

Cathedral. Though shorn of its central glory, it was nevertheless a right noble religious pageant. Throughout the splendor of the religious ceremonial associated with the Eucharistic Congress, the personnel that assisted at it from the ends of the earth, and the immense and world-wide interest that it excited, combined to make the proceedings of that great gathering the most historic incident that has happened in the Catholic Church in Great Britain since that country was riven from the unity of the Faith during the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century. The clamor that was raised in connection with the Eucharistic procession played a notable part in lifting the function to the pinnacle of public interest and importance, and in thus unintentionally furthering the object of the Congress to an extent that must have far exceeded the original hopes of its promoters. In the first place, the Congress gave, in picturesque and tangible form, evidence of the progress of the Catholic faith in England. In the second place, it brought Catholic faith and practice—especially in connection with the Holy Eucharist—before the British Protestant public in a way that was eminently calculated to stir the fancy and to move to inquiry the minds of devout non-Catholics. This phase of the Congress was, of course, greatly aided by the manner in which, ever since the Oxford Movement, the minds of English Protestants have been gradually familiarised with Catholic teachings and devotions, through the agency of the High Church section of the Anglican creed. But attention was undoubtedly very strongly focussed upon the Church's Eucharistic teaching, and inquiry specially stimulated, by the vociferous methods by which the 'yellow' and other extreme sections of the Protestant public sought to cast obloquy upon the doctrine of the Real Presence and to mar, as far as might be, the processional expression of Catholic devotion thereto. In the third place, the opposition—and especially the deplorable form that it took—served to emphasise still further the vast (we had almost said revolutionary) change that has taken place in British Protestant opinion in regard to the Catholic Church since the wild and whirling days of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill of 1851. This change of heart manifested itself in several principal ways—in the enormous space devoted to the proceedings of the Congress by the daily papers and the illustrated weekly press; in the intense interest with which the Congress was viewed throughout Great Britain; in the vast and overwhelmingly non-Catholic crowds that surged and swayed around the neighborhood of Westminster Cathedral and witnessed with friendly and respectful interest the grand religious pageant of the procession; in the cordiality which the press and public men extended to the first Papal Legate that visited England since the days of Queen Mary; and—last but by no means least significant sign of the times—the great body of public feeling that stands at the back of the demand made by a number of the leading newspapers of the country for the repeal of the remaining legal disabilities of Catholics which still dishonor the British statute-book. The bitter pressure for the exercise of dead-letter statutes against the Catholic faith in England greatly served, no doubt, to strengthen the demand for the discarding of the last rags and tatters of the penal code.

The bitterest disability under which the Faith of Old England suffers is, undoubtedly, that 'relic of barbarism,' the accession oath, which still remains a stain upon the statute-book. That infamous law forces each new Sovereign to take oath before Parliament that he believes Catholic worship to be 'superstitious' and 'idolatrous.' The Catholic faith, and that alone out of all the thousand creeds within the Empire's wide domains, is singled out for this crowning outrage; and the shameful formula is accompanied by every circumstance of personal insult to the Sovereign, who is forced to multiply phrases and protests and asseverations that he is not committing perjury, or licensed by the Pope to feign an oath or disregard it. As Lord Llandaff said in the course of a Congress paper, this outrageous formula (which we recently printed in full) 'was first introduced in a statute of the reign of Charles II., passed at the time of the frenzy of the Popish Plot. Every British Sovereign, from Queen Anne to his Majesty Edward VII., has been obliged to repeat a formula which—owed its origin to the perjuries of an impostor and the delusion of a nation. In no other civilised country, Protestant or Catholic, was it thought necessary to put into the mouth of the Sovereign or President a controversial utterance of this kind, or to search his conscience by a religious test. The reasons which explained, if they did not excuse, the imposition of the declaration have long ceased to exist.'

In addition to this studied insult to the faith of not less than 12,000,000 of the King's subjects, Catholics labor under

sundry other disabilities in Great Britain and Ireland. Here is one, from the 26th section of the Catholic Emancipation Act: 'If any Roman Catholic ecclesiastic shall exercise any of the rites or ceremonies of the Roman Catholic religion, or wear the habits of his Order, save within the usual places of worship of the Roman Catholic religion, or in private houses, such ecclesiastic or other person shall forfeit for every such offence the sum of £50.'

This was the section on which the clamorous extremists relied to prevent the Eucharistic procession. But be it noted: (1) There is no legal definition as to what constitutes 'rites or ceremonies'—if it be restricted (as is the papal decree on music) to liturgical worship, then a procession of the Blessed Sacrament, such as was contemplated at the Eucharistic Congress, would not fall within the meaning of the section. And, on the other hand, it might be made, by a too rigorous interpretation, to penalise by fine or imprisonment the private recitation of the Rosary by two persons in a public place. (2) The same remarks apply in a measure to the words, 'the habits of his Order'—which might be made to mean anything from Mass vestments to the ordinary priest's black coat and Roman collar. (3) Catholic ecclesiastics are, in every case, amenable to this clause of the Emancipation Act only by the permission of the Attorney-General. And (4) This clause of the Act has been long obsolete, as is also the clause requiring, on pain of imprisonment and deportation, the registration of members of certain religious Orders. Thus, a few years ago, the High Court treated as obsolete the latter clause when the Protestant Alliance (which took such a prominent part in the anti-Eucharistic agitation) applied for a mandamus against the Magistrate at Marlborough Street for refusing to grant a summons against the Jesuits at Farm Street for not being registered in accordance with the provisions of the Act. And the former clause was treated in like manner when, within the past year or two (as a legal writer points out in the *Westminster Gazette*), 'the colors of the Irish Guards were publicly blessed by a Catholic priest in full canonicals, in the presence of the King, on Horse Guards' Parade.' Moreover (as we have already pointed out in our editorial columns), public processions of the Blessed Sacrament have been, during the past fifty-four years, carried out without offence or hindrance or suspicion of illegality in many parts of Great Britain, and even in the heart of London itself. The Eucharistic procession in London was expressly arranged for with the Home authorities. And (says the *London Tablet* of September 19) 'in 1893 the Protestant Alliance raised an objection to a Catholic procession which was announced to take place in Chorlton. The Home Secretary of the time scouted the objection, and said roundly that her Majesty's Government did "not intend to take action." That Home Secretary was Mr. Asquith—who yielded to the clamorous pressure of the same organisation in September, 1908. The right of public religious procession was established by the High Court in the cases brought against the Salvation Army a few years ago. And there seems no reason why a Catholic priest or bishop may not, in all the circumstances, wear the insignia of his office in a public procession as well as a captain of the Salvation Army or a Grand or Semi-Grand of a Freemason lodge. As Archbishop Bourne said to Mr. Asquith: 'The Acts and Declarations to which the Protestant societies have now called attention have never been invoked within my memory. They are universally regarded as a dead letter, and they are equally applicable to many acts which I and my colleagues perform publicly, and intend to perform publicly over and over again throughout the year.' 'In dealing with this plea,' remarks the *London Tablet*, 'that the procession was at any rate against the letter of the law, it is not without interest to note that it is precisely the people who are protesting against Catholic illegalities now who were effusively slobbering over the Passive Resisters a year ago.'

At Metz a German Protestant Government secured for the members of the Eucharistic Congress of 1907 a liberty of worship which was denied to them in London in 1908. British troops in Egypt form guards of honor at certain Mahomedan festivals. And Mr. Sydney Whitman published in the *Westminster Gazette* the two following further instances of tolerance of public worship, the one from an almost wholly Protestant State, the other from the realm of 'the unspeakable Turk': 'The kingdom of Saxony contains over 4,200,000 inhabitants, of which nearly four millions are Protestants. There are less than 200,000 Roman Catholics in the country; yet one of the regular pageants of the year in the capital, Dresden, is the public Roman Catholic procession on the day of Corpus Christi. The officiating Roman Catholic Bishop walks under a baldechin, the corner poles of which are held by Saxon officers in full parade uniform. And as

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