

EDITORIAL

## THE ISSUE OF PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**“N**OT until the Philippine people are unmistakably ready for self-government should the trusteeship of the American Government cease”—so said President Taft at the annual banquet of the Ohio Society at Washington on the 29th of last month.

What, in the mind of those for whom the President spoke, is the test of “unmistakable capacity for self-government,” on the part of the Philippine people?

On the part of most people the test of the capacity for self-government is the existence of a government capable to keep order. If that test is applied to the Philippine people their capacity is amply proven. Their form of government is better than that of Austria; their parliaments are more orderly; their chosen officials compare favorably with most of our own. What then is missing?

Let us push aside the veil of “unmistakably ready for self-government” with which the soon-to-be-got-rid-of President seeks to veil the issue of Philippine independence.

When the Filipinos rose against the galling colonial yoke of Spain they made the identical experience that the Spanish-American colonists made when they took up arms, fully seventy-five years before, against the identical power. The Papal hierarchy, which they had hitherto considered the guardian, at least a guardian, of morality and virtue, threw off its mask; stepped forth in its true character as a political organization, ally of and shield for tyranny; and fulminated its anathemas against the “rebels” who dared to raise shrewd steel against the utterly corrupt Crown of Spain. In Spanish America, the effect of the Papal conduct was that, from Mexico down to Chile and Argentina, the Vatican at Rome and the Escorial at Ma-

drid were put into one sack, and treated alike. In the Philippine Islands, the shock of the discovery of the political and tyrannical essence of the Papal hierarchy carried the “rebels” further. They not only put Madrid and Rome into one sack, but they set up their own Pope—Aglipa.

By the time—May 1, 1898—when, despite the prayers of the Spanish Friars, Admiral Dewey smote the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, the independence of the Philippine Islands was, as Representative Jones of Virginia expressed it a few weeks ago in the House of Representatives, “virtually accomplished, hardly anything remained of Spanish rule or the Philippines but Manila”—with the Captain General, appointed at Madrid, and the Archbishop of Manila, appointed at Rome, as the dual head of Spanish oppression, driven into a corner. Not only was Spain cast off, but virtually Rome also. The Aglipayans were in virtual control.

The American conquest confirmed the revolution, as to Spain; as to Rome, however, the American conquest gave Rome a new lease of life.

Once in possession of the United States, the Philippine Islands came under control of the Government at Washington. There being no Aglipayan issue in the United States, the political emissaries of Rome had the field all to themselves in Washington, with the consequence that the yoke of Rome, which had virtually been shipped {slipped} by the Filipinos, was clapped back upon their necks:—The “Friar lands” so-called, which, if they belonged to any religious body, belonged to Aglipayans, were paid for out of the United States Treasury to Roman priests in the huge sum of over \$4,000,000; the sum of nearly half a million dollars was paid by the United States Treasury to the Roman Bishop of Manila for “damages” done to church property that belonged mainly to Aglipayans; and so forth and so on. Through Washington the Aglipayan church was discountenanced and despoiled, and the Roman church endowed and encouraged. It goes without saying that the Power of the Roman hierarchy in the Philippine Islands depends to-day almost wholly upon the support that it receives from the United States by reason of its being located in an American dependency; it goes without saying that Philippine dependence upon the United States is a condition precedent for the continuance of the tax-levying supremacy of Rome on the Islands. Finally, it goes without saying that not until the Philippine people have unmistakably cast off “the Aglipayan heresy”

and returned to Rome will they be considered to be “unmistakably ready for self-government”—in the opinion of the Ultramontane element whose spokesman President Taft is.

And that is, to-day, at the bottom of the issue of Philippine independence.

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