

MANILA AND A GOLD MINE.

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AFTER noting the title of this article you might reasonably expect that, if you should get to the end of it, a knowledge of Manila, to say nothing of gold mining, will have been acquired. Disillusionment awaits you. This is merely a description of a fourteen days trip to the island of Luzon (Philippines). The capital of the Philippines is Manila and, as the well-known part so often includes the lesser known whole, the title word Manila includes a good stretch of hinterland. In fact, my wife and I spent less than three days in Manila proper.

We were stationed in Hong Kong in 1935 and the question of summer leave cropped up. An early leave was indicated so the Philippines was decided upon. The guide books said that March, April and early May were the months in which to visit Manila, as the rainy season came on in mid-May, and a typhoon might interfere with comfort and plans in late summer.

We started on April 25 in a Canadian Pacific boat. It is only 600 odd miles across so that by the time we were beginning to realize all the amenities this very fine boat offered, the journey was over and the Customs people were demanding if we had anything to declare.

The Philippines are an American Colonial possession and have been since the battle of Manila Bay of 1898 in the Spanish-American war. I had never seen the American in the rôle of colonizer and was interested to learn how the country was governed. I did not have much real opportunity of judging, but superficially the administration seemed to run smoothly and efficiently.

The Customs officers were the first Filipinos we met. Short, solid little men, very polite but inclined to be excitable, they talked good Hollywood English. The general tone of the proceedings was very much akin to that of India, the native race doing Government work under a white control which might or might not be visible. As the bar room orator of the previous night had said, "We Americans are faced right here in Manila with much the same problem as you British are in India and Egypt. The Filipinos want their independence. America says they can have it, and soon. But what's going to happen when we've gone? What's to prevent the islands being swallowed up by the gentleman round the corner who perhaps, is not so altruistic as we are."

Manila looked very charming in the morning sunlight. There is nothing of the grimy port look about the place. A big pier with grey-coloured warehouses juts out from the land and there the industrial side

ends, or at least there is nothing else obviously commercial. The sea wall of enormous, rough-hewn granite blocks, piled up against a sloping bank, runs out along the coast line to right and left. On the top of the wall a line of graceful palms waves gently in the breeze.

There are few houses near the sea front and grass land stretches to the walled city which stands well back. We dumped our bags at the Manila Hotel, which is one of the buildings on the coast road near the pier, and walked up across the grass towards the city. Manila (*intra-muros*) to outward appearances has all the characteristics a Spanish mediæval fortified town would be expected to have, and the imagination conjured up the rounded casque of a Spanish Don bobbing along as the owner strode round the wall. It looked so perfectly preserved with its bastions and massive gateways, that it needed the fluttering flag of a golf course hole to bring the mind back to the present. Then it was realized that, where the moat should have been, there was green sward right up to the walls and that this excellent turf was being put to one of the better uses for such a delightful surface, i.e. a golf course and not at all a bad one either.

Inside the walls the Spanish mediæval atmosphere persists. Narrow streets of balconied houses, with fine old churches and monasteries in unexpected places, carry out the first impression. There are some shops in the main street, but the real business and amusement centres lie outside the walls in the big straggling town which is Manila proper.

One other place we looked at was the aquarium. It is just beside the gate nearest the hotel and is housed in one of the bastions. The fish to be seen disporting themselves in the tanks are really amazing both in shape and colour scheme. We gave the prize to a six-inch fellow. His body was brilliant with red and white stripes, he had a row of poisonous spines on his back and round his neck he wore a large red ruff which billowed in and out as he swam. I believe he called himself an anchorite.

We visited some friends who lived in a bungalow on the coast in the residential area and then turned our thoughts to getting to Baguio. It must come out now; this was the real object of the visit to Manila. Baguio (5,000 feet) is the hill station of the island and is a civil and military refuge from the heat of the plains. In the summer there are quite a lot of American troops up there and they live in the most charming surroundings.

At 6.50 a.m., with rather an effort, we caught the train which was to take us to the foot of the hills. This was no ordinary train; it was air conditioned. As we opened the second of the double doors a pleasant "coolth" struck us and we passed on down a corridor to a spotlessly clean carriage. All the windows were tightly shut and had notices displayed requesting the public to refrain from opening them. It was delightfully comfortable and we were quite sorry to have to leave and face the heat of the day when we arrived at Damartis about noon. Memories of Indian journeys, through similar sort of country, made us hope that this brand of

train might be introduced there before the fates hurl us back for another tour.

The next stage (140 kilometres) was done by motor bus. The road first ran up a valley alongside a stream bed, where the size of the boulders demonstrated the power of the torrent in the rains, and then zig-zagged up the hill side to dive into a belt of pines at the top. These pines heralded the end of our journey; soon the road mounted a last ridge and dipped down into the saucer-like crater which holds Baguio.

This is Gulmarg, we said. Broadly speaking, it is; but this plateau is much bigger and, although the hotel, club, golf courses and pine trees all strike notes of resemblance, the tar-mac roads, shops, buildings and the well-built bungalows demonstrate its accessibility advantage over Gulmarg. Some might cavil at the use of the word "advantage" but I think I will let it stand.

The Pines Hotel is the name of the only hotel worth going to. It is a three-storied wooden structure with a large lounge and dining room. Bedrooms are small and sparsely furnished, rather like similar hill-station rooms in India. The majority of guests were Filipinos, but there was a sprinkling of Americans and Europeans.

The plateau is divided roughly into three sections, the municipal area, the residential area and the military area. The municipal area, with its public golf course overlooked by the Pines Hotel, is nearest the terminus of the bus route from the plains. To the west of this lie the spacious looking houses of the civilian element. Then further away still is the Camp John Hay, the Army Lines, complete with golf course. Alongside it is the Country Club, which also has its golf course. This brings us to the outer edge of the saucer and beyond stretches a country of wild looking valleys and tree-clad hills where the gold mines have their being.

It will be noticed that there are three golf courses mentioned in the previous paragraph. We had gone to Baguio with the intention of playing golf and others who go there will probably have the same idea, so I will deal with the golf courses first.

One feature is common to all of them, they have all got sand greens and quite good ones too.

On the first day we tried out the municipal course. It is rather wild and woolly; as we approached the first tee a horde of cheerful-looking Filipino boys, emitting joyous sounds, descended on us to battle for the honour of carrying our clubs; on the course itself, the usual distractions of a municipal course are met with—family picnics, boys having bicycle races on the fairway, &c. There are some good holes in the nine available and there is plenty of room for the longest hitter.

The Country Club is about three miles from the hotel. It is a very pleasant spot with a residential section. It is very difficult to get a room there in the season as it is all booked up some time ahead. The course is

charmingly pretty with pine bordered fairways and very little level going. It is a full eighteen holes, but I cannot remember a hole in which the green was out of reach of two full shots.

The Camp John Hay course is close to the Country Club course and the terrain is similar. It is, however, a much stiffer proposition than its neighbour. Some of the holes are really long, but the one which intrigued us most was a 250-yard one with the hole at the top of the steepest slope I have ever met as a fairway. This course is reserved for the Army officers and men. I was told I should require an introduction to get a game on it, so, on the second day of our visit, I walked across to the camp hospital. The officer commanding and his staff showed us the truest hospitality. I say "us" because later on my wife was included in the programme they made out for us.

The hospital was on much the same lines as an I.M.H. in India. Most of the patients were Filipino soldiers. Apart from the two American officers and an American nursing sister, the staff was entirely Filipino. It included a senior rank who corresponds to a sub-assistant surgeon. I met him in the laboratory engaged in doing a blood-count. From the answers he gave to the Commanding Officer's questions he obviously knew his job.

A Hong Kong American friend had given us some notes of introduction to a civilian or two, so with golf matches and the social round the days flew by.

We had some moments of anxiety as to our return journey when a revolution broke out. It was, however, a poorly organized show run by some half-baked communists who inveigled a few witless peasants in small towns to make an insurrection gesture; it was little else. The rioters were badly armed, badly led and had very little idea of what their object was. It all fizzled out after the first blaze with a minimal loss of life. It did not seem to affect life at Baguio at all and the only difference it made to us was when one of our golf partners had to go off suddenly and investigate a riot instead of completing our four-ball.

It was the evening of our second last day when the 'phone bell rang. A friend had arranged for us to go down a gold mine next day. We had been trying to fix this up since we arrived and had given up the idea altogether as the next day was Sunday, but we had underestimated the depths of American hospitality.

Next day a car took us up past the Country Club and over the edge of the saucer. The tar-mac surface soon disappeared and, as we went down the hill, the road grew rougher and rougher. Washouts were obviously to be feared on this hillside road, particularly as we had had quite a lot of heavy rain in Baguio during the last few days. Our fears were justified and it was not long before we came upon a large gang of coolies standing beside a bit of road that was just broad enough to take a car, and only too obviously just made up. It was the complete Kashmir road picture with the various well-known features all present, viz. the steep khud side, the

grinning natives and the anxious moment when it was doubtful if the outside edge of the road would stand the wheel or not.

We could see the gold mine buildings far away down below us in the valley bottom and it took us an hour to get there, but the driver knew his job and landed us and the car intact.

We were met by the chief engineer who said he was going to show us round. He was clad in dungarees shoved into laced-up top boots and Sunday was not his shaving day. He looked scornfully at our comparatively pansy looking kit and said, "Wal, I guess you're not expecting to go floppin' about in the mud of the galleries so you'd better come into the office first and then we'll have a look at the bodega."

We followed meekly in and he ranged us up beside a model of the mine in a glass tank, transparent so that its depth and ramifications could be seen from top and sides. Then he began to talk. It did not take long to realize that we had before us a real enthusiast. His flow of information went on during our whole visit irrespective of his surroundings. The row in the factory (bodega), where quartz grinding machines, turbines and separators, each made their own strident note, was awe inspiring, but these mobile lips kept pouring out words while I, rather hopelessly, tried to balance on a plank and keep my better ear towards him. The pity of it was that the man was intensely interesting and I regretted that, perforce, I missed so many of his flowers of speech and so much golden information.

I cannot convey anything of his dramatic fervour, but I hope that the few paragraphs which follow may give some idea of how the miracle of producing gold from stone is performed.

The presence of gold in the Philippines has been known for hundreds of years. The Igorots, who are the aboriginal natives, achieved no mean state of civilization which included the discovery of how to get gold from quartz in their developmental progress through the centuries. Their old workings are still extant and the gold they produced was good, although, I gather, the processes they used have vanished in the sands of time.

The auriferous quartz on fracture is brilliant white, flecked with gold-like iron sulphide, anthracite, and manganese. In the Philippines the quartz layer may be 1,000 feet in depth, as it was in this mine. Galleries are driven into the quartz vein at different levels on the hill side. The mined quartz is dumped into a schute which runs through the various levels from the top to the ground floor. From there a light railway takes it to the factory, where it is weighed and heaved into the maw of a crusher. These crushers are arranged in series, each one breaking up its feed more finely than the last. As the quartz passes into the jaws of these monsters it is sprayed with hydrocyanic acid. By the time the last crusher has done its work the result looks like liquid mud. This is slid off into enormous round separator vats where more hydrocyanic acid and some barium are added. Here the solids are allowed to settle after whirling paddles have done some churning. The dirty supernatant fluid now goes on to a tank

called a vacuum extractor. In this is a series of double canvas plates with a perforated tube in each. The vacuum is turned on inside the hollow plates and sucks the fluid through the canvas. The fluid drains away through the perforated tube. It is mainly hydrocyanic acid and contains all the dissolved gold. This gold is then extracted with zinc, and the end-result is a coal black sludge which in this mine is a mixture of gold and silver. I am not at all clear if silver always goes hand in hand with the gold in quartz or not, but anyhow in this case it did.

The final affair we did not see. It happens twice a month and is made an excuse for a cocktail party at the mines' office. All the sludge end-result for the previous fortnight is put into an enormous crucible and heated up to some fabulous temperature. The ladies are then invited to come and watch the "pouring of the gold." This consists of the filling of brick-like moulds with molten gold. The bricks in this mine were rather anæmic looking owing to the silver in the quartz. The final refining is done at 'Frisco.

In Hong Kong I had been advised to put my money—or some of it anyway—into these gold mines, so I asked our friend what would happen to the mines when the Islands were handed back to the Filipinos. He hedged a bit as to the ultimate upshot, so we decided that the island mines might be even more of a gamble than gold mines proverbially are.

After thanking our host, we went back to the hotel to get ready for an early morning flight down to Manila. Flying is much the best way of getting up and down. The baggage goes by train and 'bus, while the aeroplane does the journey in an hour.

Manila is a good place for a short spell of leave. It is a complete change from anything to be seen in China or Japan. The best time of year to go is March and April, and it should not be left till later. We had the misfortune to arrive in Baguio the day the rains broke, and, although we played a lot of golf between showers, it absolutely prevented us going trips further afield than the gold mine, as we had meant to do. There is some wonderful country to be seen, and the natives outside the town zones are interesting if the investigation of a somewhat primitive civilization appeals. Dry roads for this, however, are essential as the rains make a bogged car pretty nearly a certainty.
