

# New Philippine Discussion and Exposition

In addition to the recent book of Mr. Allegne Ireland, another general and sweeping arraignment of American Government in the Philippines has recently appeared from the pen of Prof. H. Parker Willis.\* This is the gentleman whose charges, it will be remembered, were circulated in the 1904 campaign by Judge Parker, and were promptly and categorically denied by Secretary Taft and Governor Wright. Professor Willis, like Mr. Ireland, spent a brief period making investigations in the Philippines, his journey there being timed, as it would appear, so as to procure "thunder" for the 1904 campaign. Under whose auspices, if any other than his own, he went he has never told, and it might be interesting to know. It would be quite as interesting to have him tell who were his personal sources of information in the Philippines, tho one familiar with conditions and persons there can quite readily tell where most of his information came from. But note the insinuatory mysteriousness of the preface:

"Owing to the kindness of friends in this country and of others who wished to facilitate my inquiries, I was able to gather, before leaving the United States, a set of letters of

\* *OUR PHILIPPINE PROBLEM.* By H. Parker Willis.  
New York: Henry Holt & Co. \$1.50.

introduction to persons living in the Philippines who were in position to know the true state of insular affairs. . . . Conditions in the Philippines are such that no individual acknowledgements would be desirable, and a general statement of obligations is therefore all that can be offered."

Like every serious and painstaking discussion of the Philippine problem—and Professor Willis is certainly serious, and generally painstaking—this book merits public attention. Many of the criticisms made therein, while by no means original, are stated freshly, or with added forcefulness, and are worthy careful attention by our governing officials in the islands and at home. But no one really conversant with the history and the actual status of the Philippines and the Filipinos, even were he in sympathy with the political program of this writer, could conscientiously recommend his book to the general reader sincerely desirous of light upon our Philippine difficulties. It is not fair criticism, it is carping criticism; the tone of faultfinding is maintained till it becomes wearisome, and would raise with the most ill-informed reader a query as to the validity of even the solid criticism there is in the book; and there creeps in not infrequently a note of bitter partisanship, revealing that this is polemics, not well-balanced criticism. In particular, it is plain that Professor Willis has a touch of bias against William H. Taft, while yet he is neither bold enough nor frank enough to speak out his criticisms of the man.

So, while there is much in this book, especially in the chapters on Civil Service, Local Government, Legal and Judicial System, Economic Legislation and Income and Outgo, which is of very considerable import, it is so intermixed with errors, half-truths, misinformation of one sort and another, and political insinuation, as to make the book an altogether unsafe guide for him who is not already expert in Philippine matters. It would be very easy to catalog some scores of errors and misstatements, small and great. It may perhaps be sufficient to cite a few typical cases showing Professor Willis's manner of working and giving test of his general accuracy in criticism.

In the chapter on Rural and Agricul-

tural Conditions there are repeated the same badly overdrawn statements which were circulated on Professor Willis's authority in last year's campaign. Were he at all acquainted with former conditions in the Philippines, or even reasonably familiar, as a library student, with the Spanish bibliography of the Philippines, he could not make such assertions as the following, which are in plain contradiction with the actual facts:

"The food of large masses of the population has been curtailed to a bare subsistence minimum.

"It is generally conceded that [the roads and trails] are today very much worse than they were in Spanish times, and that our expenditure in repairing them cannot compare with the outlay of our predecessors."

On pages 343-344 he returns to insist upon "the disproportionate number of women and children" in the Philippines, having already accepted, on page 23, an entirely unsubstantiated newspaper interview in which an American general was quoted as saying that one-sixth of the Filipinos of Luzon died as the direct or indirect result of American military operations. Professor Willis made a few trips into the provinces, and, the men being at work in the fields, the hills or the forests, he thought he noted, what he desired to note, viz., a noticeable lack of adult males. But why did he not take the trouble to consult the census of 1903? There he might find that there were, of 6,931,548 civilized natives of the Philippines, 3,487,732 females and 3,443,816 males, or 50.3 and 49.7 per cent., respectively. A little calculation based on the census tables would have shown him there were 1,777,189 males of eighteen years of age or more, as compared with 1,919,004 females of the same adult years. Allowing the largest possible figure for adult males of European, American or Chinese birth above counted, still at most the discrepancy between adult Filipino males and adult Filipino females would not be over 190,000. Surely this is no startling disparity as between adult males and females, following so closely upon a period of warfare and disturbance dating back to Spanish times.

In Chapter XVI the author has juggled the figures (even if he had quoted them correctly) to make a most amaz-

ing comparison of the cost of government to the Filipinos. He appears to have counted Philippine *pesos* as United States gold dollars in many places in his table of receipts and expenditures under American occupation. On the other hand, he has counted the *pesos* of expenditure under Spanish government for 1894-5 at fifty cents each, thus carefully halving the Spanish total, while doubling the American, even were his comparisons accurate otherwise. Really this is hardly creditable for a "professor of economics and politics."

On pp. 41-45 he has led himself into some great exaggerations as to the supposedly arbitrary power of the Governor-General in the Philippines thru an error made on p. 31. In quoting the instructions to the Philippine Commission of April 7, 1900, he has failed to note that these instructions were addressed by President McKinley to Secretary of War Root, and that in the phrase giving legislative power to the Commission to be exercised "under such rules and regulations as you may prescribe," the *you* refers to the Secretary of War (representing the "war power" of the President under Congress acting in 1902), and not to Governor Taft, as Professor Willis edits it to mean. This is the chief basis for his carefully constructed theory as to Governor Taft having been a virtual dictator. Such mistakes as these are both too willingly and too frequently made in this book, and they quite fittingly characterize it.

Two other rather bulky volumes have also lately been added to American bibliography of the Philippines, one the random and indiscriminating observations of a visitor in missionary interests,\* the other the carefully arranged volume of the first General Superintendent of Public Instruction in the islands.† The latter is both valuable and interesting where it presents the author's own observations and opinions, but is often inaccurate where sources of encyclopedic and historic information which should now be discarded have been relied upon in the work of compilation. Dr. Devins's

\* AN OBSERVER IN THE PHILIPPINES, OR LIFE IN OUR NEW POSSESSIONS. By John Bancroft Devins, D.D. Boston, New York and Chicago: American Tract Society. \$2.00.

† THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS. By Fred W. Atkinson. Boston and New York: Ginn & Co. \$3.00.

chapters on the Protestant campaign in the islands are of contemporary value. His book is dedicated to President Roosevelt, and has a foreword by Secretary Taft.