more stupid than before, and eve-

rybody thinks himself a good Christian always. Sometimes, and luckily very seldom indeed, a volunteer company passes the province. Alas, for those who have enemies. It is enough to be in the list of "suspicious" persons for the leader of the company, without due process of law and without any cause whatsoever to take him to another place. Then, it is goodbye to the country and to everybody! Let us observe then if this is the way to encourage agriculture in the other islands.

But if the landowner is one of those who knows how to please those in power by bribes, then he has them acting for him and he then gains an advantage over others. But then, there are many other gods to propitiate. These are the robbers and bandits.

For those who have their farms far from the towns, it is the robber-bandit that is a terrible enemy. There can be no favors gained, like in the others, by giving him gift and bribes, which some do secretly, because he would then be plunged into another abyss: whosoever deals with the bandit is accused of connivance and of being an accomplice of the evildoers and this would mean certain torture and later, exile. The better way of combating this evil is to arm one's self and face danger everyday.

For a peaceful taxpayer to possess arms and have the means to protect himself, it is necessary for him to obtain the goodwill of the neighborhood, of the Civil Guard, and of the parish priest; to apply later to the Central Government in Manila; to have patience; to wait patiently because petitions are not always acted upon promptly but are considered after months and months had elapsed and even then, only if there were someone to follow it up or some friend in the office that awards licenses who could help.

All this is all right. What is not good is that in spite of a good recommendation, in spite of peace and order in the province except for the bandits, in spite of the exemplary conduct of a citizen farmer and the danger that he and his harvests are exposed to, the government denies him not only the use of firearms, or the renewal of a license he already possesses but also deprives him of his weapon which he had purchased at a fabulous price. Once confiscated, the firearm is thrown into some corner of the headquarters or of the court, there to rust and be of no use to anybody except to favor the bandits who are the only ones who gain an advantage by this process.

This is what happened to a neighbor in the province of Laguna, who owned a considerable size of land far from the town and planted to sugar cane, coffee and abaca. The province had been not alone loyal to Spain, but eminently so for more than three centuries. When a local man arrived in Laguna, Captain Francisco de San



Juan, during the war against the English in 1762, he declared his loyalty to Spain even when the Central Government itself was under the control of the invaders. With the aid of native troops, he succeeded in saving the money of the province, which the authorities had wanted to turn over to the enemy. This was what made a Spanish writer at the time say that this native had displayed leadership that was half a century more advanced than that shown by the *alcalde* of Mostoles. Laguna is one of the better agricultural areas in the islands but more subject to natural calamities and human depredations. When a citizen is denied a renewal of his permit to have firearms, in spite of all good things said in his favor, when his firearm is taken away from him, then he is forced to abandon his lands and lose completely his *abaca*, for he cannot go to the field unarmed. I am sure that whoever leaves the field like that cannot defend the crop and neither can he redeem it from the bandits.

We are sure that the Minister of the Colonies and the good Spaniards who care for the honor of Spain and who maintain an affectionate regard for the Islands overlook these matters. We, who are able to cite names, towns, dates, witnesses and able to attest to other incidents of a similar nature because of personal experience or the testimonies of eyewitnesses, content ourselves with citing this example and saying, "*Je passe et des meilleurs*" for the rest.

It would be necessary to correct this, Mr. Minister of the Colonies, lest some malicious mind say that since the government there is helpless, it makes friends with bandits by handing over to them disarmed inhabitants; that it desires to cultivate lands by speeches, plans, and agreements, a policy that should be enforced by tying the hands of the farmers and forcing them to till the soil under the new system. Agriculture cannot be improved by this method. What is needed is aid to those who are engaged in it. Those who, from their comfortable seats think some other way possible and who, when they find the failure of their Royal decrees throw the blame for backwardness on the indolence of the native do not know with what difficulties the farmer contends. They ignore the fact that for a machine to work well, it is not enough that it be constructed according to definite principles but also that it be perfect in every detail, such that everything fits well and no single piece is out of its place.

These abuses which become more and more ridiculous, result in losses for the country and in the decline of Spanish prestige. This system of preventing work, of unfounded fears, of unjust suspicions not only irritate and awaken the people but they also uncover the weakness of the government. Fear, it is said, is a sign of weakness.

This, added to the inability of the government to suppress banditry, makes the people think that the government is hard only on the peaceful and law-abiding citizen, but it pampers or tolerates the rebellious and the criminally inclined. This opinion is the plaint voiced by the unsubdued natives to Christian natives.

This conduct of the government in the islands harms the true intentions of Spain. By fostering discontent by means of this procedure, the government becomes the real *filibuster*. We believe that nothing serves the nation better than telling the truth. Therefore, we are telling the Mother Country the truth so that reforms may be adopted. This is why we ask for representation in the Cortes and for freedom of the press in Manila: that we may expose evils to public notice. The abuses committed there do not always find a pen to write about them, nor does every article written find a generous paper which would publish it in its columns. Although it has not been so before, reforms always come late these days in correcting evils.

We shall conclude by recommending a change to the Minister of the Colonies in the licensing and use of firearms.

Although a license should not be given without considering the condition in the town, the recommendation of the Civil Guard and of the parish priest, it should be decided by the Council of every town through secret balloting and not in Manila. There should also be previous consultation with the teacher, Civil Guard (Spaniard), and parish priest (almost always a Spaniard) and the matter attended to only when approved unanimously. Thus the procedure will be simplified and facilitated without much loss of time. There are no other drawbacks but two: there will be more dismissals and secret enemies cannot seek revenge or offer anonymous information. On the other hand, the Treasury and humanity in general will be the beneficiaries, the former by having less employees to hire, and the latter by more loyalty and less treachery.

## BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF EVENTS

European politics this fortnight is under a very clouded sky: France, in a crisis; Italy in a crisis; Spain in a crisis; abdication in Serbia.

France, after a very painful crisis in the government, was able to form at last a cabinet that neither satisfies nor pleases all the republican parties. In our opinion, the French cabinet is still in a crisis.

Nothing has been resolved of the problem. While the constitutional revision and other urgent and essential reforms in the life of the republic