San Francisco Examiner
September 18, 1898

New "Imaginary Conversations"

1. McKinley; Sagasta; Aguinaldo

McKinley—First of all Senor Prime Minister, you must renounce the island of Luzon, and—

Aguinaldo—Yes, that being the most important island of the group, and the one in which you have not now even a foothold, its renunciation will naturally precede that of the others, as my great and good ally is pleased to suggest. With regard to Luzon you have only to say: "We renounce"; I: "We accept."

McK.—Please have the goodness to hold your tongue.

Ag.—With both hands, your Excellency.

McK.—Second, Senor, you must assure a liberal government to the other islands.

Sagasta—With great pleasure, your Excellency; quite cheerfully.

McK.—Please do not wink. Third, there must be—

Ag.—Excuse me; I was brought up a Spanish subject. What is a liberal government?

McK.—That is for Spain to decide.

Ag.—I don't see what Spain will have to do with it.

Sag.—My friend, you slumber—peaceful be thy dreams.

McK.—Third, there must be complete separation of church and state.

Sag.—What! A Diabolocracy? You shock me!

McK.—A shock or two more or less cannot greatly matter to you. Fourth, none of the islands, nor any part of them is to be ceded to any foreign nation without the consent of the United States.

Ag.—You understand, Senor—you hear that! Spain can never again acquire a square foot of these islands, not even by reconquest or a corrupt bargain with a recreant Filipino Dictator, for she will again have to reckon with our powerful protectors, whom may the good God reward!

McK.—The trouble with you is you talk too much. Fifth, the United States must have in the Philippines equal commercial privileges with Spain.

Ag.—Equal? May I never again run amuck if they shall not have superior! Why, I have it in mind to issue a proclamation closing every port to the ships of Spain. As to the United States, commercial primacy is a small reward for their assistance in the closing scene of our successful rebellion.

Sag.—Of course I shall have to accept whatever terms you have the great kindness to offer. As I understand your proposal, Spain retains all the islands but Luzon; that is to belong to the United States, and—

Ag.—Hoooooowat!

Sag.—This worthy Oriental appears to be laboring under a misapprehension.

McK.—I know of nothing else that could make an Oriental labor.

Ag.—Gentlemen, Senores, the language of diplomacy is to me an unfamiliar tongue: I have imperfectly understood—pardon me; go on. But when the night is gone the sun comes up. Is it indeed intended that the United States shall take Luzon and Spain take all else?

McK.—"Retain" is the word.

Ag.—"Retain"? Why, that means to keep, to hold what is alredy possessed. What you gentlemen have in possession in this archipelago is the ground covered by the shoe-soles of your soldiers. What right have you, sir, to the island of Luzon? The right of conquest? You have not conquered it.

McK.—My dear fellow, you distress me. I conquered this gentleman, and he is going to be good enough to give me the island as a testimonial of his esteem.

Ag.—But he doesn't own it. I had taken it away from him before you defeated him—all but the capital, and by arrangement with your man Dewey—

Sag.—Caram—!

Ag.—I assisted to take that. Why, he supplied me with arms for the purpose!

Sag.—Arms with which I had had the unhappiness to supply him.

Ag.—What is my reward? I am driven from the city which I assisted to conquer, and you grab not only that but the entire island, which you had no hand in conquering.

Sag. (aside)—Faith! He'll conquer it before he gets it. I wish to God he would keep the whole group!

McK.—My friend, you are a Malay, with a slight infusion of Chinese, Hindu and Kanaka. Naturally, you cannot understand these high matters.

Ag.—I understand this: We Filipinos rebelled against Spain to liberate our country from oppression. We wrested city after city, island after island, from her until Manila was virtually all that she had left. As we were about to deprive her of that and regain the independence which, through four hundred years of misrule, she had denied us we experienced a dire mischance. You quarreled with her because she denied independence to Cuba. Spanish dominion, which we had stabbed, was already dead, but you arrived just in time to kick the corpse while it was yet warm, and for this service you propose to administer upon the estate, keeping the most valuable part for your honesty. You will then revive the deceased and reinstate him in possession of the remainder!

Sag.—Apparently, Senor Presidente, this worthy person is afflicted with a flow of language (Aside) The Porcus Americanus has the habit of blushing.

McK.—(to Sagasta)—Yes, the Filipino always has his tongue in his ear. (To Aguinaldo) Proceed with the address.

Ag.—It is as if the French, having assisted your forefathers to independence, had kept Boston and all New England for themselves and restored the other colonies to Great Britain. If the Good Samaritan, arriving while the man fallen among thieves was still struggling with them, had assisted him to beat them off, had then taken his purse and delivered him to the thieves you would have had a Scriptural precedent.

Sag.—(writing in a notebook)—At a certain temperature the Procus Americanus can sweat.

McK.—My great and good friend you seem to have your climate with you, as well as your chin. I must beg you to abridge your tirade against manifest destiny.

Ag.—Destiny was a long time manifesting herself, but she has not been idle since, in the last four months you have torn up the three American political Holy Scriptures: Washington's

Farewell Address, the Monroe Doctrine and the Declaration of Independence. You now stand upon the fragments of the last and declare it an error that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. In Hawaii you are founding a government on the consent of less than three percent of the governed. In my country you propose to found one government and restore another against the unanimous dissent of eight millions of people whom you cheated into an alliance to that end. You cajoled them into assisting at the cutting of their own throats. Your only justification in making this war at all was Spain's denial in Havana of the political principle which you repudiate in Honolulu and Manila. Senores, we shall resist both the American and the Spanish occupation. You will be allies—embrace!

Sag.—Madre de Dios!

McK.—Jewhillikens!

II.—Clio; An Historian

Historian (writing).—"The Yanko-Spanko war was brief, but very destructive. In the two or three months that it lasted the Americans had more than three thousand soldiers and a half-dozen sailors killed by the Spaniards and—"

Clio.—Tut-tut! No romancing; less than three hundred were killed.

H. (writing).—"An effort was made to hold the commanding officers of the expeditionary forces responsible for the mortality among their troops, but it ended in failure, for it could not be determined who was in command." (To Clio) Clio, dear, who was in command at Santiago?

C.—First Linares, then Toral.

H.—I mean who commanded the Americans?

C.—I don't know.

H.—What are you the Muse of History for if you don't know such a thing as that?

C.—Ask me who really built the Great Pyramid, and why. Ask me who wrote the "Junius" letters and the lines

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone.

Ask me who was the Man in the Iron Mask and how he liked it. Ask me what Browning meant. Ask me anything in reason, but don't ask me who commanded an American army in the Yanko-Spanko war. Settle it (and all other historic doubts) by turning a coin. You'll be as likely to be right as wrong, and in History that will give good results. The Historian who in the long run tells the truth half the time is a great historian.

H. (turning coin)—Head, Miles; tail, Shafter.

C.—Well?

H.—It is a smooth coin! (Writes) "The army before Santiago had no commander."

III.—Alger; Corbin; Miles

Miles.—Sir, good morning. I salute you.

Alger.—Morning; take a chair.

M.—Sir, as the senior Major-General commanding the Army, I demand the respect that is due to my rank.

A.—Take two chairs.

M.—I have called—

A.—So I observe.

M.—My purpose in visiting the Department today is—

A.—Pray don't mention it. It is of no importance, I assure you.

Corbin.—Our soldier boys from the front are entitled to great consideration. Perhaps the gentleman would like a furlough—to visit his mother.

M. (to Alger)—That is a bright girl—she begins to take notice. I do not care for a leave of absence, but now that the matter has been brought up I may venture to explain that the leave of absence which I do not want is the one which you did not have in the civil war.

A.—Sir!

M.—Nevertheless you left your command in the face of the enemy, for which, if my recollection serves, you were dismissed from the Army.

C.—On your recommendation.

M.—It was cheerfully given. He was welcome to it.

A.—Corbin, I am choking!

M.—Corbin, the gentleman is cheating the gallows.

A.—Get out of this office, you blackguard!

M.—Ah, my leave of absence.

IV.—Shafter; Toral

Toral.—Ah, Senor, it was an anxious night—that of July 2. The angel of sleep did not visit me any my pillow—I shame not to say it—was wet with tears.

Shafter.—Me too. I never swore so much in my life. I tried every way to sleep, but couldn't make it go.

Tor.—How sad! Senor, we are no longer enemies, and we are alone. May I hope that heaven will put it into your heart to tell me why you slept not that unhappy night?

Sh.—That's an easy one: I had made up my mind to demand your surrender.

Tor.—Ah, what a tender heart; what sensibility! It pained you, the thought of humiliating me.

Sh.—Not a bit of it; what worried me was the fear that you would refuse.

Tor.—And then there would be such—what you call effusion of blood. You are all compassion.

Sh.—Effusion of nothing. If you did not surrender to me I was going to surrender to you. My army was rotten with fever. Now what kept you awake, old man?

Tor.—The fear that you would surrender first. God o' my soul!—we could not eat you.