

EVENTS IN PHILIPPINE HISTORY FOR MARCH

By TIMOTEO S. ORACION *

March 2, 1847. Birth of Cayetano Arellano in Orion, Bataan. Arellano was the first Filipino chief justice of the supreme court and is regarded as the greatest Filipino jurist.

When the Philippine Republic was established, General Aguinaldo offered Arellano a position in his cabinet. When the Americans came, Arellano was asked to help organize the civil government in the Philippines. Because of his wisdom, he was appointed the first Filipino chief justice of the supreme court. He occupied this post from 1901 to the time of his death in 1920. His ability as a jurist was recognized even abroad. Yale University conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws. Yet, in spite of the honors that he had won, Arellano was very modest. When he was dying, he was asked if he had any wishes regarding his funeral. The great jurist answered, "After I am dead, wrap me up in a mat and take me to the cemetery."

March 16, 1521. Magellan discovered the Philippines.

From the Ladrões Ferdinand Magellan sailed westward, still looking for the Spice Islands. On March 16, 1521, he sighted an island which he learned afterwards was called Zamal, now called Samar. On the following day Magellan landed his worn-out sailors on a small island named Humunu, now Homonhon, and had two huts built for the sick. This island was uninhabited, but some natives came from the island of Suluan, in a native prau. These were the first Fili-

pinos seen by the Spaniards. Because of the difficulty in getting food, Magellan left the place eight days later, and sailed to Limasawa, a small island south of Leyte. Here he found a prosperous Filipino village. The inhabitants were cultivating rice and breadfruit. They had coconuts, oranges, bananas, citron, and ginger. In Limasawa Magellan held the first mass in the Philippines. He erected a cross and took possession of the Islands in the name of the king of Spain. Magellan called the Islands the Archipelago of Saint Lazarus because it was on the day of this saint that he reached the Philippines.

March 24, 1934. The passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Law in the United States Congress.

The Tydings-McDuffie Law is sometimes known as the Philippine Independence Act because its purpose is to give the Philippines her independence after a transition period of ten years. The government during this period of trial and preparation is known as the Commonwealth of the Philippines. The Filipinos are given the right to run all its departments—executive, legislative, and judicial. The United States exercises control only in the relations between the Philippines and foreign countries. The United States is represented in the Philippines by an American official called the High Commissioner. He takes no direct part in the government of the country and acts as a mere watcher in the way the government is being run, and reports his observations to the President and the Congress of the United States.

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