

EDITORIAL

AMERICAN AGLIPAYANS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

BIDDEFORD, ME., despatches bring the news of six members of the Roman Catholic churches of that city and Lewiston, "all prominent," being interdicted by Bishop Louis P. Walsh of the Portland diocese in a general letter to the clergy read at churches on the 14th of this month. The despatches explain that the offense of the six prominent men was the signing, as "members of the Executive Committee of the French-American Roman Catholic Church of Maine," a petition to the Legislature in support of a bill that sought to take the management of the property of the church from the hands of the Portland diocese, and place it in the hands of a Board of Directors. For that act, pronounced "a grave scandal," the six men "have been interdicted the rights and privileges of the church in the reception of the sacraments in the Diocese of Portland," and Catholic societies are warned in the letter "that if they co-operate with the above-mentioned parties under interdiction, they will be deprived of their rights and privileges as a Catholic society in the Diocese of Portland."

This is pregnant tidings, all the more in view of the circumstance that 600 other Catholics signed the petition to the Legislature.

The interdiction, virtual excommunication, of men, not for any lapse in morality, not for any transgression in matters of faith or religion, but for acts that strictly and exclusively affect ownership and control of property in forms and manner recognized as legal by the laws of the land,—that, together with the undoubtable consequences thereof, is an event in which history is repeating and will, as a consequence, repeat itself, not as a farce, but as the continuation of a long chain of historic events of prime magnitude.

It was no act of "heresy" that, at the beginning of last century, provoked the Vatican to excommunicate the flower of South America's population. Their offense

was the taking up of arms against the intolerable tyranny and rapacity of the corrupt-to-the-bone then court of Spain, and the driving of the despoilers from the land.—The act concerned PROPERTY and was POLITICAL.

It was no act of “heresy” that, some 70 years later, again provoked the Vatican to threaten, and its friar agents to seek to enforce the threats upon, a large portion of the Filipinos. Their offense also was the rising in revolt against the extorting Spanish Government.—The act concerned, once more, PROPERTY, and was POLITICAL.

Last year and in this very country, Neff, O., it was no act of “heresy” that brought down upon some sixty and odd Roman Catholic parishioners condemnation from the pulpit. Their offense was to reject the economic and political tenets of Capitalism and accept those of Socialism.—Again, the act concerned PROPERTY, and was POLITICAL.

And now we have it in Biddeford, Me., where people are placed under interdiction by prelatical authority, not for “heresy,” but—once again, on an issue of PROPERTY, hence ultimately POLITICAL.

In the South American instance, just so soon as the patriots in arms discovered, behind the mask of religion, agencies of the political power which they were struggling with, these were, fast as caught, made to keep company with their franker fellow political spies, pendent from the limbs of tamarind trees.

In the instance of the Philippine Islands, the Filipinos went further, in a way. The Pope in Rome being against them, they deposed the Pope, so far as they were concerned, and set up a Pope of their own in Mindanao, Aglipa by name.

In the Neff, O., instance, the course adopted by the sixty and odd Socialists resembled that of the Filipinos. They pulled themselves out of the jurisdiction of the capitalist politician disguised in clerical robes, set up their own religious organization—the Polish-Slavonic Catholic Church; and affiliated the same with a kindred national body—the National Catholic Diocese of America, incorporated under Ohio, laws. It was an Aglipayan move.

Whither the Biddeford, Me., affair is bound to tend may be gathered, partly from the Aglipayan note, easily caught from the title of the six interdicted men—“Executive Committee of the French- American Catholic Church of Maine”;

and partly from the Bourbon blind tenacity in error that marks a ruling Property Class, among whose satraps the Roman Catholic political priesthood have ever led in Bourbon blindness.

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Uploaded April 2012

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