

thing that can give us clear views of the strength, and sacredness, and blessedness of the matrimonial bond, which knits the subjects of it so closely that they are thenceforth to be considered one. Thus we have not only the law of Moses prohibiting marriage with the sister of a deceased wife, but by fair inference we have the law of Christ doing precisely the same thing. Those who deny this must either believe that Christ's words have no authority, or if they admit that they have, then to be consistent they must contend that it is also lawful for a man to marry his own sister or his own niece.

III. The prohibition of such marriages tends greatly to the moral safety and comfort of domestic intercourse.

Such marriages are not merely unlawful because God has forbidden them, but he has forbidden them because they are every way improper. In the intimate intercourse of domestic life, what temptations to impurity and impropriety would there be if marriages with the nearest collateral relations were admissible! And the strict prohibition of such marriages preserve the moral safety of society amid the close and endearing intimacies of family intercourse. They are the grand bulwarks of purity, and the individual who would take any step which tends to undermine them, is, in our judgment, a traitor to the community and an enemy of all that is beautiful and dignified in the intercourse of domestic life.

It is true that the same amount of evil might not at first and directly result to society from legalising marriage with the sister of a deceased wife as from legalising marriage with one's own sister, and thus breaking down all the restraints and eradicating all the sentiments by which the purity of family intercourse has been hitherto guarded, but the evil would nevertheless be certain. It would be like carrying the outposts of a fortification; and let them once be carried and kept, and soon the fortress itself, however strong, will be destroyed or forced to capitulate.

We are told sometimes that such marriages would be most conducive to the happiness of the parties more immediately concerned. "Where," it has been asked, "could such a suitable stepmother be found as the aunt of the motherless children? Who could be expected to take such an interest in them as the sister of their own mother?" To this we would reply that, even if all this were unquestionable, the presentation to frail mortals of temptations which do not at present exist, and the introduction of jealousy and dispeace into families, and of scandal into communities, is a price too great to pay even for such advantages. But the reality of these advantages may well be questioned, for the moment the sister-in-law becomes the wife, she becomes the subject of new feelings. The moment the aunt becomes herself a mother, she is influenced by new instincts, swayed by new motives, and stimulated by new prospects, which may hinder her from acting as a kind and judicious stepmother.

A strenuous attempt is at present being made in the British Parliament to alter the law, as it now exists, and to legalize the marriage of a man with the sister of his departed wife. To sanction such a law as this, will, we believe, be fraught with mischief to the best interests of society; it will, we fear, introduce distrust into the social circle, discord and misery into families, and demoralise society to an extent beyond what we can at present conceive. If we have any regard for the peace of families, any admiration for what is pure, and lovely, and of good report, any value for the virtue and happiness of our race, and any honour and respect for the law of God, let us lift up a protest against such a law as this, which if carried in England will soon reach this country also, and will remove one of the ancient landmarks our fathers have set up by which to guard the sanctity of family relationships.

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