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SECOND EDITORIAL

'TIS THE FIRST STEP THAT COSTS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

The latest advices from the Philippine Islands must be distressing to every decent man in the land; if he is at all informed upon some of the incidents in the recent history of America, he will furthermore see in those advices something downright ominous.

Gen. Otis telegraphs that the “rebel” forces are disbanded; that, consequently, any Filipino found in arms is a bandit, and will be treated as such. War is at an end, murder commences.¹

This sequence: “disbandment of rebels” and treatment of armed men as bandits, recalls certain events that took place only about thirty-three years ago just across our Mexican border.

Napoleon the Third—the Little—, found himself pressed at home; the thoughts of the French people were to be turned away from his misrule at their very doors; Mexico offered an opportunity; he set up there an Empire, with Maximilian as emperor, and backed up his intrusion with 50,000 soldiers.² Mexico was no match for such a force; its armies were routed, but—no sooner routed than they sprang up again. Despatch after despatch announced French victories, only to be immediately followed by news of the rising of new forces—just the same as now in the Philippines. The “enterprise” could not last in that way. Napoleon had to claim

¹ [MAJOR GENERAL ELWELL STEPHEN OTIS (1838–1909), commanded U.S. occupation forces and was military governor of the Philippines from August 1898 to May 1900, during the early stages of the U.S.-Philippine War of 1899–1913.

² During the American Civil War (1861–1865), Emperor Napoleon III of France enlisted the aid of Britain and Spain to defy the Monroe Doctrine and send an army to Mexico, ostensibly to force that country to pay its foreign debt. When the English and Spanish withdrew their troops, Napoleon decided to establish a Mexican puppet state, with Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph of Austria as emperor. A rebellion ensued under the Mexican patriot, Benito Juarez, and the French withdrew their forces in March 1867. The delusional Maximilian refused to desert “his people,” however, and was captured, court-martialed and executed in May 1867.

absolute victory; such was impossible for him in a country where the people repudiated him, and where, accordingly, armed forces re-rose and were bound to re-rise perennially—just as with the Filipinos. Thereupon followed the positive announcement of the absolute disbandment of the Mexican forces, and upon the heels of the announcement followed a decree of Emperor Maximilian, to the effect that, ARMED REBELLION BEING OVERCOME, ALL MEXICANS FOUND IN ARMS WOULD BE TREATED AS BANDITS. The decree was carried out. A butchery followed—and culminated shortly with the shooting of Maximilian himself, together with his two supporters in crime, Mejia and Miramon.³ Napoleon's announcement of the final overthrow of the "Mexican rebellion," together with what was a piece of the announcement, the decree pronouncing all Mexicans in arms bandits, was but an act of desperation, such an act as called for and brought on a speedy retribution.

Gen. Otis'—or is it McKinley's?—similar conduct toward the Filipinos recalls the Mexican incident.

Truly, the path of "Empire" is sodden in sin; nor was there ever a crime that did not meet its deserts.

'Tis the first step that costs. Led by the murderous class of Capital, who feel pressed at home and wish to turn our people's attention away from their home tribulations, the country took the first step towards rapine and brigandage; the second step is now being taken in sin, nor will retribution fail: "As nations cannot be punished in another world, they are punished in this; by an inevitable chain of causes and effects, Providence punishes national sins with national calamities."⁴

³ TOMAS MEJIA (1815–1867) and MIGUEL MIRAMON (1837–1867) were Mexican generals who betrayed their country to join with the French occupation forces and the Emperor Maximilian, with whom they were executed.

⁴ [GEORGE MASON (1725–1793), author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, as recorded in James Madison's *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention* for August 22, 1787. Mason's full statement, delivered during a debate on the slave trade, was as follows:

[“Col. MASON. This infernal traffic [sic] originated in the avarice of British Merchants. The British Govt. constantly checked the attempts of Virginia to put a stop to it. The present question concerns not the importing States alone but the whole Union. The evil of having slaves was experienced during the late war. Had slaves been treated as they might have been by the Enemy, they would have proved dangerous instruments in their hands. But their folly dealt by the slaves, as it did by the Tories. He mentioned the dangerous insurrections of the slaves in Greece and Sicily; and the instructions given by Cromwell to the Commissioners sent to Virginia, to arm the servants & slaves, in case other means of obtaining its submission should fail. Maryland & Virginia he said had already prohibited the importation of slaves expressly. N. Carolina had done the same in substance. All this would be in vain if S. Carolina & Georgia be at liberty to import. The Western people are already calling out for slaves for their new lands, and will fill that Country with slaves if they can be got thro' S. Carolina & Georgia. Slavery discourages arts & manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves. They prevent the immigration of Whites, who really enrich & strengthen a Country. They produce the most pernicious effect on manners. Every master of slaves is born a

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petty tyrant. They bring the judgment of heaven on a Country. **As nations can not be rewarded or punished in the next world they must be in this. By an inevitable chain of causes & effects providence punishes national sins, by national calamities.** He lamented that some of our Eastern brethren had from a lust of gain embarked in this nefarious traffic. As to the States being in possession of the Right to import, this was the case with many other rights, now to be properly given up. He held it essential in every point of view that the Genl. Govt. should have power to prevent the increase of slavery." (Emphasis added)

[De Leon apparently quoted from memory, which he often did. — *R.B.*]