

**MARY  
HAZELTON  
BLANCHARD  
WADE**



**ALILA, OUR  
LITTLE  
PHILIPPINE  
COUSIN**

**Mary Hazelton Blanchard Wade**

# **Alila, Our Little Philippine Cousin**

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Contact: [DigiCat@okpublishing.info](mailto:DigiCat@okpublishing.info)



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# Preface

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ON the farther side of the great Pacific Ocean are the Philippine Islands. These form one of the many island groups that hang like a fringe or festoon on the skirt of the continent of Asia. Like most of the islands in the Pacific, the Philippines are inhabited by people belonging to the brown race, one of the great divisions of the family of mankind.

The Philippines are shared by many tribes, all belonging to the same brown race. People of one tribe may be found on one of these islands; those of a different tribe are living on another; or one tribe may live in a valley and its neighbour in the hills; and so on to the number of eighty tribes. Each tribe has its own customs and ways. And yet we shall call these various peoples of the brown race our cousins; for not only are they our kindred by the ties which unite all the races of men in this world; they have been adopted into the family of our own nation, the United States of America.

The people of these islands are many of them wild and distrustful children. They have no faith in us; they do not wish to obey our laws. If we are in earnest in our wish to do them good, and not harm, we must learn to know them better, so that we may understand their needs. That is one reason why we are going to learn about our little Philippine cousin, Alila of Luzon.

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# CHAPTER I. THE NEW BABY.

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ALILA is such a strong, active boy now, it is hard to imagine him in his babyhood,—he was such a tiny brown tot!

His nose was so flat one would hardly have noticed there was a nose at all, except for the wideness of the nostrils. His big black eyes seemed to be moving around all the time, as much as to say:

"I must find out everything I can, and just as fast as I can, about this queer place in which I find myself."

His hair was straight and coarse and black, even on the day he was born. It was quite warm (in fact, almost all the days are warm in the Philippines), yet the doorway was carefully covered and the windows closed tightly.

Now, why do you suppose Alila found himself shut up in a close room like that when he first entered this big round world of ours, while there was such a soft gentle breeze outside as scarcely to move the tops of the cacao-trees in the garden?

The fact is, Alila's father, who is not afraid of the wild buffalo nor the boa-constrictor, nor even the huge cayman, is constantly dreading the evil that bad spirits may bring to him. And now he had a darling boy of his very own! According to the beliefs of his people, no evil spirit must be allowed to enter a home when a child is born, or the little one might be troubled by the spirit for the rest of his life.

So the loving parent walked back and forth over the roof waving a bolo in his hand, as much as to say:

"Look out, spirits, or you may get your throats cut. Keep away from here. Do not try to get inside to trouble my little one."

He did this very earnestly in the first hour of Alila's life, although he was shown the foolishness of such ideas by the priests the Spaniards sent among his people.

He is a small man, this father of Alila. He has high cheekbones like the Chinese and Japanese, and no beard upon his face.

When he felt that everything was really safe, he climbed down from the thatched roof, and, opening the door as little as possible, went softly up to the mat where the baby lay and kissed him.

But, dear me! not all persons kiss the way we do, and this father of the Malay race seemed rather to *smell* the baby than anything else we can think of. He placed his own nose and lips on the baby's cheek and drew a long breath. It was done to show his love, and that is what any kiss is given for, is it not?

This baby's bed would not, perhaps, suit all the other babies in the world. Some of those babies we know are cared for on cushions of down and wrapped in soft flannels and delicate muslins. But what did black-eyed Alila care for that? To be sure, he lay on a mat of woven palm leaves, but it was sweet and fresh.

And although the floor his eyes sometimes rested on was not covered with a rich velvet carpet, it was smooth and clean, for it was made of split bamboos flattened and fitted

close together. And oh, that floor was beautifully polished by Mother Nature herself, for the bamboos as they grow are covered on the outside with a coating of the finest and hardest varnish.

If Alila could have thought about it at all, he would have considered himself more fortunate than most babies,—for did not his own dear mother, who lay at his side, make every bit of the spread which covered his tiny body? She had taken the fibres of pineapple leaves and hemp and woven them together.

But that alone would not make the spread beautiful enough for her dear one. It must be given a bright colour, so she searched through the woods till she found a sapan-wood tree; then, breaking off some branches and opening them, she took a substance from the heart of each and made a crimson dye.

So you can see that the cover was done entirely by Alila's mother; and you can ask yourself if that wasn't a hundred times better than buying cloth out of a store. That would not have the touch of love in its making.

There was something else in Alila's home one does not see in other lands. Whenever the baby's eyes turned toward the light, they found it very soft and restful, for it came through a window in which were fitted the inner shells of a certain kind of oyster.

It was so pretty! The colours of the rainbow shone there in pale tints, and the flaring sunshine could not enter. The room was kept in a sort of twilight all day long, and made it pleasant for the new-born baby and his mamma to doze and dream.

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