

Corpus Christi and Party Processions.

(By Richard John Wicksteed, Ottawa, Ont.)

In the *Toronto Week*, of the 7th June last, a correspondent from Montreal, describing the *Fête Dieu*, Procession of the Holy Sacrament or Corpus Christi, writes:

"Heretics, reassured by Chief Hughes' order forbidding any interference with those who failed to kneel or uncover while the Host passed, might philosophically contemplate this petty remnant of mediævalism, tough-hearted, strong-visioned old world legislators condemned long ago."

In connection with a similar procession in adoration of the Holy Sacrament, the police of Hull, P.Q., had not so much common sense and worldly wisdom. Policemen in the procession ordered every one to remove their hats under pain of arrest, and one more officious snatched the hat from the head of a member of the Church of England and threatened to arrest him. The Englishman ought to have summoned the policeman for assault. But we regret to say did not do so. Some correspondence about the affair appeared in the newspapers, and there the matter rests. It is interesting however to observe the crafty wiliness of the Roman Catholic correspondent finding fault with all spectators for not uncovering their heads in the presence of God. In his first letter he assumes that God is present in the procession on the general grounds that He is present where two or three are gathered together in His name. But on the Englishman replying in a straightforward manner that he would not be guilty of idol worship, the Romanist drops his mask of subterfuge, and states that the Almighty Son is actually present under the form of the bread carried by the priest. The correspondence ceased at that point, issue being joined.

It is true that, for reasons of State, British soldiers were, many years ago, compelled to salute the Host as it passed them on guard, on Corpus Christi day. But for the same politic reasons the same soldiers furnished an escort to the Sacred Carpet of Mahomet when being carried to Mecca on its annual pilgrimage. The British soldiers of the reformed faith protested against being made supporters of a gross superstition as taught by the Roman Catholics, and the Host was left unguarded and unsaluted by British bayonets. The carpet will, it is hoped, also be left unprotected by Christian red-coats.

What is the Feast of Corpus Christi? It is a festival instituted in the Roman Church, in honour of the consecrated host, or wafer bread, used in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and with a view to its adoration. It owes its origin to a nun of Liège, named Juliana. In 1230, while looking at the full moon, she said she saw a gap in its orb, and, by a revelation from heaven, learned that the moon represented the Christian Church, and the gap the want of a certain festival,—that of the adoration of the body of Christ in the consecrated host,—which she was to begin to celebrate, and to announce to the world. Pope Urban 4th appointed Thursday after Whitsunday for the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi throughout Christendom; and promised absolution up to one hundred days to the penitent who took part in it. The doctrine of Transubstantiation, as it is called, is adopted by the Church of Rome, but by no other branch of the catholic church. It is on this dogma that Rome bases the propriety of the adoration of Host, and the procession of Corpus Christi. In a short paper like this it is only possible to give the conclusions of eminent modern writers—without advancing the proofs of their positions.

The Council of Trent, whose decisions on points of Roman Catholic faith are supremely authoritative, in the 13th Session (A.D. 1551) passed the following, among other, canons:

"Whosoever shall affirm, that in the most Holy Sacrament of the eucharist there remains the substance of the bread and wine, together with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and shall deny that wonderful and peculiar conversion of the whole substance of the bread into his body, and of the whole substance of the wine into his blood, only the appearances of bread and wine remaining, which conversion the Catholic Church most fitly terms 'transubstantiation'; let him be accursed."

"Whosoever shall affirm that Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is not to be adored in the Holy eucharist with the external signs of that worship which is due to God; and therefore that the eucharist is not to be honoured with extraordinary festive celebration, nor carried about in processions, according to the laudable and universal rites and customs of holy church, nor publicly presented to the people for their adoration; and that those who worship the same are idolatrous; let him be accursed."

Almost at the very moment that the Synod of Trent was passing the above canons, the compilers of the Book of Common Prayer of that pure and reformed branch of the Catholic Church, viz., the Church of England, were attaching to the second Book of Prayer of Edward 6th, in 1552, the following declaration on kneeling:

"Whereas it is ordained in this office for the administration of the Lord's Supper, that the communicants should receive the same kneeling (which order is well meant, for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy receivers, and for the avoiding of such profanation and disorder in the Holy Sacrament, as might otherwise ensue); yet, lest the same kneeling should by any persons, either out of ignorance and infirmity, or out of malice and obstinacy, be misconstrued and depraved: It is here declared that thereby no adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the sacramental bread or wine, there bodily received, or unto any corporal presence of Christ's natural flesh and blood. For the sacramental bread and wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored (for that were idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful christians); and the natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's natural body to be at one time in more places than one."

Article 28 of the Church of England (A.D. 1571) contains the following clauses:

"Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of bread and wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions."

The body of Christ is given, taken and eaten in the Supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper is faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up or worshipped."

These are the time-honoured institutions and doctrines of the Church of England. To which subscription has been given ever since 1604 by all the bishops and clergy of the church, comprising some of the greatest minds that have during nearly three centuries guided and instructed the nation; an authority for the soundness of these articles, and their faithfulness to the word of God, on which they are professedly founded, which must tend to recommend them to all who value religion for the conviction it brings to the mind of God's purpose regarding human souls, and of His promise of their eternal salvation and felicity.

To establish, if necessary, that the subscription is real and heartfelt, without mental reservation or intention, it may be permitted us to quote passages and expressions from the writings of Anglican and Protestant writers condemnatory of the doctrine of transubstantiation of the Roman church—held by that church alone, and not thought of until the middle of the ninth century and condemned by the Greek and Anglican branches of the church catholic:

"Inconsistent as these decrees of the Council of Trent are with each other, they are followed by canons anathematizing all who presume to dissent from any. The audacity of such censures, in the face of the acknowledged institution of Christ and the universal practice of the first ages of christianity, is a melancholy proof of the callousness induced by the arbitrary exercise of spiritual power. They remind us of the horrible blasphemies attributed to some of the Popes of the previous century."—*Dr. George Trevor.*

"It is important to maintain firmly this idea of Christ being Himself not only the food received, but also the Master of the Banquet, because the maintenance of this idea would be a safeguard against erroneous and carnal notions of the ordinance. If Christ is not only the heavenly viand, but also the distributor thereof, the viand cannot be in a carnal sense His Body and Blood."—*Dr. Goulburn.*

"The Church of England denies such a gross, local and physical mode of presence."

"This is a physical explanation of what the Church of England receives as a mystery, and so as inexplicable; and being a rude and impertinent unveiling, as it were, of a deep mystery, itself requires explanations and suggests questions which tend inconceivably to lower the christian's conception of the Eucharist."—*Rev. M. F. Sadler.*