

portant subject if the proceeding did not have at least the tacit approval of the church whose members are taking part. From the length to which matters have been allowed to go already, there is good reason to believe that a political life-and-death struggle is on its earnest between anti-Catholics and Catholics, and that the contest will be waged more fiercely than ever from this time forward. It is not confined to the municipality of Butte, or to Montana, or even to the West, but reaches to every part of the Union, and with the campaign as it is to be instituted this summer it probably will not be long before there is no candidate for office, from President of the United States down, who is a Catholic or an A. P. A., or who is believed to have a feeling of toleration for one or the other, who will not have to meet the solid political antagonism of the side which he is looked upon as being unfavorable to.

The A. P. A. part of the program is pretty well understood from recent discussions. The Catholic division, which has been in embryotic operation three or four years, is about to be opened before the country, though, like the power it antagonizes, the workings will be principally in secret. The launching of the scheme is to take place at the convention of the Catholic union, which opens in Cleveland on June 25. The four conventions previously held have had membership in Ohio only, taking in the ill Catholic societies of that state. Since the meeting last year, however, owing to the action of the A. P. A., the Catholic union has been made a national affair, and in this respect has assumed broad proportions. In the call of the union, issued to the Catholic clergy and societies, it is set forth that "the object of the organization is to unite in fraternal union for the promotion and protection of Catholic interests, and for the mutual welfare of its members, all Catholics." The urgent need of such union is pointed out in the existence and workings of the A. P. A., from the references to which the following excerpt is made:

By a widespread organization, which is agitating in the dark, the Catholic church and her children are maligned and persecuted in the vilest manner, and attempts are made for their disfranchisement and oppression in political and social respects. Its influence is felt in society as well as in the legislative halls. By the enactment of partisan laws the maintenance of parochial schools is rendered more and more difficult to Catholics, as, for instance, by the enactment of the free school book bill. Every now and then new measures are brought forth, which are calculated to curtail the rights of Catholics. And where will they stop if not checked by the united action and energetic endeavors of Catholics to assert the rights guaranteed them by the Constitution of our glorious land?

The "united action and energetic endeavors of Catholics to assert the rights guaranteed them" are to be directed in the political channel, with all the vehemence of religious fervor. It is pointed out that even in its limited state capacity the union has had its influence in politics. Among the works claimed for it is that in Ohio "it succeeded in blocking the passage of the free school book bill for two years and would certainly have baffled the project completely but for the

shrewdness and artifice on the part of persons in high political standing." Its influence is now invoked as a national organization, regardless of any existing lines of division, to cause all Catholics to "stand ready with watchful eye and strong hand to ward off these malevolent aggressions and defend our warranted rights."

Whatever influence the enemies of the Catholic church may have thought it exercised in the political affairs of this nation heretofore, it is now an assured fact that henceforth Catholic unity and perseverance will be directly felt in politics. The Roman church, as such, may take no active part; and its official utterances may be as friendly to the Republic and its institutions as ever; nevertheless, through this Catholic union everything that the religious body could accomplish, and more too, can be attained. The church, as such, can keep aloof, while its members as a secret society "union," such as the one about to commence national operations, may carry out every purpose within reach. Nor can the Republic complain. It tolerates a secret organization which ostracizes and virtually disfranchises citizens because of their religious affiliation; while this is done there can be no offense taken at those citizens organizing to fight their assailants with their own weapons. The anti-Catholics and Catholics, in that capacity, are strictly and emphatically in politics. If the fight is permitted to go on much longer there is trouble coming to the nation from that source.

STREET PREACHING.

This may be a land of liberty, political and religious; but there are some people who think that the liberties of some classes are very much curtailed by local regulations in various municipalities. Of this number are the Rev. Henry Varley, the millionaire English evangelist, and the forty Oakland ministers who tried to preach in the streets of the California town on Sunday night. Street preaching is allowed in the cities and nearly all the towns of Great Britain. It is urged that this is the only means that many poor people in crowded cities have of receiving religious instruction, for there is no place in lighted churches for those whose best clothing is little better than rags; hence assemblages in the streets and other public places where traffic is not impeded thereby are permitted and even given police protection. But it is not so in Oakland. Mr. Varley started out for a seven days' street preaching campaign, in which he proposed to carry religious exhortations to every soul of the poor, the thoughtless, and the erring of Oakland's thousands who would listen when the preachers came to them, but who would not enter the door of a church building to seek religious instruction. The appearance of the ministers in their open pulpits created a decided sensation, and was attracting much attention, when the whole thing was put a stop to by the mayor informing the ministers that they were violating the law and would be arrested if they did not suspend operations at once. So now the poor and the sinner in Oakland are not

privileged to have Gospel preached to them even from a sectarian minister's standpoint, as it would be unlawful to address an audience in the street without permission of the mayor, who will not consent. What is freely granted to the many thousands of "darkest England's" population in metropolitan London is denied the inhabitants of an enlightened municipality like Oakland and some other American cities that might be named.

The practice of street preaching sometimes may become a nuisance, and in that respect may need regulation. But where it does not occasion the obstruction of a public highway, or cause interference with the rights of people, either individually or collectively, to forbid it seems an infringement of at least the spirit of the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and the right of the people peaceably to assemble. Certainly when the preaching that may be indulged in is not of a nature to promote disorder and crime, but tends to elevate morals, to lead to order, and to encourage those ennobling sentiments that strengthen and uphold good government, it is not the genius of republican institutions to prohibit it. Were preaching to take the direction of lawlessness, either in street or building, its suppression would be legitimate.

The agency of street preaching has been a powerful means of effecting reforms in many countries and different ages. By it the populace has been aroused to action for the overthrow of tyrants, the correction of public abuses, and for the performing of an important part in the evolution from the dark ages to the present state of popular freedom and enlightenment. It is a method of reaching people who fail to attend the usual places of assembly, but whose yearning for something more than they experience makes them eager to accept an advance or reform movement when it is brought to them. For this cause, if no other, it would be good policy for government to encourage that means of disseminating views which lead to its own stability.

Important as has been the use of popular or street meetings in the evolution of political life, it has been still greater in the religious field. It was largely by this means that the principles of Christianity, whose preachers were cast out of the synagogues and the churches, reached the masses of the people and set in motion the restless tide which carried over a great portion of the globe firm convictions regarding a crucified and risen Redeemer of mankind. In this dispensation it also has been an important avenue through which the Gospel message has been brought to thousands; and its usefulness in this regard was not passed away, either at home or in foreign lands. It is a means of popular discussion and education among the common people, the masses of the poor, and the multitudes of those who without it might have remained in deeper ignorance. Hence it is a privilege which, under proper regulation for its peaceful exercise, should be preserved sacredly to the people for religious, political or other purposes of common interest to mankind.