

MABINI - FIGHTER FOR FREEDOM

Apolinario Mabini, a Filipino, was the first Oriental to present the bold formula of complete and absolute freedom and independence for his people. For him, independence and freedom had to be absolute in order to be cherished by the people.

The Spanish colonial regime was a period characterized by moral, social, and political degeneration. Mabini's honesty, decency, dignity, and delicacy provided contrast to the pervading corruption in that period. He was born on July 23, 1864, in the barrio of Talaga, municipality of Tanauan, province of Batangas. Although his parents were very poor, Mabini was able to finish his secondary course at the San Juan de Letran through a free scholarship obtained in open competition. Afterwards, he obtained his Bachelor of Laws degree at the University of Santo Tomas.

It is to be recounted that when Mabini was named Prime Minister of the Aguinaldo Cabinet, he did not collect his salary nor spend a single centavo of the public finances. In his Decalogue, the Batangas sage emphasized the value of honor which he laid stress on in the first commandment:

"First. Love God and your honor above all things; God as fountain of all truth, of all justice, and all activity; honor is the only power that will oblige you to be truthful, just and laborious."

After his graduation from the University of Santo Tomas, Mabini worked as deputy clerk in the court of first instance of Manila. Later on, he practised law. Once, while Mabini was undergoing treatment for his paralysis in Los Baños, a group of soldiers appeared in his cottage and informed him that they were instruct-

ed by General Emilio Aguinaldo to bring him to the General's office in Kawit, Cavite. Mabini was surprised, but he obeyed the orders of the commander-in-chief of the Filipino rebels who had just returned from Hong Kong in keeping with the agreement in the Pact of Biak-na-Bato.

Mabini was offered the position of adviser by Aguinaldo. The Batangas lawyer at first refused, claiming that he was a very sick man. Aguinaldo, then, appealed to his sense of patriotism and Mabini could no longer ignore the call of duty. Aguinaldo was advised by Mabini that in order to strengthen his government he had to obtain the support of the people. He suggested that a Congress of delegates from different provinces be summoned to congregate at the Barasoain Church in Malolos, Bulacan, to ratify the Declaration of Philippine independence of June 12, 1898, and to support the policies of the new and independent government. Aguinaldo followed Mabini's suggestion and the delegates of the Malolos Con-

gress were summoned. Aguinaldo and the rest of his cabinet transferred the seat of government to Malolos, Bulacan.

Since his arrival in Malolos, the first problem that Mabini had to tackle was the consolidation of Aguinaldo's rule. When the latter proclaimed Philippine Independence in Kawit, Cavite, on June 12, 1898, he held control only over eight Tagalog provinces, which were Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Morong, and Nueva Ecija. Aguinaldo had no jurisdiction over the rest of the regions of the Philippines. At that time, Aguinaldo had appointed Mabini Prime Minister, and as such, head of the Council of Ministers.

Mabini was aware that the three most important regions of the Philippines had also declared their independence from Spain under three different leaders, separated from and independent of each other.

During the convention of the Malolos Congress in the church of Barasoain, Malolos, Bulacan, on September

29, 1898, the Visayan leaders sent Francisco Villanueva as their delegate to propose to Aguinaldo that the Visayas be joined with Luzon and Mindanao to form a strong and united nation which would be powerful enough to resist the Spanish rulers. Aguinaldo, Mabini and other members of Congress approved the proposal of Villanueva, Sr.; and for the first time in Philippine history a single juridical entity, a true Philippine nation, was born.

Mabini continued to fight for his country's freedom even with the coming of the Americans. He had to be carried from town to town, from battlefield to battlefield in a hammock and he never ceased writing letters to generals and other army officials encouraging them not to lose heart in fighting. Afterwards, the Americans offered peace negotiations. Pedro Paterno proposed that the Philippines be made a

protectorate of the United States. Trinidad Pardo de Tavera proposed that the Philippines be annexed to the United States. But Apolinario Mabini remained firm in his idea of complete and absolute independence for the Philippines.

Mabini was captured by the Americans and brought to Manila where he was imprisoned at Fort Santiago. However, after peace reigned in the Philippines, the Americans issued in 1901 a general amnesty for war prisoners, and Mabini regained his freedom. He was helpless, sick and penniless. Finally on May 13, 1903, the Sublime Paralytic succumbed to cholera. Thus ended the life of a ceaseless fighter for Philippine freedom, who in spite of his being a paralytic offered his talents and labor for the well-being of his country. — *By Francisco Villanueva, Jr., Sunday Times Magazine, July 25, 1965.*

When a man is on his knees proposing to a girl,
he might as well say his prayers at the same time.

— *Chicago Daily Tribune.*