

BUT IT RAINED ON THE UNJUST ONLY

BY GEORGE BALLARD BOWERS

MORE than a score of the religious editors in the Ohio valley had commended the appointment of that promising young divine John Maxwell as a missionary to the Philippines, America's insular possessions of the Orient. The appointment had come to him at his graduation as a reward for his religious zeal and vigorous defence of certain beliefs frequently questioned by modern college youth. Maxwell fervently believed, as yet do millions more, in a literal interpretation of the Bible, in the power of prayer to heal the sick, to control the sunshine and the rain notwithstanding contrary contentions of modern science.

In due time Maxwell reached Manila where after three months of instruction in one of the seventy dialects of the archipelago, he was assigned to the land of the Mayaoyaos, a tribe of primitive, picturesque Filipinos living in the mountains of Northern Luzon. The Mayaoyaos are those little, stocky brown farmers whose fields are terraced mountains. Many of the terrace walls reach a height of fifty feet to form a field no wider. Terrace is laid upon terrace until the topmost is lost in the clouds and cold a mile above the perpetual torrent at the foot of the mountain. These marvels of primitive engineering are irrigated, many with water carried by canals a mile or more around a mountain peak, or through tubes of bamboo supported on bamboo trestles a hundred feet high across gorges five hundred, or more, feet wide. Because of their inhospitable surroundings, men, women and children, hiding their nakedness with no more than a mud-plastered wreath of sweetpotato vines, toil in the mortar-like earth from dawn to dark to wrest from their narrow fields the rice and taro that are their scanty fare. Should there by chance be left a slight surplus it is traded to peddlers from the coast for salt, cheap cotton cloth and thin blankets to protect their scurried limbs from the cold, damp mountain air.

East of the mountains of the Mayaoyaos there lies a great plain drained by the mighty Cagayan, where dwell the tall, gaunt Gaddaans, a tribe of mighty hunters, who, like the Mayaoyaos, were headhunters, each tribe being ever ready to take a head from the other whenever the pagan rites required one. From time immemorial, to prevent surprise head-taking raids, each tribe had maintained outposts against the other.

Soon after the American occupation of the Philippines, the military authorities decreed head-hunting a crime to be punished as murder, thus the revolting custom came to be practiced only in the greatest secrecy. Although head-taking had been forbidden, that prohibition had not healed the mutual tribal hatreds then existing between the Gaddaans and the Mayaoyaos; for the hunter Gaddaans still owed the farmer Mayaoyaos three heads. Peace was deemed impossible without a settlement of some sort. Years later the Mayaoyaos brought their claim to me.—Here I may explain that both tribes were at the time within my military jurisdiction.

It was on an October morning that the two chiefs, Damag of the Mayaoyaos and Gaoad of the Gaddaans appeared at my headquarters. Each was accompanied by a group of his followers. The Mayaoyaos wore loin-clothes of somber blue and variocolored blankets draped sash-like over the shoulder. The Gaddaan warriors were draped with yards of red cotton cloth and wore loin-cloths of bark. Because of my previous instructions the attending warriors had left behind their lances and machets, only Damag and Gaoad were permitted to bring their lances and shields into my presence. At first sight I was glad that I had thus limited arm-bearing; for, notwithstanding the early hour, both parties showed signs of having freely imbibed of nipa wine sold in the local shops.

At nine I opened the conference. The warriors squatted on their haunches, each tribe apart, silent and scowling at each other.

I asked Damag to speak first. His speech surprised me, he said in part:

“I desire to know why the Gaddaans killed one and wounded two of my warriors last July. We were peacefully returning from trading in Ilagan when Gaoad ambushed us without warning. Besides the loss of a life the Gaddaans stole thirty pigs, twenty blankets, ten pieces of black cloth and thirty chickens.

“My people have acknowledged American sovereignty but the Gaddaans do not. They are false. I once made a treaty with them

but they broke it. Their word is without value. I must have a written agreement. But before I can talk of peace I must be indemnified for the losses we have sustained."

"Yes, I attacked the Mayaoyaos as related by Damag," Goad began, "but it was only to repay him for his attacks upon my hunters. Only last Lent he took two heads. In the July attack I took one head."

At this point I questioned him and brought out the admission that the attack cited had occurred three years before instead of the last Lent.

So Goad continued, "Yes, it was three Lents ago that we lost two heads together with six pig nets, five blankets, three lances, four dogs and a horse.

"I deny taking the articles lost by the Mayaoyaos. A Gaddaan never loots.

"I can make no peace until my people are paid for what they lost to the Mayaoyaos."

Damag denied having attacked the Gaddaans, but, however, he was willing to make some concessions, he would cut his claim to fifteen pigs and twenty blankets. Goad announced that he was willing to pay fifteen pigs and ten blankets provided he were first reimbursed for all his people had previously lost.

The conference ended at four o'clock when the Gaddaans had agreed to pay the Mayaoyaos one blue loin-cloth and four blankets.

But the treaty of peace thumb-printed and sworn to in my presence was to be of short duration although both parties appeared satisfied. I neglected to instruct them to return home by different trails, so Goad's party ambushed the Mayaoyaos thereby increasing the Gaddaan score by two heads.

Soon after this incident Maxwell reached Banaue, the principal Mayaoyao settlement. He was accompanied by Ciriaco a Bontoc Igorot who had accompanied a former master to Manila where he had been left stranded when his employer returned to the United States. Ciriaco came with Maxwell in the capacity of cook but later became a valuable assistant.

Maxwell was a tall, ascetic-looking individual dressed in close-fitting khaki, helmet and leather puttees. With the addition of silver bars on his shoulders, and bronze buttons instead of shell, he would have passed for a disappointed, dyspeptic army chaplain who had found the service ungodly.

Notwithstanding its picturesque setting Banaue is neither romantic nor inspiring unless one leaves it almost immediately after arrival. It occupies an entire valley miles long with clusters of houses perched periliously on terrace walls and on rocky points.

A Banaue home is never a pretentious structure. It is built with no other end in view than to protect its occupants from the cold and rain. Under its low thatched roof there is a box-like sleeping-place entered through a small opening only large enough to admit the sleeper. The space between the sleeping-box and the roof serves as a storeroom and quarters for the numerous dogs kept for hunting and fattening.

Taro and rice, their principal food, are cooked in earthen pots under that part of the roof not used for sleeping. Meat is a delicacy served only on special occasions when dogs, pigs and caraboas are slaughtered, the number depending upon the occasion and the importance of the person honored by a feast, or canyao.

After Maxwell had temporarily settled in the guest-house built for passing travelers, he began a study of Mayaoyao life and customs, thus he thought to better fit himself for the mission he had come to carry out. This he pursued with consummate tact. For a time the people thought Maxwell an officer of the government. When he gave out that he was a missionary who intended to live in their midst they were surprised. Until then they had known only Spanish friars garbed in long black cassocks.

Damag was somewhat abashed once he had discovered Maxwell's plans and kindly intentions. He felt that he had not given the missionary the consideration and honor deserved. Therefore, Maxwell was informed through Ciriaco that on the Sunday following after the morning-service, there would be a canyao, an honor not to be lightly considered in view of its cost to the people.

The Sunday service was early, while the air was cool, after which Maxwell returned to his hut to await the feast in his honor. Damag escorted him to the scene of the festivities, a bare terrace with a small shelter of banana leaves erected for his comfort. On his right within the shade there was a row of clay jars filled with a brownish, pungent liquid which the thirsty drank from large bowls carved of wood.

As a majority of the men and women present already showed signs of intoxication, Maxwell guessed that the jars contained tapuy, an alcoholic beverage made of rice. Some distance in the rear of

the shelter there were several caldrons of rice steaming under their banana-leaf covers ready to serve. To the left and partially covered with palm fronds there were two roast carcasses which, upon inquiry, the missionary was informed were dogs, stuffed with the rice of their own eating, rare delicacies dear to the heart of the Igorot of whatever clan.

Directly in front of the guest of honor, about a hundred feet distant, was tethered a decrepit carabao. Maxwell inquired of Ciriaco the reason for the animal's presence but he pretended not to know. Later, at a signal from Damag fifty or more warriors set upon the bellowing, tortured animal. They literally hacked it to pieces much to the delight of the onlookers. Each secured for himself a portion. The horror of the spectacle was heartrending. Maxwell closed his eyes. He prayed that the inhumanity he had witnessed might never again be repeated.

Damag was too much occupied with the enjoyment to notice his visitor's disgust. Even had he seen his look of horror he might have interpreted it as the American manner of appreciating a signal honor, for, according to the Mayaoyao idea of hospitality, Damag had gone the limit.

As soon as the carabao meat had been roasted in the fires freshly kindled for that purpose, the feast began. Banana leaves served as platters. Damag ordered generous portions for his guest. Anxious not to offend Maxwell managed to swallow a few mouthfuls of rice with a new wooden spoon carved for the occasion. The Mayaoyaos use a wooden spoon for eating, other peasant Filipinos carry the food to the mouth with the hand.

Maxwell remained but a short time after the feast started, for Damag was soon too drunk to notice his departure. A Mayaoyao canyao lasts as long as there remains a bite to eat or a drop of tapuy. Dancing continues after eating until the dancers are overcome by the stupor of food and drink.

That night Maxwell prayed with greater fervor than ever before. In the States he had been told that the Filipinos do not drink to excess. His short stay in Manila had proven that false. Now, he had found that the primitive Mayaoyaos were even more intemperate than the Manila Tagalogs. And the canyao, he could not think of the spectacles he had witnessed without a shudder of disgust. Disillusion had met him more than half way.

The missionary put the memories of the canyao behind him as

if it had been a bad dream. He resolved to redouble his efforts to forward the mission he had been assigned. Within four months he had gathered a congregation eager to learn something of the Americans and their beliefs, for the Americans were the conquerors of the Spaniards known to them only as leaders of slave-hunting parties gathering laborers to toil in the steaming muck of the tobacco fields in the Cagayan valley flood-lands. It has been asserted that such raids always had the sanction of the Spanish missionaries on the ground that those Mayaoyaos finally escaping and returning to their mountain homes might bear some message of the meek and lowly Nazarine.

Maxwell's conduct toward the Mayaoyaos was most satisfactory from their point of view. He neither demanded nor accepted contributions of any kind, instead he presented them many gifts of beads, red cloth and other articles dear to the heart of the simple folk.

The tribal leaders secretly hoped that the new religion might serve them as an additional weapon for use against their traditional enemies the Gaddaans dwelling beyond the protecting mountains. After a time Damag the chief accepted baptism that the gods of the white man might be called upon to reinforce those of his ancestors, thereby giving his people an advantage over the Gaddaans who have to this day resisted every missionary effort of whatever creed.

Damag's acceptance of Christianity without discarding his ancient creed is a common Oriental practice. A Chinaman may be a Buddhist, Confucian and a Christian, all at the same time. Most Japs are both Buddhist and Shintoist, and a few add Christianity.

Maxwell had opened an intensive campaign for converts in April after his arrival in Banaue, at the end of the rainy season when the terraced fields promised a bountiful harvest. But, before the rice had ripened, there came a plague of locusts that left but half a crop. That meant hunger should the dry season linger longer than usual. In the Philippines there are but two seasons, the wet and the dry. A few days delay of either one may spell ruin to the farmer. The rainless days continue to the end of October long after the first shower should have fallen. Secretly, the shamans of the tribe, the pagan priests, had already many times invoked the ancient tribal gods and with propitiating offerings of white roosters, wine and tobacco performed the customary rites, but there came no rain to drench the parched fields.

It was not until the middle of November that Damag confessed to Maxwell the seriousness of their plight, that hunger had begun to exact its toll. Damag requested that he aid them through intercession with the god and savior to whom he had taught them to pray with an assurance that their prayers would be heeded. That a white man might thus have lived in the midst of an alien people without having known their precarious condition seems improbable to him who has never studied the Orient. Nevertheless, nearly twenty years there has proven to me that such is often the case, primitive peoples are slow to carry their problems to an alien who would change their customs or might criticize their beliefs.

At first Maxwell doubted the truth of what he had heard from the trembling lips of the grizzled, white-haired chief. Little investigation was required to convince him of the truth of what he had heard. At first thought, Maxwell decided to appeal to the government at Manila. But to obtain that aid weeks were necessary. Food would have to be brought in over trails too steep and narrow for other than light-burdened foot-travelers. While Maxwell was mentally debating the difficulties, Damag reminded him that he had not asked for food from the outside, only for the help of the gods of the white man. He explained that up to that time their own god Lumauig had not heeded their pleas. This made the situation even more perplexing in that not until that moment had it dawned upon the missionary that the primitive Filipinos had no concept to fit such terms as alms and charity as understood in modern society of the Occident.

The Mayaoyaos had prayed to their principal god and failed. Maxwell, too, believed in the power of prayer as did those responsible for his appointment to the post he occupied, hence to pray for rain in that hour of helplessness and distress seemed to be a most fitting course. This at least was his public attitude but, whatever might have been his secret convictions of the power of prayer as a producer of rain, the circumstances put them out of his mind, he had to follow the course of his preaching; he could claim no less power than the shamans of the local cult who never confess defeat.

A tropical shower closing the dry season has an effect scarcely believable to one who has never actually observed it. Such a shower, in a single night, turns brown fields green with inch-long grass. Plants grow with such rapidity that we who know the tropics sometimes hesitate to relate our experiences; for example, that a

banana plant may add a foot to its height in a single night, that within a period of three or four days leaves and roots grow to an edible size.

Prayer would bring rain the missionary assured the simple mountaineers. A call went out for a meeting that very afternoon. The entire community assembled. The men wore their best blankets, every color represented, and blue loin-cloths freshly cleansed. The women were resplendent in bright-colored skirts and necklaces of black, white and red seeds. Many of the girls wore flowers in their long, dark tresses. The babies naked romped in the yellow dust covering the clay floor of the little grass-thatched chapel the tribe had built with love and hope. The chapel furnishings were meager. There was a raised platform with a small table and a chair made of packing-boxes in which Maxwell had brought a supply of tinned foods and a small library. Into the earth floor stakes had been driven to which bamboo poles were lashed to provide seats for the worshipers.

The prayer service was opened with every member of the tribe present except those on guard against the Gaddaans. The opening was a song by the missionary himself assisted by Ciriaco his cook, the words of the song being Ilocano, a dialect understood by only a few Mayaoyaos. As yet no songs had been adapted to the Mayaoyao, this dialect having no written characters or alphabet. After a series of songs and prayer, Maxwell read a translated selection from the Bible, the Fifth Chapter of Mathew, calling particular attention to and explaining verses 43 to 45, inclusive.

"Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them which despitefully use you, and persecute you:

"That you may be the children of your father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

Maxwell had not yet concluded his explanatory remarks when Damag, followed by his lieutenants, stalked angrily out with the entire congregation in their wake. The missionary was so astonished he could utter no word of protest. He was left alone with his faithful Ciriaco. Although the chief and his people had vacated the chapel they lingered near to hear Damag's explanation of his action.

After Maxwell had recovered from his surprise, he went outside to where Damag with his lieutenants squatted in a circle, chewing betelnut. The center of their circle was marked by a blood-like pool, the combined efforts of their agitated chewing.

"Chief Damag, why didst thou leave the meeting?" Maxwell inquired with concealed chagrin and anger.

With what he considered a lordly *mein*, Damag discarded his chew, wiped his red-stained lips on the hem of his blanket, after which he began in a loud voice.

"Brother, thou shouldst know that it was thy reading that offended. Thou knowest that the Gaddaans are the only enemies we know. How can we love them? And thou knowest, too, that they are the unjust. My people ask for rain for themselves alone, they desire none for their enemies. We have no desire to love our enemies, neither do we desire their love. If the god of thy creed were to send us rain and famine to the Gaddaans, we would willingly pray to him," gulping emotion silenced him for a time. "We are now convinced that we must depend solely upon the god of our fathers Lumauig who has never yet failed us although sometimes somewhat tardy."

Maxwell raised his hand, a sign that he wished to reply. "Chief Damag, why should not the god of whom I have told thee send rain to all his children?" Damag was silent, Maxwell went on. "Surely thou wilt not deny that the Gaddaans are God's children as well as the Mayaoyaos."

"The Gaddaans are the evil spirits and their children," Damag sneered. "I can not believe that any Gaddaan could be a child of the Good Spirit of the white man thou hast recommended to us. Even now our enemies beat their tomtoms and drums nightly while dancing around a freshly taken head of a black pigmy an offering to the evil god to whom they pray for rain. But they pray in vain, their god desires a Mayaoyao head. They could not take one this year."

This last speech brought shouts of approval and peals of laughter from the listening crowd. The pigmies are the little blacks living in the Philippine jungles not yet invaded by the Malay stock. The Mayaoyaos being Malays did not consider a pigmy head a suitable offering during a crisis such as then threatened both tribes.

After hours of entreaty and argument, it was Ciriaco who was to find a way out of the dilemma. His was a Malay mind that under-

stood the viewpoint of Damag and his people who insisted that if the god of the white man were able to send rain to friend and foe alike, he would be equally as powerful to send rain to the just alone, the just, of course, being the Mayaoyaos.

Although Ciriaco was only a fair bean cook, he was a devout student of the Bible insofar as his limited schooling permitted. He like many others study most those chapters and verses best justifying their prejudices and suiting conditions confronted. He was fond of the Psalms, and it was in that part of the Bible he sought and found a solution of the problem at that moment confronting his employer whose failure might mean the loss of his own position as cook and prominent social figure of the community because of his ability to read and sing with the missionary. Shouting in a loud voice that all might hear, he read:

"Psalms XI, verse 6, Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup." He explained briefly that "the wicked" meant the Gaddaans and the "he" referred to the god of the white man.

"That's what we want for the Gaddaans!" Damag shouted. He thought such destruction as that described equally desirable as rain for the Mayaoyaos themselves.

The church refilled with a wild rush, only Maxwell and Ciriaco were left outside.

Maxwell bowed his head as if in silent prayer. After a full minute he boldly entered followed by his faithful Ciriaco. The service was resumed where interrupted hours before and continued long after the tropic sun had purpled and fallen under the horizon and had been relieved by a great, yellow moon flooding the chapel with her pale light.

The service ended the worshippers filed out. Through the clear, crisp mountain air, up from the plain beyond, there came to their ears weird sounds, drumbeats and echoes of shrill cries, high notes of the fierce Gaddaans dancing around their pigmy head, an offering to their god that he might send rain to quench the fires raging over their hunting-grounds. While they danced they put aside all thought of their enemies the Mayaoyaos; they had no desire to call the attention of their god to the substitution of a pigmy head for that of a Mayaoyao which they themselves considered a more acceptable offering.

The Mayaoyaos held a second meeting during the following

afternoon as no rain had fallen as a result of the first. Damag reported to the missionary that the Gaddaans had danced all night, their weird chants had been heard by his outposts at the lowest pass. They had been audible in the settlement only during the early hours of the night. On such occasions pagan enthusiasm wanes with the passing of the night.

At the third meeting of the third day, it was reported that a party of Gaddaans lead by their chief had been seen skulking near the low pass, but upon being discovered, disappeared in the jungle.

In the early part of that evening the Mayaoyao outposts reported that an ominous silence reigned in the Gaddaan camp. The strength of the outposts was doubled, an attack seemed imminent.

At midnight the excited outposts reported to Damag who passed the news on to Maxwell that great banks of clouds were gathering over the Cagayan valley beyond the Gaddaan plain. The end of the dry season seemed assured. Hope ran high, the settlement wakened, the rain-bearing clouds in the east, the Mayaoyaos believed, were an answer to their prayers. But the morning brought only disappointment, more bitter, when the coppery sun showed the Gaddaan hunting-grounds resplendent in ribbons of glistening silver. The silence on the plain was now explained. Rain had kept the Gaddaans under cover, and had filled their streams to overflowing.

At sunup not a single Mayaoyao guard remained at his post, each wanted to be first to report to his people that the rain had fallen on the unjust only.