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United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs From 1889 to 1893.

Contributes This Very Interesting Article on "The Papacy and the Indians."

One of the greatest contests of the ages is now in progress on the American continent. It is the struggle between Protestantism and the papacy; between modern civilization and medievalism; between republicanism and despotism; between Americanism and foreignism.

THE PATRIOTIC ASPECTS OF THE STRUGGLE.

The object of this paper is to set forth clearly the patriotic aspects of this great contest. The Roman Catholic church as a religious institution, with its system of theology, its mode of worship, its discipline, its methods of propagandism, has the same right that any other religious organization possess in America, and so long as its friends and advocates confine themselves to the realms of strictly ecclesiastical affairs it will receive from the American public, rightly, the same treatment that is accorded the Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, or any other denomination.

When Roman Catholics in America, acting, not as individuals, each expressing his own personal preference and following the lead of his own judgment in political matters, seeking to promote justice and to further the public welfare, as members of Protestant churches generally do, but instead of this, united under a compact organization, standing together, voting together, seeking to secure advantages for the Roman Catholic church out of the political conditions in this country, they at once subject themselves to the challenge of patriotism.

When Roman Catholics, simply because they are Roman Catholics, and without regard for their fitness, are thrust forward into public places and fill an exceptionally large number of the national, state and municipal offices; when it is understood that Roman Catholic votes are in the market, at the disposal of those candidates for office who, directly or indirectly, in money or in other ways, will pay the highest price for them; when the Roman Catholic church boldly and openly and almost unanimously allies itself with one political party, and seeks through that party to gain for itself advantages at the expense of other denominations; when the church identifies itself with a disreputable political ring, such as Tammany Hall, and fattens on the ill gotten gains of blackmail and corruption, as has been shown by the Lexow committee; when the church is able to secure for its schools and charitable institutions millions of dollars from the public funds in the great cities and out of the state treasuries; when the church is able, by its organized lobby and its political influence, to take from the United States treasury millions of dollars for the carrying on of its missions among the Indians, it behoves every lover of the republic and of republican institutions to array himself against an evil that menaces, seriously, the welfare of the nation.

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patriotism, and is as urgent as was the call for troops in '61 to preserve the Union. The assault made upon our institutions is more subtle, veiled in greater secrecy and more plausible, but none the less hostile and deadly than was the assault made by those who sought to dissolve the Union.

A CONCRETE EXAMPLE.

History is said to be philosophy by example. We have much to learn as to the aim, method, spirit and ultimate tendency of the Roman Catholic church in this country by studying the relation of the papacy to the Indians. No one will deny that there have been self-sacrificing Roman Catholic missionaries who have devoted themselves to work among the Indians, and no fair-minded man desires to withhold from them whatever modicum of praise may be due to their zeal, conscientiousness, fidelity and efficiency. It is not easy, of course, to separate between the individuals who are involved in a system and the system itself. Many of the individuals may be honest and praiseworthy, while the system to which they belong, and for which they themselves are not responsible, may be utterly vicious. It is fair to say that in relation to the Indians in this country the chief motive, the impelling cause, the one dominant force which, more than anything else, and all else combined, has urged forward the Roman Catholics in their endeavors, has been the desire to augment their own power, to extend the influence of the papacy, to make Roman Catholics out of the Indians, to secure whatever could be secured for the glory of the church.

CONTRACT SCHOOLS.

The government of the United States has, since 1876, been devoting an increasing amount of money and care to the work of educating Indian youth, with the view of fitting them for American citizenship. Some years ago, in addition to public schools established and maintained by the government itself, the Indian office entered into contract with various religious bodies for the education of Indian children in mission or church schools. Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Friends, Lutherans, Mennonites, Unitarians and Roman Catholics participated in this form of government subsidy. Baptists are the only considerable body of christians that have had no share in it. They have refused to have anything to do with it, because of their well-known doctrine as to separation of church and state.

The following table, taken from the records of the Indian office, exhibits the amount of money paid out of the public treasury to the various religious denominations for carrying on their mission work among the Indians:

Table with columns for Year (1880-1888) and rows for various denominations: Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal, etc. Total amounts are listed for each year.

In 1889 the commissioner of Indian affairs, when appealed to by the Roman Catholics to increase the number of Roman Catholic contract schools, declined to do so, on the ground that he regarded the entire system as objectionable, and hence he was unwilling to extend it. His action in this matter gave rise to a violent and bitter controversy which continued during his administration, and attracted large public attention. Among the reasons urged by the commissioner for the position taken by him were the following:

First—The schools carried on by the Roman Catholics, and by other religious bodies, while indirectly promoting the general welfare of the Indians, and tending to fit them for citizenship, were nevertheless distinctively mission schools, designed chiefly to proselyte

the Indians to the peculiar form of religious faith held by each denomination carrying on its work among them. The basis of instruction in the Roman Catholic schools is the Roman Catholic catechism, which inculcates in the minds of the Indian children—taught at public expense—that "the only true church is the Roman Catholic church," and that the pope is its infallible head, to whom absolute obedience is due. While no one disputes the rights of the Roman Catholics, at their own charges, to propagate among the Indians, or elsewhere, their own peculiar dogmas, the commissioner insisted that they had no right to do this at public expense.

Second—The money paid for the support of these contract schools is public money, taken from the United States treasury, and belonging to the people of the United States, and raised by public taxation. It is a misuse of public funds to appropriate it to private purposes. Public money should be used only for public purposes. The propagation of a sectarian tenet is not a matter in which the public is interested.

Third—It is a violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of the constitution of the United States, which prohibits the establishments of any religion. The United States does virtually establish the Roman Catholic religion when, by act of congress or by the act of any executive officer, it takes public money and uses it for the establishment and support of a distinctively Roman Catholic school which inculcates as a fundamental doctrine of its teaching the idea that it alone is the true church, and that there is no salvation out of its folds.

Fourth—To take public money for the maintenance of sectarian schools is contrary to the doctrine which is now well nigh universal among Americans, that the church and the state should be kept entirely separate and distinct. The state or the nation is a political institution, established for the preservation of order, the securing of justice, the promotion of the public welfare; the state has nothing to do with matters of conscience, and has no right whatever to meddle with religious affairs. The church, on the other hand, is distinctively a spiritual institution, designed to promote the religious welfare of its own subjects, and it has no rights or authority outside of its own domain; it can exercise discipline only over those who voluntarily, as members, submit themselves to its jurisdiction. The state has no right to interfere with the church or to control it so long as it keeps itself within its own spiritual domain; the church has no right to seek to impose its obligations upon any that are unwilling to accept them, nor to intrude itself into the sphere of politics, nor to attempt to secure an unfair advantage in the way of offices or public patronage. For the government to appropriate money to sectarian schools among the Indians is a violation of this established doctrine of the separation of church and state.

Fifth—To appropriate money for Roman Catholic schools is un-American. The public schools of America are peculiar. They are the pride of the republic. They are a distinctive feature of our civilization. They embody more fully, perhaps, than any other one institution, a distinctive American idea. They seek to prepare the entire generation of children for their duties as American citizens; their aim is patriotic; their scope is universal; their spirit is equality. They seek by all legitimate means to break down all the barriers of race, nationality, religion, which separate the masses in American life, and to blend all the heterogeneous elements into one homogeneous people. They are the citadels of freedom. They are the training schools of American citizenship. For them the nation pours out its treasure like water, the annual cost of its public schools now exceeding \$100,000,000. They are public institutions, maintained for the public, for the promotion of the public weal, and are paid for out of the public treasury. To take public money and devote it to sectarian schools which are necessarily provincial, and which tend to separation, and which strive to keep alive the animosities of race and religion, is thoroughly and wholly un-American.

Sixth—To appropriate public money for the support of Indian schools is unpatriotic. It violates a fundamental principle of Americanism; it creates a corruption fund dangerous to the peace of the community; it introduces into politics sectarian strife and bitterness; it tends to subordinate questions of public policy to sectarian interests; it hinders the process of complete amalgamation and assimilation of the various elements of our population; it promotes the temporal prosperity of one sect at the expense of others; it is done in the face of the earnest protests of millions of people, who believe it to be a public wrong; it threatens the integrity of the public school system of the country, and opens the door for the countless abuses which history shows are inseparable from any union of church and state.

THE PROTESTANTS ACQUIESCE.

The discussion of the question of contract Indian schools was taken up with zeal by the public at large; clergymen discussed in the pulpits; religious and secular newspapers devoted leading

editorials to it, and published many communications regarding it; the deliberative assemblies of the various Protestant churches considered it; it was a frequent theme of discussion in ministers' meetings, and in social unions, and received careful consideration by the Mohawk conference, the Indian Rights Association, the National League for the Protection of American Institutions, and was a favorite theme in the various patriotic associations. The result of the discussion has been a great change in public sentiment, which amounts to practical unanimity, outside of the Roman Catholic church. The Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians and Unitarians, who had shared in the public money in support of their mission schools, one by one gave up their connection with the system and pronounced against it, so that at present (1895) the Roman Catholic church stands almost alone in receiving government aid for its missionary work among the Indians. So overwhelming has been the tide of public sentiment against the system that the present commissioner of Indian affairs, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, has announced that it is his present purpose to entirely do away with the contract school system, and that he has already, wherever it could be done without prejudice to the interest of the Indians, withheld appropriations from contract schools. Thus the system is doomed to destruction.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ASSAULT.

The Roman Catholics, on the other hand, sought to resist the force of the arguments urged against the system, and to break down the commissioner who urged them. The methods adopted by them are very significant and should be carefully considered.

1. They brought to bear upon President Harrison, through their ablest men, Archbishop Ireland and others, the strongest influence they could use to induce him to remove the commissioner from his position. The president informed them that he sympathized with the general attitude assumed by the commissioner; that he, himself, preferred the national schools for the Indians, and that he was unwilling to accede to their request.

2. They attempted to destroy the commissioner's reputation. False and libelous articles, seeking utterly to discredit him in the public mind as a trusted and competent official, were printed and extensively circulated. For months, and even for years, the Catholic newspapers were burdened with these accusations; but slander and false charges often re-act upon their authors. This method of warfare is a modern form of the inquisition, the essence of refined, cruel persecution; but while it may inflict pain and suffering, it fails of its ultimate object. It failed here.

3. Failing in this, the Roman Catholics next attempted to defeat the confirmation of the commissioner of Indian affairs. They concentrated upon the senate of the United States, either personally or by letter, the whole force of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Senators were flooded with letters and petitions, and remonstrances and threats; nothing was left undone that could be done to secure a victory, and the men who engineered the scheme felt absolutely confident of success up to the hour when the vote was taken; but this scheme also failed. It was the most brazen, bold, unjustifiable, un-American attempt ever made in this country to dictate to the United States senate its action regarding the confirmation of a high official, on purely sectarian or religious grounds. It injected into the secret deliberations of the United States senate the odium theologianum in its most repulsive form; it was suitably rebuked by the action of the senate in confirming the commissioner in his high office.

4. Failed again, the Roman Catholics next attempted, through their lobbying machine in Washington—known as the bureau of Catholic Indian missions—to control legislation on Indian affairs in their own interests; and in this they were partially successful. They secured the introduction into the Indian bill to be supported by the government, special Roman Catholic schools which had been rejected by the commissioner. Senator Vest, of Missouri, was one of their principal champions on the floor of the United States senate in securing vicious legislation, and in protecting their interests.

5. The Roman Catholics attempted to prevent the renomination of President Harrison, giving as a reason for their position their dissatisfaction with him because of his "bigotry" in sustaining the commissioner of Indian affairs in his opposition to the contract school system. In this, too, they were unsuccessful.

6. In the presidential election of 1892, the two great parties, the Democratic and Republican, entered the contest on pretty even terms; it was generally understood that the result of the election was very uncertain. The Democrats had triumphed in '84 and the Republicans in '88, and there was every reason to believe that the result of the struggle in '92, if not a drawn battle, would be determined by a very small plurality of votes. It was thought that a comparatively small number of voters might exert an abnormally

effective influence in determining the result of the election. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN POLITICS.

This offered to the Roman Catholic church an opportunity that had never presented itself before in the United States, when it might show its power as a political machine. Roman Catholic newspapers boldly announced that they cared nothing for the great questions at issue between the two parties; that they had a grievance against the Republican party because of the Indian policy of the Indian commissioner; that by united effort on the part of the Roman Catholics they might defeat the Republican party, insure the election of Cleveland, and thus punish their enemies and gain an advantage for the church. A secret pamphlet, full of misstatements, falsehoods, slanders, charging President Harrison with "bigotry," and asserting that he was using the powers of his great office to the injury of the Roman Catholic church, were circulated freely all over the country, among priests, bishops and others. Urgent appeals were made privately, and from the pulpit, to Roman Catholics to stand together for the overthrow of the administration as a matter of revenge, and for the election of Cleveland for the sake of the ecclesiastical advantage that they might gain from it.

Harrison was defeated; Cleveland was elected. How far the attitude of the Roman Catholic church contributed to this result probably never will be known; it is probably true that their attitude was not the determining factor; many causes combined to bring about a change of administration. Nevertheless it is true, and a truth of great significance, and needs to be carefully pondered by every patriotic American, viz, that the Roman Catholic church threw itself almost solidly into the presidential struggle of 1892, and sought to bring about the defeat of Harrison, because he sympathized with the public schools and was opposed on principle to appropriating public money for the support of Roman Catholic schools among the Indians. The Roman Catholic newspapers boasted, after the election, that the victory was theirs, brought about by them; and the church had sought to secure from the then incoming Democratic administration the reward of its labors in behalf of Cleveland. The startling fact presents itself thus, that the Roman Catholic church in this country, which claims a following of ten millions, with a voting population probably of a million and a half or more, can be used as a machine for determining presidential elections; that it holds—as it has boasted said by one of its champions—the balance of power, which it is prepared at any time to use for its own advantage. The Roman Catholic church thus enters the lists, not to promote the public weal, not in the interest of patriotism, but to promote its own advantage and in the interest of the Roman Catholic church. In this fact there is great peril to Republican institutions; it is full of ominous threatenings, which indicate a storm that may at any time burst upon this country with such fury as to shake its very foundation of liberty.

Admitting what is claimed by intelligent Roman Catholics, that the Roman Catholics of America combined secretly for the overthrow of President Harrison and the election of Grover Cleveland, and succeeded in their effort, what follows? Evidently if they can combine for the defeat of President Harrison, they can combine for the defeat of any other president. If they can conspire together for the election of Grover Cleveland as president, they can conspire together for the election of any other man as president. If they can combine to control a presidential election because of their dissatisfaction with the administration of the Indian office, they can combine to control a presidential election because of the dissatisfaction with the administration of any other great office. If they can combine for the control of a presidential election to punish one administration for being unfriendly to their securing money from the public treasury for Indian schools, they can combine for the overthrow of another administration because of its unfriendliness, or supposed unfriendliness, to their securing public money for parochial schools, or for the erection and maintenance of cathedrals, for the establishment and maintenance of monasteries, monastic or theological seminaries. If Roman Catholic priests can control the votes of the members of their churches, and lead them to do violence to their own political convictions in one instance, they can in other instances. Thus we are confronted with the specter of a vast body of voters, not actuated at all by individual judgment, not influenced to any degree by patriotic considerations, not following their own conscience, not seeking at all to discharge their civic obligations to the republic, but banded together, led, controlled and guided by a priesthood seeking to use their votes wholly in the interest of the Roman Catholic church, and who hold up before the community this vast political power as an ensign at any time ready to be used to strike down any man or party that is not willing to bow meekly to their command and concede all that they see fit to ask. It does not require the intelligence of a statesman, but needs only the common sense of any plain patriot to see that in such a condition of things there is imminent peril to Republican institutions, and that there is need of some sort of a remedy. The foe of Republican institutions, the enemy of liberty, that thrusts itself into American politics and seeks to prostitute the sovereignty of the voters to the base uses of an ecclesiastical body, ought to be rebuked in such manner that the reputation of the disreputable conduct of the Roman Catholic church in the presidential election of 1892 will be impossible.

The friendly warning addressed by American patriots to the Roman Catholics in this country is this: Hands off of the public treasury; hands off of the ballot box; no priestly interference with American politics. There is room in America for only one people, who shall all be Americans. No flag shall be honored here as the symbol of sovereignty, except the stars and stripes—the emblem of liberty.