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A WORD TO SUBSCRIBERS.

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CHANGES IN OUR MARRIAGE LAWS.

We last week promised some further observations upon the proposed changes in our Marriage Laws, and we now publish the form of Petition, which has been circulated throughout the Diocese of Nova Scotia, as containing a brief summary of the objections to those changes. We may here mention, that persons in Country Parishes wishing to sign it will find a copy in the hands of their Rector:

To the Honourable the Senate of the Dominion of Canada:

The petition of the under-signed members of the Church of England in the Parish (or Mission) of

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

That your Petitioners have been much alarmed by the introduction into your Honourable House of a Bill to effect serious changes in the marriage laws legalizing the marriage of a man with his deceased Wife's Sister, and of a woman with her deceased Husband's Brother. That your Petitioners are persuaded that any such interference with the table of prohibited degrees will materially affect the welfare of the community and the comfort and happiness of many households in which persons connected together by affinity have been accustomed to regard each other in the same light as though they were connected by ties of consanguinity, and enjoy the same happy familiar intercourse as brothers and sisters without suspicion or thought of evil.

Your Petitioners believe that one of the marriages proposed to be legalized is expressly forbidden in Holy Scripture, and that the prohibition of the other is implied, and they cannot admit that any authority, ecclesiastical or civil, is empowered to dispense with such a prohibition.

That your Petitioners especially object to the proviso in the Bill making a distinction between marriages where the parties are members of one religious body, and other cases, as introducing an element of confusion and uncertainty, and they hold that all such marriages ought either to be legal or illegal in every case, without reference to the peculiarities of any Branch of the Church.

That on behalf of the children who may be deprived of their mother your Petitioners pray that the present position of the surviving sister with relation to the widower may not be altered, as such alteration must necessarily deprive the motherless children of the loving care of the aunt at the time when it would be most especially beneficial, and under the present law is commonly enjoyed.

Finally, your Petitioners submit that before any alteration is made in the marriage laws, ample opportunity should be afforded for the full consideration of a subject in which all persons are more or less interested, and for the presentation of their objections by those who are opposed to any change; that no such opportunity has been afforded with respect to the Bill now before your Honourable House, and that for this as well as the other reasons herein set forth it should be rejected.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

It will be seen, in reference to the Bill published last week, that it goes far beyond its title, since it legalises the marriage of a widow with the brother of

her deceased husband, which is expressly prohibited in Holy Scripture, and is not included in the scheme of the English Marriage Law reformers. That a man may not marry two sisters, is inferred from the precept that a woman may not marry two brothers; and the principle of the prohibition is the same in both cases; but the marriage with two brothers is a violation of the letter, as well as of the Spirit, of God's word; and to legalise it is to repudiate that authority. We are warned in Leviticus xviii, from which our table of degrees is taken, that, in consequence of their allowance of the marriage therein condemned, the people of the land were driven out and the Israelites substituted for them. These prohibitions, therefore, must be regarded as part of the law of nature, the law written in the heart, for otherwise the Gentiles could not have been so severely condemned for violating them, and they must be of perpetual obligation, and still more binding upon us than upon the Jews, inasmuch as our Lord has inculcated greater purity and holiness as required in His disciples.

The application of this chapter has been so generally recognized, that these marriages were, for many ages, absolutely prohibited by the whole Church; and the Eastern Church refuses to this day to sanction them under any circumstances. The Roman Church still condemns them, although assuming the right to grant dispensations for special reasons, and by her also, equally with the Eastern Church, they appear to have been prohibited as unscriptural, until the 15th century, when the first dispensation was granted, (to Emanuel, King of Portugal, permitting him to marry his deceased wife's sister) by the infamous Roderick Borgia (Pope Alexander VI.). Our own Church affirms that they are incestuous, and the following resolution was passed by both Houses of our Provincial Synod in 1877:—"No clergyman of this Ecclesiastical Province shall, knowingly, solemnize a marriage forbidden by the 99th Canon of the year A. D., 1603."

In Scotland, they are regarded with so much abhorrence, that the advocates of change, in the British Parliament, have been obliged to exclude that country from the operation of their proposed laws. With such a general consent as to the divine origin and permanent obligation of these prohibitions, we ought at the least to be very cautious, and sure that we have good reason for the adoption of a different interpretation, before we presume to legislate in opposition to them, since even if it were only just possible that the correct interpretation of the precept is right, prudence would lead us to adhere to it, as the safe course, rather than risk antagonism to the will of God.

Even if we could be persuaded that these marriages are not contrary to the Word of God, we should still earnestly deprecate the removal of the legal impediment, as a change that strikes at the root of our family life, placing the wife's sister in the same relation to the husband as any other unmarried woman, unconnected with either of them, for, to use the weighty language of a highly respected Lord Chancellor of England, "our sister-in-law is our sister, and that is a name and a relationship which, God permitting, we do not intend to lose. She is our sister in every respect. Who that has ever been married has not felt that, when he has formed a union with the woman of his choice, the atmosphere of love, which he experiences in his heart towards her whom he has taken to his home, spreads itself out collaterally, and envelopes all who are connected with her, in the same way that it does those who are connected with himself? Her relations become his relations. She is

blood of his blood, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. All her blood relations are his relations. He welcomes them to his own heart and his home." This applies to a great extent to the wife as well as to the husband but, if this law is enacted, if at some future time marriage may be possible between them, the husband's brother and the wife, the wife's sister and the husband, can no longer associate together with the security of brothers and sisters. The domestic life of England, of which the pattern is imitated among ourselves, is an exceptionally happy life, owing, we have reason to believe, in a great measure to our marriage laws, which enlarge the family circle, and by their restrictions enable relatives of several degrees of consanguinity and affinity to enjoy familiar intercourse, and the closest intimacy, without giving occasion for jealousies and suspicions.

If we do not wish to be deprived of our birthright and to be assimilated to other countries where confusion is introduced into families by facilities for divorce, which appear to be inseparable from a disregard of the scriptural restrictions on marriage, no time is to be lost, the obnoxious bill has already passed a second reading in the House of Commons, and petitions should be as soon as possible transmitted to Ottawa, with the hope that the Senate may be induced to secure time for ascertaining the opinions of the people throughout the Dominion before completing this disastrous legislation.

THAT TABLE OF PRECEDENCE.

SOME of our exchanges seem to be very much worried over the fact that Archbishops and Bishops have been assigned a certain precedence on public occasions. They are very willing to allow Judges, Doctors and such like to be assigned a place in a procession, but Bishops! never! We candidly confess, for our own part, that it makes no difference to us whether our chief officers are at the head or the tail of a procession. We recognize their spiritual office and authority. We care not whether the world gives them temporal honors or not. The cause of the irritation is easy to be seen. One gentleman makes the amusing assertion that *Baptists* are older than the Church of England "by a decade and a half of centuries." And then comes the usual stale assertion about the creation of the Church of England by Henry VIII., so often exploded, but which still keeps afloat. That is the real point. If the Church was a new Church at the time of the Reformation, then we are all in the same boat; we are all man-made sects, without authority, except our own sweet individual will, and mere names mean nothing. The point then made might have something in it. But no one can make such an assertion without ignorance of the true history of the Reformation in England. The English Church was just as much the same Church after as before; as the man who washed his face is the same man, clean or dirty. The English Church was reformed, not re-created. And as to the office of a Bishop, in the New Testament we find three orders: 1. Apostles, 2. Bishops, meaning overseers, called also Elders or Presbyters, the latter contracted into Priest. 3. Deacons. The New Testament Church was Episcopal, and there is not a hint that the highest office was ever to cease. For fifteen centuries the Church continued Episcopal, and historians tell us the reason for dropping the title "Apostle" was that out of reverence for these inspired men the name was dropped, and the second order having two names "Bishop" and "Elder," the first was appropriated to the Apostolic office, and the second used exclusively

for the second order. We claim for our Bishops that they succeed to the office of "Apostle" in its ordinary official functions. The power of working miracles, the "gift of tongues," passed away as soon as Christianity was fairly promulgated, and the New Testament Books were written, because they were no longer necessary to attest the merit of the new dispensation. Our Bishops "ordain Elders," lay on hands in confirmation, have the care of the churches, and carry out the ordinary functions of the Apostolate. It ill becomes the bodies of Christians who have split off from their venerable mother, dating not from the days of Henry VIII., but from the planting of Christianity in Britain, centuries before Augustine, the Monk, landed there, to sling stones because the officers of a Body so venerable for antiquity; to mention nothing else, are assigned a position in a State procession equally with the lawyers and doctors.

We remember hearing a story of a celebrated American divine. A minister of a certain body complained that doubts were thrown upon his orders, and stated his annoyance; whereupon the clergyman announced that he should not be worried if doubts were cast upon his ordination. As a Church, our bishops and clergy are too busy in missionary work to have much time for State parades, necessary, we presume, upon occasions. We have too much to do in this land to worry over "tables of precedence."

Mr. Beecher, a Sunday or two ago in Plymouth Pulpit, made an apposite remark, with which we close. He said "that his right hand should fall palsied at his side and his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth before he ever uttered a word in disparagement of his mother, the Church of England." This is commended to those who so dearly like to have their periodical fling at "their mother."

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF GOD'S PROMISES.

THERE is a sad want of reality about the religion of most Christians. God's Word is full of the most precious and comforting promises, conditional on our "asking in Faith." Yet Christian people are so faithless that they will not believe that these words mean what they say. Most of the doubt and spiritual trouble that people have arises from the simple fact that they will not believe that God will do what he says he will do. We give below an extract from a little book called: "Francis Ridley Havergal: a brief memorial of one of the King's Daughters." Miss Havergal was the daughter of the Rev. Canon Havergal, and one of the sweetest poets of these modern days. Her hymns and sacred songs and poems are read wherever the English language is spoken. In "Hymns Ancient and Modern" are inserted her beautiful hymns: "I could not do without Thee," "Now speak to me that I may speak," "Thou art coming, O my Saviour," "Thy life was given for me," and "To Thee, O Comforter Divine." Her death has left a void which cannot easily be filled. But what a death-bed hers must have been when her life is represented to us as follows:

"If those who knew her well were asked to give, in one word, the true 'key' to her life, possibly that one word might be this—*reality*. To her life was real, and the experiences of the Christian course were all real. Redemption, by the precious Blood of the Incarnate Son of God, was a great reality; and so was forgiveness of sin through simple faith in Jesus, and peace and joy in Christ, and the sanctification of spirit, and soul and body, and constant communion with God, and prayer, and praise, and trust, and guidance step by step, 'a moment at a time,' and glad service for Jesus, and the work of winning souls, and of helping and comforting the weak ones and the tried, and all the items which go

to fill the catalogue of the operations of the Holy Spirit of God in the believer's heart, and through the believer's life. 'Reality'! Yes, that is the word! She did not understand anything at all of a merely ideal, sentimental, or artificial 'religiousness.' She knew nothing of promises that, however affecting and beautiful, were nevertheless not to be fulfilled, or of spiritual joys, and consolations, and privileges that might only be sung about in hymns, or 'aimed at,' as desirable, but unattainable. No; she took her Father's word, and her Saviour's, given her in the pages of inspiration by the Holy Ghost, as a real word, with a very real meaning, and intended to lead her to the possession and enjoyment of very real blessings. And more, she went to the throne of grace with this word on her lips, and asked, believingly in the name of Jesus, that it might be fulfilled to her. And what was the result? Why, 'of course' (as she would say) 'it was fulfilled'! Yes, indeed, 'of course' it was! And why should Christians ever have an experience differing from hers in this respect?

Why, indeed, let us ask ourselves! Simply because we put two bars in the way. First, want of Faith; second, sin. Use these words, "God is able," "God can," and then "ask, and ye shall receive."

OUR EASTER MEETINGS.

The following clauses of the Church Act, as revised, are published for the information of the clergy and people of the several parishes in the Diocese of Nova Scotia.

By the revised Church Act, it is provided that at the Easter meeting "any Parish business may be transacted."

Clause 8. "The following persons shall be entitled to vote at all meetings of Parishioners of any Parish of the Church of England:"

(1). "Men of full age, who have been communicants in the said Parish for not less than six months previous to the day of meeting."

(2). "All men of full age, who are members of the Church of England, and have habitually attended the services thereof within the Parish for which they claim to vote, except when temporarily hindered by absence from their ordinary residence, or any other unavoidable impediment, for at least three months, being pew holders or otherwise contributors towards the funds for the maintenance of the ministrations of the said Church, within the said Parish, and who are not more than six months in arrears, in respect to such contributions. Provided always, that any person before voting may be required by the chairman of the meeting, or any Parishioner present, to sign a declaration that he is qualified as aforesaid."

Clause 10. "No conveyance by lease or otherwise, of any property held by a Minister of the Church of England, shall be valid for a longer period than his own incumbency, and no such conveyance of any property belonging to any Parish, or held by any Rector, in virtue of his office, shall be valid for a longer period than as aforesaid, unless with the concurrence of the Church Wardens and Vestry, expressed in writing under their common seal, and in no case for a longer period than twenty-one years; but with the concurrence of the Bishop, the Rector, and the Church Wardens, and Vestry, full and absolute sale and conveyance may be made of any glebe land, or other real estate belonging to the Parish, if the same be thought for the interests thereof."

Clause 12. "The Lord Bishop of Nova Scotia may grant a license to officiate as a clergyman of the Church of England in this Province to any person who shall have been admitted to the order of priest or deacon, by any Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, anything in the Act of the Imperial Parliament of the 26th year of His late Majesty, King George III., cap. 84, to the contrary notwithstanding."

The words printed in italics are the additions to the Act.

THE CHURCH ENDOWMENT FUND OF NOVA SCOTIA.

We feel disposed to congratulate ourselves upon having at least done something towards placing on a much more liberal footing, as regards certain of the Parochial Clergy and Parishes, the Church Endowment Fund of the Diocese of Nova Scotia.

It was generally understood, we believe, by the members of the Endowment Committee that no Parish could become a beneficiary of the Fund except such as had previously held an S. P. G. Grant. Now, since our agitation, and mainly through the exertions and legal acumen of the Rev. J. J. Ritchie, of Annapolis, a much larger view has been taken of the Trust; and it has been decided by the Committee, so we under-