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[The pressing importance of the proposed alteration in the Marriage Law, has induced us to devote the whole of the Gazette to it.]

**MARRIAGE WITH A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER.**

**MARRIAGE LAW DEFENCE ASSOCIATION—MEETING AT WILLIS'S ROOMS.**

[The following papers are published under the authority of Right Rev the Lord Bishop of Toronto, for the guidance of, and to give necessary information to, those lovers of order and morality who would be grievously injured by a change in the Law of Marriage, which it is the glory of the reformation to have preserved inviolate, and under which the social and peaceful family intercourse of Great Britain has been ensured. A mischievous and wanton attack has suddenly been made on the Law of Marriage in Canada, and the people of this country are threatened with a violation of their moral and social customs which ought not to be suffered passively. Fortunately the question is one which does not in its effects blight the happiness and shock the religious principles of any one class of believing christians: on the contrary, the Church of England and Ireland, the Greek and Asiatic Branches of the Church, the Gallican, Spanish, Austrian and American Churches, the Presbyterians of Scotland, all preserve the same law, and are of one voice in forbidding marriage within certain degrees, and which are therefore called "prohibited degrees." In Canada the United Church of England and Ireland being free from all state connexions, and having no direct voice in Parliament, is now forced to assume an attitude of defence against an invasion of principle, which are sacred. The Church is forced to condemn this proceeding as a wicked and sinful act against God, and against His express law, and is called to protest solemnly against a measure which sanctions the crime of incest. She further protests against the measure as a wanton and uncalculated for interference with the moral law, endangering the social happiness of families, and utterly subversive of the peace and eternal welfare of those who may, under sanction of human law, violate the law of God; lastly, the Church must protest against a civil enactment, which, inasmuch as it clashes with the Word of God, places Her in a position in which it will be impossible to maintain neutral ground.]

TORONTO, March 31st, 1860.

REVEREND SIR,—The form of Petition, which you will find below, against the proposed Bill to legalize marriage with the sister of a deceased wife, has my cordial approval, and I would earnestly request you to forward to the Secretary of the Church Society authority to attach your signature to it.

I am, Rev. Sir,

Yours truly,

JOHN TORONTO.

To the, &c.

We, the undersigned, the Bishop and the Clergy of the Diocese of Toronto, beg humbly to represent to your honourable House, that we have seen, with great apprehension, the frequent attempts which have been made in the Imperial Parliament to relax the laws, by which the sanctity of marriage and the purity and happiness of domestic life have so long been guarded. Your Petitioners deeply regret that a Bill should have been introduced into the Provincial Legislature, during the present session, the object of which is to sanction certain marriages within the prohibited degrees, and they humbly beg your honourable House to withhold its assent from any such measure. And your Petitioners, &c.

(Signed)

N.B.—It is requested that signatures may be sent in as early as possible, in order that the Petition may be presented immediately after the Easter recess. The above form of Petition will be addressed *mutatis mutandis*, to the Governor-General, and to both Houses of the Legislature.

A very full meeting of the Clergy and Laity, including some of the leading representatives of all shades of opinion in the Church, was held last Wednesday, in connection with the Marriage Law Defence Association, to co-operate with its efforts in opposing the proposed bill for legalizing marriage with a deceased wife's sister.

The Duke of Marlborough presided; and upon the platform were the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Bishop of Oxford, the Bishop of St. David's, the Dean of Westminster; Archdeacons Sinclair, Hale, Burney, and Denison; Vice-Chancellor Sir W. P. Wood; Revs. Dr. Irons, Dr. Hessey, Dr. Jelf, Principal of King's College; Hon. and Rev. R. Liddell; Revs. R. E. Auriol, C. W. Page, D. Moore, E. Garbett; Hon. F. Lyon, M.P., Mr. Maxwell Close, M.P., Captain Gordon, M.P., Mr. H. Ker Seymour, M.P., Mr. Kekewich, M.P., Mr. Beresford Hope, Mr. J. C. Colquhoun, Mr. Roundell Palmer, Q. C., Mr. Whateley, Q. C., &c. In the body of the room there was a considerable number of ladies.

The DEAN OF WESTMINSTER opened the proceedings with prayer.

The CHAIRMAN, in calling attention to the purpose for which they were met, observed that, although it was scarcely possible to suppose that all who composed that crowded meeting could be of one mind or one opinion with regard to the various aspects in which the question of marriage with a deceased wife's sister might be viewed and considered, he might assume that they were all influenced in their attendance by one common object—an object of the greatest social importance, and involving results of the most momentous consequences—viz., the preservation of the law of marriage as it now stood. As they were all no doubt aware, the meeting had been called together in consequence of the action which he was sorry to see was still going on year after year by an organisation promoted by a small body of persons as its originators and founders, but which, if unchecked, might unhappily extend its baneful influence through the large and important masses of the community. They were met to show that the people of England were determined, by God's help, to maintain the law by which the purity of family life was protected. It would not become him, in the presence of so many gentlemen of great ability and such intimate knowledge of all the bearings of the subject, to detain the meeting with any lengthened remarks; he would merely touch upon the principal or salient points involved in the question at issue, and leave the elicitation of further details to those who had consented to propose and support the resolutions. They must all admit that the question was to be viewed in two aspects—the one Scriptural and religious, the other social and economic. It seemed to him strange that the advocates for the repeal of the marriage law of England as it now stood should venture to take Scripture for their warrant, because a fair and impartial view of the Scriptures showed clearly that if such unions as those who desired to maintain the law felt to be repugnant to the best feelings of society were not actually forbidden in express terms, there was more than sufficient of implication even in the Old Testament to satisfy any reasonable mind that it was not only marriages of consanguinity that were forbidden, but marriages of affinity likewise. And even if there was a supposed permission given by implication to the ancient people of God to contract such marriages, he denied that that implied permission would be binding on us Christians. It must be borne in mind that the dispensation under which the Jewish Church was placed was of a lower character than that upon which our blessed Saviour had raised the Christian Church. Consequently we found many things permitted by implication in the Jewish Church, from the absence of any express prohibition to the contrary, which under no circumstances could be allowed or tolerated amongst christians. Take polygamy itself—there was no prohibition, on the contrary, there were passages in the Old Testament which might almost be taken as a warrant for the practice, yet no one would pretend to argue that polygamy was to be permitted in a Christian community, much less that it was sanctioned by the law of God. Again, there was suicide. Nothing in the Scriptures of the Old Testament forbade suicide, yet we all know that if a man fell by his own hand he committed a crime which the law of the land and the sense of society stamped as one of the deepest character. But, on the other hand, every patient and prayerful investigator of the christian law would find that by implication there were ample indications in the Old Testament that marriages of the nature contemplated by the advocates of a change in our marriage law were displeasing in the sight of God; that the near approach of consanguinity