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WILLIAM CAMERON FORBES

A GOVERNOR-GENERAL AT WORK

BY O. GARFIELD JONES

Since the following article was written President Wilson has appointed, and the United States Senate has confirmed, Mr. Francis Burton Harrison as successor to Governor-General Forbes of the Philippines. Comment on the appointment will be found in The Outlook for September 6.—THE EDITORS.

"FORBES is coming!" Whit called to me as I came out of the school-house at the close of the afternoon session.

"You don't say! Who said so?"

"The Governor just got a telegram. He'll be in on the Pollilo at five o'clock."

Whit hastened into the trade school to clean up things, and I began looking for some boys to mow the ball field and repair the back-stop.

W. Cameron Forbes, Governor-General of the Philippine Islands since 1908, has

reduced his office work to the minimum in order to spend the maximum of time making inspection trips about the islands. He has a habit of dropping in on the provincial capitals at any time of the day or night without warning, except for a telegram a few hours in advance to insure the presence of the provincial officials and to call a mass-meeting of the citizens.

The Pollilo did not drop anchor off shore until almost dusk, so the Governor-General and his assistants did not get ashore till after

dark. But my work on the athletic field was not entirely in vain, because the Governor-General insisted on taking a look at it by lamp-light. Not the least of the virtues of the present chief executive of the Philippine Islands is his love for manly sports. A great polo player and baseball fan, he is always willing to hold down first base on a pick-up team of Americans to show the local high school team "just how it ought to be done." Having a private fortune of his own, he gave a complete baseball outfit to the school in each of the thirty-five provinces that made the most improvements on its school grounds in 1910. In 1911 he gave a complete basketball outfit to the school in each province that won the most interscholastic baseball games. Being a graduate of Harvard, a grandson of Emerson, and the highest official in the Philippines, his enthusiastic personal participation in the ball games of the islands removed the stigma of "vulgar" from interscholastic athletics. As a result, the "blue-blood" families of the Philippines clipped the long finger-nails of their "cultured" sons and sent them into baseball and track work to appropriate some of the glory that was fast accruing to the "uncultured" but vigorous sons of the laboring people.

The ball field inspected, Mr. Forbes turned his attention to the government buildings. He went from room to room through the school-houses, the municipio, and the provincial building. He was a severe inspector, and did not hesitate to express his disapproval if things were not in proper shape. During a former visit to Sorsogon he reprimanded the American superintendent of schools for the dirty condition of the school-house, and for having a number of framed pictures hanging in his office that should have been distributed among the school-rooms of the province.

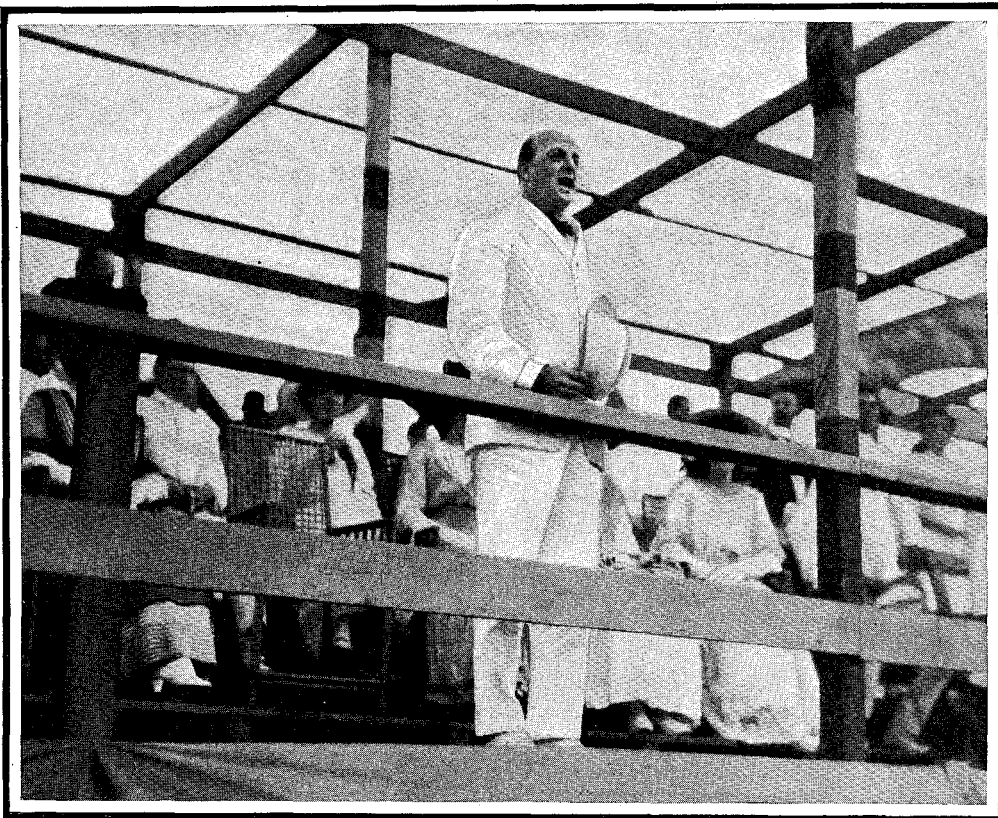
He visited the provincial jail and talked personally with the prisoners, asking them if they had any complaints to make. A woman prisoner said she was unjustly imprisoned, but the investigation ordered by the Governor-General failed to substantiate her claims.

The last and most important event of the evening was a mass-meeting of the citizens. The purpose of this meeting was to give the people a chance to make complaints directly to the Governor-General, and also to give the Governor-General a chance to answer these complaints in person. When I crowded my way through the mass of short, stout laborers

at the door of the court-room about nine o'clock, it was only through the courtesy of the provincial governor that I secured a seat toward the front of the room. As I swept my eye over the fringe of stolid-faced farmers around the room, shifting nervously from one foot to the other, then looked at the close-packed rows of white-clothed, brown-skinned landowners and business men seated on the narrow benches, and finally turned to the row of white-uniformed, white-skinned officials who seemed almost gigantic under the flickering glare of the smoky lamps at the front of the room, I was struck with awe by the contrasts that the room presented. "Was it possible," I asked myself, "that, by furnishing similar education, training, and environment, these big, fair-faced Teutons and these short, brown-skinned Malays could be made to act and think and feel alike?"

The first speaker was from the village of San Roque, and in an impassioned address he declared the personal tax of two pesos too high. Then a man from Guinlahon asked that an agricultural school be started in the province. He pointed out that, since Sorsogon was a strictly one-crop province, the existing low price of hemp made it imperative that more diversified farming be introduced to save the already declining business of the province from complete decadence. Then a big landowner got up and complained that the land tax was too high. He admitted that seven-eighths of one per cent was not a high rate, but he said the hemp land had been appraised when hemp sold for twenty pesos a picol, and then the price had fallen to ten pesos a picol. Thus the apparently low tax rate was really burdensome because of the unfair evaluation of the land.

The Governor-General, addressing the people in Spanish, said the personal tax was not too high, because those who could not pay it in cash could work it out in five days on the road. Furthermore, half of this personal tax went to the provincial road fund, and, by improving the roads of the province, raised the standard of wages for the laborers and the price of hemp for the landowners. The Governor-General also called their attention to the fact that one faction was asking for lower taxes, which meant less revenue, while another faction wanted an agricultural school, which meant increased expenditures. "Surely," he said, "you can see that increasing expenditures and decreasing revenues cannot go together." In regard to the high



GOVERNOR-GENERAL W. CAMERON FORBES, OF THE PHILIPPINES, ADDRESSING THE CONTESTANTS AND VISITORS AT THE OPENING OF THE FIRST ORIENTAL OLYMPIAD

appraisal of the hemp land he admitted that there might be much truth in the complaint, and, turning to the executive secretary at his side, he asked that the matter be looked into.¹ Then he sat down and let his assistant, Mr. Carpenter, explain to the people the plans of the Administration with regard to agricultural schools.

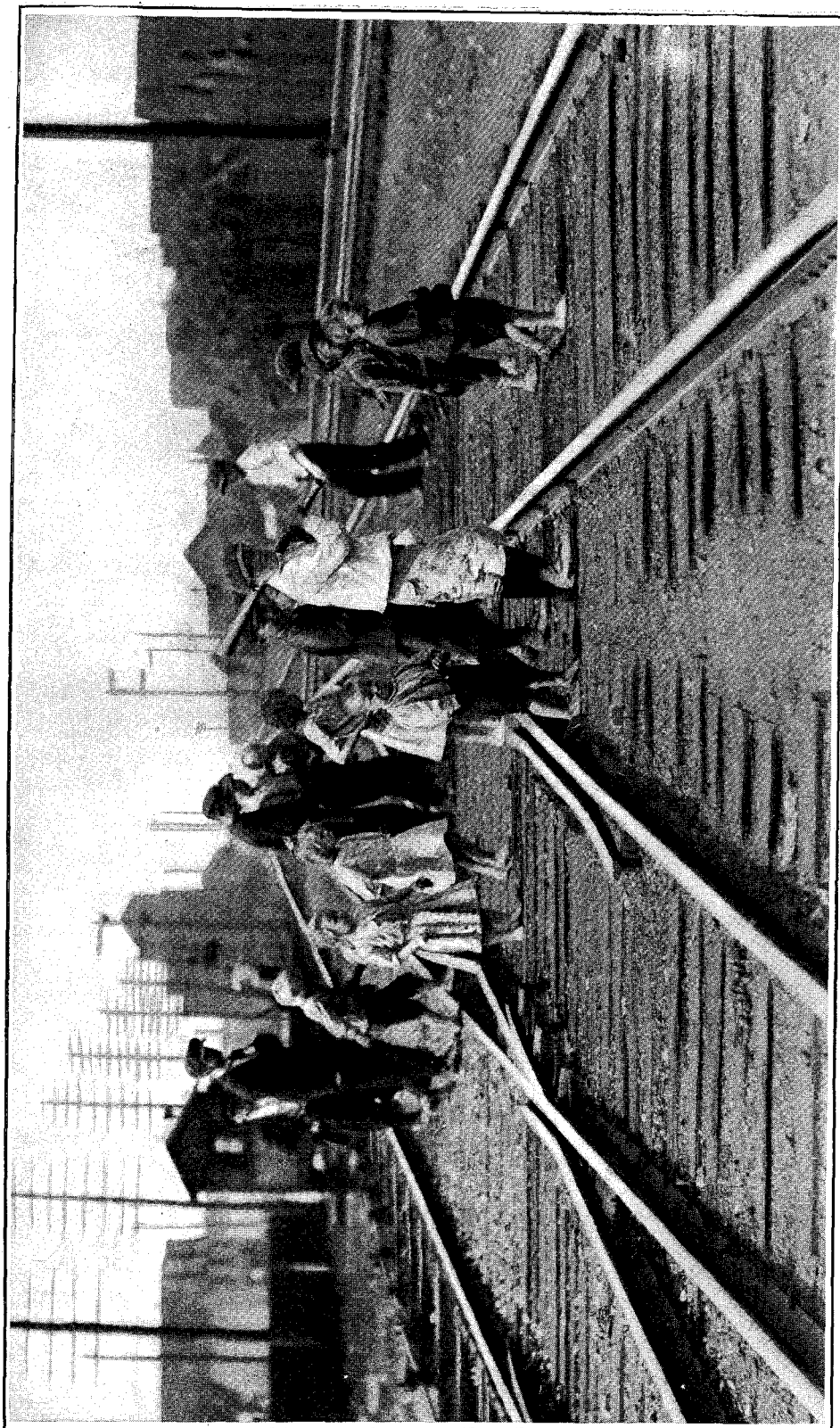
By twelve o'clock the inspecting officials were all back on board the Pollilo, and she was turning her nose toward Masbate, where the Governor-General was to make an official visit the first thing in the morning.

It is this kind of personal supervision that has made it possible for us to grant the Filipinos a large measure of local self-government. People do not have to be dishonest in order to learn how to be honest; and, likewise, the Government does not have to be rotten with graft before the people can learn how to run a clean government. Because of the excellence of the present Philippine system of accounts, audits, and personal

¹ The price of hemp has almost doubled since June, 1912; consequently it is not likely that there will be any further complaint about the low evaluation of the hemp land.

supervision, three successive treasurers in one municipality were caught using municipal funds for private purposes. Such grafting was customary under the Spanish system, so why shouldn't it work under the American system? But it didn't! In this one municipality, at least, the Filipinos are beginning to see that honesty is really the best policy.

The advocates of immediate Philippine independence either ignore the lifelong training of the present generation of Filipinos under the corrupt system of Spanish colonial politics, or else they ignore the experience that Central America has had during the last ninety years, and assume that a decade of rotten government will teach tropical Malays how to run a good government. The present American administrators in the Philippine Islands realize what a pernicious inheritance the Filipinos have from the Spanish political régime; but they hope that, just as years of bad government taught the Filipinos bad political habits and ideas, so will years of good government ultimately teach them good political habits and ideas.



THE SHORT WAY TO THE BALL GROUNDS

These little victims were shown by their big brothers the shortest way to the ball field. Their parents should have told them that the road which is the longest way around is often the safest