

# The Commoner.

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## DO WE DESERVE THE COMPLIMENT?

Tomas Estrada Palma, president-elect of the Cuban republic, upon the announcement that the United States would withdraw from Cuba, and permit the young republic to take its place among the nations of the earth, issued a statement in which he said:

The government of the United States has shown a most beautiful example of good faith in dealing with a weak government which it undertook to rescue from its oppressors. It has demonstrated its generosity and patriotism, and by the shedding of its own blood has helped Cuba to break the chain which united it with Spain. Some countries would have sought some pretext for selfish gain in undertaking a work of this character, and would have taken advantage of some technicality for their own aggrandizement, but the contrary spirit has been manifested by the United States, and it has given to the world an evidence of good will seldom found. The people of the United States have remembered their own Declaration of Independence, and have fulfilled a duty to mankind.

This compliment would make the American breast swell with pride, if the compliment itself did not remind us of our shortcomings in our dealings with another people.

The Filipinos helped us in our contest against our foe and their oppressor. Have we shown toward the Filipinos "a most beautiful example of good faith?" Have we demonstrated toward the Filipinos our "generosity and patriotism?"

"Some countries," says President Palma, "would have sought some pretext for selfish gain in undertaking a work of this character, and would have taken advantage of some technicality for their own aggrandizement, but the contrary spirit has been manifested by the United States and it has given to the world an evidence of good will seldom found." This is said with respect to our actions toward Cuba. Can it be said, in truth, with respect to our actions toward the Filipinos? Have we not in fact "sought some pretext for selfish gain?" Have we not "taken advantage of some technicality for our own aggrandizement" in our attitude toward our former allies in the Philippines?

"The people of the United States," says President Palma, "have remembered their own Declaration of Independence, and have fulfilled a duty to mankind." Undoubtedly President Palma meant well in his generous tribute to the "beautiful example of good faith" with which he credits our government; but in emphasizing this "beautiful example of good faith" in our dealings with Cuba, he has emphasized our lack of good faith in our dealings with the Filipinos?

He has stirred within the American breast a feeling of pride, so far as concerns our final act toward the Cubans, but that feeling was to some extent checked by a feeling of shame in the recollection of our course toward the people of the Philippine islands.

And why might not the same tribute that has been paid by President Palma in the name of the Cubans have been paid with equal truth in the name of the Filipinos? Why might not the

American people have "remembered their own Declaration of Independence" and why might they not have fulfilled "a duty to mankind" in their dealings with the Filipinos in the same manner and the same spirit which President Palma says they displayed with relation to Cuba?

## A Specific Instruction.

On March 3, 1900, the following resolution was passed by the house of delegates of the state of Virginia, and the same was passed by the senate on the 5th of that month:

Be it resolved that Hon. John W. Daniel and Hon. Thomas S. Martin, be, and they are hereby requested, to use their best efforts to secure an amendment to the constitution of the United States providing for the election of United States senators by direct vote of the people.

Of course, such a resolution, followed by the indorsement of the same doctrine by the democratic national convention, makes it certain that the senators from Virginia will cordially support the resolution now before the senate submitting a constitutional amendment providing for the popular election of senators. It is to be regretted that all of the states have not been equally specific. There is reason, however, to expect that every democratic senator will be recorded in favor of the resolution when the roll is called. If any one is to stand in the way of popular government and the direct representation of the people in the United States senate let it be a republican, not a democrat.

## TREASON IN THE PHILIPPINES.

The Commoner has received several requests for the publication of the law, or rather the official order, making it a criminal offense for any one to read the Declaration of Independence in the Philippine islands. It will be found in an order known as No. 292, entitled, "An act defining the crimes of treason, etc.," and was enacted "by the United States Philippine commission by authority of the president of the United States." Section 10 reads as follows:

Until it has been officially proclaimed that a state of war or insurrection against the authority or sovereignty of the United States no longer exists in the Philippine islands, it shall be unlawful for any person to advocate orally or by writing or printing or like methods, the independence of the Philippine islands or their separation from the United States whether by peaceable or forcible means, or to print, publish or circulate any hand bill, newspaper or other publication, advocating such independence or separation. Any person violating the provisions of this section shall be punished by a fine of not exceeding two thousand dollars and imprisonment not exceeding one year.

Circulating the Declaration of Independence would violate this order.

Section 9 of the same act provides a punishment for any one who joins a society for the promulgation of any political opinion or policy.

Section 15 provides that the act shall not apply to certain provinces unless the commanding general shall authorize and direct prosecutions under the act, "in which event it shall apply." In such provinces no one can tell whether the law is in force until the prosecution is begun.

The anti-imperialists in the senate had ample reason for denouncing this sample of arbitrary power. What would republicans have said five years ago if they had been charged with contemplating such a policy?

## TRUTHS THAT ARE SELF-EVIDENT.

No one who has watched the progress of events during the last four years has failed to notice the increasing frequency with which self-evident truths have been attacked. The Declaration of Independence formed the beginning of a new epoch in history; the truths set forth in that immortal document had long been entertained in secret, but no nation had set them forth with such clearness and positiveness. For nearly a century and a quarter these truths have been stated and reiterated by those who have spoken in defense of free institutions. They are self-evident truths because they appeal to that sense of justice which is inherent in every person. When it is said that they are self-evident it does not mean that they will not be denied, for no truth is so plain that it will not be denied by those who have an interest, or think they have an interest, in its overthrow. Some one has suggested that if any pecuniary advantage could be gained by disputing the law of gravitation, many influential and learned men could be found who would seriously attempt to destroy confidence in that universal law.

When it is said that the truths set forth in the Declaration of Independence are self-evident truths, it simply means that they appeal to those who are anxious to find the truth, and will be supported by those who have no personal reason for rejecting the truth. It is not expected that an hereditary monarch will admit that "all men are created equal," and that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." He would have to forfeit his throne in order to accept the doctrine, and that would require a self-denial which kings have not usually shown. There is not a single legal enactment, moral precept or great principle, however widely accepted, that is not at times condemned and denounced by those whose pride or whose pocket-books would be touched by the enforcement of that law, precept or principle.

But one of the tests of a self-evident truth is to be found in the failure of those who oppose it to propose a substitute for it. For instance, if a man denies that all men are created equal, he will first misconstrue the doctrine, and then, when asked to furnish a substitute for it, will have none. Men are not created equal in physical strength, in mental ability, in moral character or in worldly possessions. No one has ever asserted that they are, but they are created equal in their natural rights. Strength varies from day to day; mental ability may be inherited in part and in part acquired, and it may be destroyed by accident or disease. Moral character may be built up and it may be lost; wealth may be accumulated or it may be squandered, but natural rights can neither be acquired nor annihilated.

When God created man he bestowed upon him certain inalienable rights—rights which government did not give and rights which it cannot take away. In the possession of these rights every human being is equal to every other human being. No friend of imperialism, no supporter of monarchy, no scion of aristocracy, no represen-