

THE VIVID EAST

First Impressions of a Colonial Cleric

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No. II.

THE VENICE OF THE SOUTHERN SEAS.

ONE of the dreams of my life has been to visit Venice; Venice, the city of the water highways, the gilded gondolas, and the splendour of the Doges. But I am now content. I have seen Manila. Manila is the Venice of the southern seas; and before any Australian or New Zealander travels over 12,000 miles and incurs great expense to visit Venice of European fame, let him see the Venice of the Philippines, which lies almost at his doors. Manila has its waterways, made possible by the serpentine course of the river Pasig, and Manila Bay, and these waterways are spanned by numer-

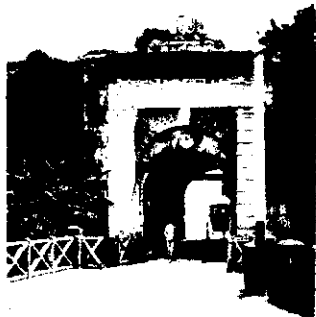
ous bridges. Instead of gondolas, Manila has an unbroken succession of strange-looking craft, built high in the stern, and covered with matting and fibre, as a protection for the numerous families which sometimes live aboard one of them. As many as twelve families have been found on one of these barges, I am assured, but I had the evidence of mine own eyes for the existence of what appeared to be three families on many boats. The painting of the Doges

palaces are not to be found in Manila, but instead the most wondrously beautiful sunrises and sun-settings in the world are to be seen from the Lameta (a beautiful promenade where thousands of people listen to the strains of a band made famous by winning the second prize at the St. Louis Exhibition).

In Australia we have nothing old save the hills and the gum trees; upon all our buildings and institutions is the stamp of almost painful newness, but in Manila are to be found walls 30 feet thick crumbling to decay through length of service. In an unbroken succession of nearly 400 years the Spanish flag waved over the

time and human labour. Every little while one is confronted with enormous doors, and off these again are to be seen elaborate provision for the care of carriages and horses. In those days life could not have been very safe, nor properly a cure, for every window has its iron bars and enormous shutters. There could have been no labour troubles nor union rates when the Spaniards ruled Manila, for Santiago (now the residence

Maoris, Filipinos, I would place Filipinos first for attractive appearance, while it is a real pleasure to listen to the sweet silvery tones of their speech. Spanish is the language most commonly spoken by them, and they have not forgotten the courtly manners of their former masters. "Senor, I do but speak little English, but I trust you will find



PUERTA ISABELLA II.



PLAZA TOMAS, MANILA.



Reneo would have had no chance in the Philippines, as these windows are universal.

of the Governori), and the very streets, pavements, walls, all show that labour was expended with wondrous prodigality. The old churches have the same story to tell. The Cathedral of Manila must cover nearly three acres of land, and is a splendid relic of the old days when religion wrought itself into architecture. From the beginning of the entrance to the completion of the arch over the front doors I measured 25 feet of solid masonry; the larger cornices and mouldings are still in rich evidence, but many of the smaller ones are yielding to age and exposure to all weathers. The interior of the Cathedral is paved throughout its great length with polished marble slabs; six chapels adorn the wings, the organ and choir are placed in the centre; while the high altar and Archbishop's throne are so adorned and arranged as to make the whole scene impressive and interesting.

Philippines. When blackfellows, wallabies, and snakes roamed and crawled over the sites of Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane, and the Maori reigned supreme in New Zealand, Spanish Dons lorded it over the Filipinos, and impressed upon them from love of the beautiful, along with their courtly manners. Within the walled city of Manila, on every hand, one sees evidences of great wealth, of skilful artisanship, and rich design. There are miles of houses built in solid rows of massive masonry, embellished with carvings and cornices utterly regardless of

your way, enjoy yourself, and may we meet again." was the reply one of them made to a friend of mine when asked for a direction in the street. It may seem a little false to some, but it certainly is an improvement upon the grunting expectorating ejaculations with which one is often greeted when seeking for direction from a stranger in the streets of some cities.

The Filipinos in Manila are distinctly of two classes; the thousands of people who live on the boats which adorn the waterways do not impress one by their cleanliness or beauty. It is said that they will work only when they are in need of a few dollars. With dollars in pocket they sit in the sterns of their barges and smoke, and talk, and chew tobacco, as many a ship eager to be unloaded has proved to its cost. But the Filipinos engaged in the offices and shops of the city are apparently cleanly in their persons, charming in their manners, and I think handsome in their persons. Of three native races, Samoans,



WOMEN OF THE COUNTRY AND THEIR BARGES.



A TYPICAL STREET, MANILA.