

# The Philippine Question.

A REPLY TO COLONEL DENBY'S "REMARKS."

By Sixto Lopez,

LATE SECRETARY OF THE FILIPINO COMMISSION TO WASHINGTON.

THE Philippine question—involving as it does the moral and legal rights of two peoples of totally different race, language, and traditions—requires that the Commission charged with the duty of judicial settlement shall maintain a strict impartiality, and a hair's-breadth precision in regard to matters of fact. Especially is this so when one of the parties to the dispute has undertaken, single-handedly, to deliver a judgment just in all respects to both. Any evidence of partiality, any looseness as to facts, any attempt at denying or concealing the acts or intentions of either party, will lessen, if indeed it does not wholly destroy, the value of the conclusions reached.

Colonel Denby is one of the Commissioners. He is the dominating influence; to him is attributed the actual writing of the "Preliminary Report." If an opinion is to be formed of the impartiality and judicial ability of the Commission, it is to the utterances of Colonel Denby that chief attention must be paid.

To THE INDEPENDENT of January 4th the Colonel has been good enough to contribute some remarks on an article of mine in the same journal. He displays caution and a sense of the fitness of things in terming his article "Some Remarks," because it is in no sense a reply to what I had written. He quotes a number of statements, interesting in themselves, but in most cases no more relevant to my contentions than if he had quoted from Deuteronomy or the minor Prophets. Nevertheless, Colonel Denby makes statements upon which I should like to cross swords with him—gallant soldier tho he be. At the outset he takes exception to my use of the word "ally" as applied to the Filipinos. Now it seems to me of the utmost importance that this question of "alliance" or "co-operation" between the American and the Filipino forces should be

definitely settled, because if there has been an "alliance" or a "co-operation" in the defeat of Spain, then the Administration and those who support it would be guilty—wittingly or unwittingly—of treachery toward the Filipinos in attempting to purchase our islands, or in seeking to seize them by force. If two parties have co-operated in seizing a territory from a third, it would be immoral and illegal for one of the parties to claim the sole right of determining the fate of that territory; and it would be treachery if the one party sought to purchase the territory from the defeated third claimant. That seems to me to be a clear issue, the importance of which few will dispute.

In dealing with this issue the Commissioners' "Preliminary Report" says:

"Nor was there any co-operation of any kind between the respective forces."

In Colonel Denby's "Remarks" he quotes an up-to-date letter from General Merritt, in which it is claimed that

"there was no agreement made by which he [Aguinaldo] was to aid us in taking Manila, nor assist us in any other way in the accomplishment of the object of our army in Luzon."

To which Colonel Denby adds,

"This letter [together with similar statements by Admiral Dewey] would seem to settle the 'alliance' question."

Presumably the Colonel has brought forward his strongest evidence. If all our future points of contention are to be "settled" in that summary manner, I fear the "savages" in Luzon, who still have an antiquated notion that both sides of a question should be considered, will hardly appreciate the beauties of "benevolent assimilation" and "civilized" government! That was our difficulty with Spain. We have had a good many vital questions "settled" in the same convenient fashion.

What are the facts of the case? On the

24th of April, just one week before the battle of Manila Bay, Consul-General Pratt, of Singapore, telegraphed to Admiral (then Commodore) Dewey, as follows:

"Aguinaldo, insurgent leader, here. Will come Hong-Kong arrange with Commodore for general co-operation insurgents Manila, if desired."

To which there came the reply:

"Tell Aguinaldo come soon as possible."

"DEWEY."

On the 10th of June, after Aguinaldo had been operating at Cavite and Manila, Mr. Pratt wrote to "His Excellency, General Emilio Aguinaldo," tendering his "sincere congratulations on the brilliant success of your recent military achievements," adding:

"It is now being shown that I was right in arranging for your co-operation with Admiral Dewey."

Brigadier-General Anderson, writing on the 4th of July to "Señor Don Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy, Commanding the Philippine Forces," says:

"The United States of America . . . being at war with the Kingdom of Spain . . . I desire to have the most amicable relations with you and to have you and your people co-operate with us in military operations against the Spanish forces."

Again, in a letter to Aguinaldo dated 6th July, in reference to camp accommodation and supplies, General Anderson says:

"For this, I should like to have your Excellency's advice and co-operation, as you are the best acquainted with the resources of this country."

In several other letters General Anderson asks Aguinaldo for "all possible assistance in making reconnaissance of the lines and approaches to Manila;" for permission "to see your maps;" for "any information you may have on the above subjects;" for "assistance to procure means of transportation for the American army, as it is to fight in the cause of your people;" for "passes," etc. And on the 21st July he thanks Aguinaldo "for assistance given on previous occasions."

In the face of all these plain statements by responsible officials—civil and military—of the United States, what has Colonel Denby to say? He simply quotes General

Merritt, who did not arrive in Manila until after the chief military successes had been achieved, who, when nothing more was required of the Filipinos, states that:

"It was part of my policy that we should keep ourselves aloof from Aguinaldo;"

and who finally writes a belated letter to Colonel Denby, saying that

"so far as I was concerned, or so far as my knowledge was concerned, there was positively no agreement between Aguinaldo . . . and myself that looked toward co-operation between us!"

We do not know, and we do not care, what General Merritt's "policy" was, but we know that his policy of "aloofness" was not the policy of General Anderson or Consul-General Pratt, one of whom "arranged for" and the other repeatedly "requested" the "co-operation" of Aguinaldo and his "Philippine forces." Yet Colonel Denby imagines that General Merritt's letter, with its studiously evasive "I's" and "my's" and "myself's" "would seem to settle the 'alliance' question." I leave the people of America to judge, merely remarking that the confidence of the Filipinos will be neither gained nor retained if the Administration, and those who undertake to defend it, seek to evade the obligations contingent upon the acts and utterances of its responsible servants.

Colonel Denby also directs attention to the question as to whether the Filipinos rendered any assistance in conquering the Spanish forces in the Philippines. This, too, is an important question, for altho "co-operation" and "assistance" were arranged for and requested, it might still be asked: Were they ever given? Generals Greene and Whittier cheerfully admit that the assistance rendered by the Filipinos was "very great." General Anderson, as I have already shown, thanked Aguinaldo for "assistance given on previous occasions." Consul-General Pratt congratulated Aguinaldo on the "brilliant success" of his "military achievements." The Filipinos' successes against the Spanish in Luzon, Panay, Cebu, Mindanao, Negros, Mindoro, Samar, Leyte, Marinduque, Masbate, Bohol, Parangua, and the smaller adjacent islands, are too well known to require reiteration here. But Colonel Denby admits or

doubts this assistance, according to the exigencies of the particular argument which he happens to be answering. Thus, in the *New York Herald*, he says:

"So Aguinaldo went ashore and commenced to fight, and, it must be said, to *vanquish* the Spaniards."

Further on in the same article the Colonel seems to doubt it, for he says:

"If he [Aguinaldo] rendered any assistance, let us pay him like men."

In the very next sentence he declares:

"That his [Aguinaldo's] *victories* over the Spaniards made our task easier is true."

In a former number of THE INDEPENDENT he says:

"If it [the war] had lasted any considerable time the diversion created by him [Aguinaldo] against the Spaniards would have undoubtedly benefited us."

Finally, in his "Remarks" on my article, he boldly declares that "the Tagalogs were drunk with vain glory. They had conquered the Spaniards."

Now which of these statements does Colonel Denby really believe? I know which of them is true, but to which of them am I to reply? The Colonel says that the Filipinos (1) helped to vanquish the Spaniards; (2) if they helped, they ought to be paid; (3) "it is true" they did help; (4) if the war had lasted they *would have* helped; (5) they were drunk with vain glory because they had not merely helped but had "*conquered* the Spaniards." Immediately following one of these statements Colonel Denby says: "Let us be honest." I cordially reciprocate the invitation; do let us be honest. If we helped to conquer the Spanish, be honest and say so, and stick to it. Nothing can be gained by verbal shiftiness. A victory gained in argument, by paradoxical contradiction, cannot be a victory for the right. If the Administration and those who support it are to set an example to our people; if we are to expect honest treatment and honest government, do let us be honest all round, in small things as well as in great.

Another point which Colonel Denby raises is as to whether Aguinaldo's policy from the first embraced the idea of independence.

Says Colonel Denby:

"As early as June, 1898, Aguinaldo favored the idea that we should hold the Philippines as a colony."

This extraordinary statement is made on the strength of hearsay evidence only. Not a word in all of Aguinaldo's letters or proclamations shows that he ever "favored" any such "idea." But Colonel Denby tells us that Consul Williams told the Secretary of State that Aguinaldo told him that "*his friends*" all hoped that "the Philippines would be held as a colony." If this gossip were true—and there is every reason to doubt its authenticity—it would simply indicate that not Aguinaldo, but *his friends* were favorable to American colonization. It is quite possible that Aguinaldo may have stated that *some or a few* of his friends professed to favor American rule. The transition from "some" to "all" is quite intelligible. Colonel Denby knows that hearsay evidence is insufficient to support the truth of a grave statement. But the "Preliminary Report" declares that with the arrival of General Anderson, "*for the first time* arose the idea of national independence." If this were true, what of it? The natural process of national evolution is from simple reform to independence. But, as a matter of fact, the idea, nay, more, the intense desire for independence was held and maintained from the first. Before Admiral Dewey arrived at Manila, the Filipino leaders in Hong Kong sent to the Philippines a proclamation beginning thus:

"Compatriots: Divine Providence is about to place independence within our reach."

The *Singapore Free Press* of May 4, 1898, in giving an account of Aguinaldo's departure for Manila, among other things, says:

"General Aguinaldo's policy embraces the independence of the Philippines."

Consul-General Pratt says, in reference to this newspaper's report: "The facts are, in the main, correctly given."

Independence was surely a *main*, and not a *minor* fact. The desire for independence was openly declared by Aguinaldo in his proclamation of May 24; in his letter to President McKinley of June 10; in his message to the Philippine Congress of June 23;

in the first article of his provisional constitution, promulgated June 23; and in his proclamation of June 18, part of which reads:

"I have proclaimed in the face of the whole world that the aspiration of my whole life, the final object of all my efforts and strength, is *nothing* else but your *independence*."

General Anderson did not arrive at Cavite until June 30, 1898. Yet according to Colonel Denby the "idea" of independence "arose for the first time" after the arrival of General Anderson. Again I leave the American people to judge on which side lies the balance of truth.

Colonel Denby complains that I have no right to profess ignorance of the intentions of the Administration in reference to the Philippines. He declares that when I was in Washington I "argued our cause with all comers, members of Congress, newspaper men, ordinary acquaintances, everybody." In this he exaggerates the facts. Undoubtedly I did have many *conversations* with some leading Americans, including several Congressmen. But what did they tell me? Nearly all of them assured me—whether out of mere politeness, or from actual knowledge, I know not—that our independence was a certainty; that the President had spoken, disclaiming all intention of annexa-

tion, and that the President *would never go back on his word*.

I am also charged with saying too much about "forcible annexation" and "criminal aggression." I have nowhere charged the Administration or the American people with either of these offenses. President McKinley first made use of the expressions. If his dictum upon the American "code of morality" is correct, and if he and others seek *forcibly to annex the Philippines, then it is* President McKinley, and not Sixto Lopez, who formulates the charge of "criminal aggression."

Finally, Colonel Denby is good enough to refer to me as one "who writes so well in favor of peace." I should like to return the compliment, but I cannot congratulate Colonel Denby on writing well in favor of *war*. He is doubtless the ablest defender of the Administration, and presumably he has used his strongest arguments. But his omissions are too apparent. His deductions are by no means warranted by *all* the facts. His arguments are far from convincing. His article and the "Preliminary Report" will aid us in our plea for independence. And inasmuch as unconscious humor is the highest form of humor, so unintentional aid from an opponent is of more real value than the help of friends.

LONDON, ENGLAND.