

of literary poison. The common schools will produce readers, these readers must have books. Immortal souls thus trained by our common and high school education, need just such religious literature as our Board supplies, to fit them for usefulness and happiness here, and for glory, honour, and immortality hereafter. We wish to give them, as companions, such men as Howe, Bunyan, Chalmers, McChesney, Nelson, Baxter, and the Christian Poets, and Philosophers. We would fill the sack with wheat, so that there may be little or no room for the chaff. We would teach the rising race to detect the poison so as to avoid it, or if perchance they may swallow it, we would put them in possession of the antidotes. And this admits of no delay, since we have not men or means to preach the gospel orally to all who wish to hear us, and as we cannot visit as ministers or missionaries, all the erring, the outcasts, the desponding, the anxious enquirers, the bereaved the sick, the dying—who would willingly welcome us—we desire to send for the hundreds of Baxters, and Bunyan and Howes, and Nelsons, and John Angell Jameses, and hosts of other "good men and true," who will silently supply our lack of service, and it may be perform that service better, than we could perform it ourselves.

But can the Church do this? Is she able to afford it? Let the feeble efforts of the past two or three years predict what may be done by more vigorous and united efforts in the future. Past efforts have been wonderful, circumscribed, locally at least. Hamilton assumed almost the entire burden, and has had the honour of bearing it—with most exemplary patience. Before the Church generally assumed any responsibility in this matter, we are informed that the Hamilton Presbytery prosecuted the work of Colportage during fourteen months, and in that period sold some six or seven hundred pounds worth of books, and at the end of the period instead of being a loser, was a gainer in a pecuniary sense of a few pounds at least. Immediately before the present commercial crisis, Mr. Armstrong the Colporteur was down here three weeks, and sold as he usually does in good times at the rate of £10 worth of Books per week, being on an average 6s. 3d. for each family visited. This he has done elsewhere, and when visiting the same localities in about a year afterwards has sold on the second visit to the same amount. With sales such as these, the church can be no loser in a pecuniary sense. In the present scarcity of money we must not expect colportage to pay its own expenses. But this state of affairs is the exception to the general rule. But is the church to take a cold commercial view of this great scheme of Christian philanthropy? Surely not. Our Colporteurs are not mere book-venders. See Armstrong with his Pocket Bible and tracts, in happy medio between the *circa sacra* and in *sacris*. He sells and is not regarded as worldly-minded; he converses religiously, exhorts, and prays, where he visits, and all this is not regarded as inconsistent with the secular part of his calling. Such a man is valuable as a missionary. If such a man should cost the church a hundred pounds a year, it would be well spent money. Give us half-a-dozen of Armstrong colporteurs, to visit all our Presbyteries, and the Book Board will empty, and fill again, and pay itself, and bless the church and the whole community.

McK.

IS IT RIGHT TO MARRY A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER?

Why open this question in the *Record*? Is the question not clearly answered in the negative, by the standards of the Church? Has the

Synod not given forth its decision of unwavering, determined adherence to those principles of the Confession of Faith, which apply to this question? And, does not that Synodical decision, moreover, declare that these principles are of divine authority? What more, then, can be reasonably required in answer to the question?

Courteous reader, bear with the writer for a little, while he reminds you, that, some—perhaps not a few—of the readers of the *Record* never read, or even saw the *Standards* of the Church, and perhaps do not even know what the *Standards* of the Church are; never saw the decision of the Synod, or perhaps never heard of such a decision having been come to; do not know what those principles referred to are; or if they know the principles, cannot see reason for regarding them as of divine authority. The writer speaks advisedly when he speaks thus. Let him also assure you that he has no special liking for this question, and claims no extra ability to discuss it. He shall be very agreeably mistaken if he do not, by thus uttering his convictions, give offence, especially to certain parties whose friendship he very highly esteems, and who are deeply and personally interested in this question. He has waited long, but waited in vain, for some abler pen to perform this disagreeable task; and it is only because he knows and feels that something more than our Synodical decision is required to give light on this question, and to carry the conviction to some minds that the principles by which the church is guided in it are of divine authority.

It would be presumption, however, in the writer to imagine that he could advance any new idea on a subject so old, and which has been so fully and so frequently discussed, especially in the Fatherland and the United States; and it would be a want of candour and of gratitude if he did not acknowledge, that for any information he possesses on this question, he is more indebted to a book entitled, "The Marriage Affinity Question," written by Prof. Gibson of Glasgow, than to any other source—a book which contains, perhaps, all that can be said *pro* and *con*, and from which the materials of a dozen articles like the present could with little trouble be extracted. Prof. Gibson, however, writes for men who understand Latin, Greek, and Hebrew: this article is written for no such readers; but for the people—or rather for that portion of the people, among the readers of the *Record*, who do not possess and who could not appreciate the learned Doctor's rich mental and theological pabulum. The Professor, however, cannot be held responsible for this article, or for anything in it, unless it be directly attributed to him.

Is it right to marry a deceased wife's sister? Some say yea—others say nay—whilst a third class of respondents, and by far the most numerous, while opposed in sentiment to such a marriage, confess that they cannot give "chapter and verse" from the Bible for such opposition.

The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, during its Session at London, C. W., in June, 1856, laid this question brought before its notice; and without discussion, adopted the following deliverance, namely:—"The Synod having no doubtful opinion, as to the conformity with the Sacred Scripture, of the principles laid down in our Church Standards, on the Law of Marriage, and especially touching the degrees of affinity, within which Marriage is forbidden by the Divine Law, enjoin on Presbyteries to carry out those recognised principles, as a rule of guidance in dealing with practical questions of Church-fellowship, in this particular."

For this deliverance the writer is thankful, and he endorses it with all his heart.

Let us look now at "the principles laid down in our Church Standards," so as to comprehend what the Synod means. The Church has several Standards to guide it in discipline, but we presume the Synod refers particularly to "The Confession of Faith," the 24th chapter and 4th Section, where the following words occur, namely:—"Marriage ought not to come within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden in the word; nor can such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful under any law of man, or consent of parties, so as those persons may live together as man and wife. The man may not marry any of his wife's kindred nearer of blood than he may of his own, nor the woman of her husband's kindred nearer of blood than of her own."

Let us illustrate this last sentence by saying, that, therefore as a man must not marry his own sister so he is forbidden here to marry his sister-in-law; and as a woman must not marry her own brother, so she is forbidden here to marry her brother-in-law. It is to these two kinds of relationship that the previous words refer—*consanguinity*, relationship by blood; and *affinity*, relationship by marriage.

But, are these principles of the Confession of Faith sanctioned by divine authority? It is evidently a question of morality, and we must therefore appeal to the Bible and the Bible alone for a decision. If the principles referred to are of divine authority, we expect to find them in the Word of God.

We shall not wait to talk to that free thinking kind of man who would come to a decision of this question by the light of nature, or of the natural conscience. We do not despise the light of nature even in this question. But as we do not care for candle-light when there is good sun-shine, so we cannot be detained at present with the light of nature when we have the better light of the Bible. We are afraid that such free-thinking men bring themselves under that condemnation of which the Saviour speaks:—"This is the condemnation that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans we have a very sad picture of the heathen, who having left the light of revelation to guide them in morals, are guided by the light of nature. Truly the light that is in them is darkness. "Our feelings are very bad counsellors in matters of morality."

But whilst just about to open the Bible, there comes to view another man with another shade of free thinking, and of a more subtle description. He will interrupt us in his own mind, kindly way: for he has in many respects the bearing of a christian gentleman. It is rather a suspicious circumstance, however, that he is not fond of settling this question by an appeal "to the law and to the testimony." He says "Christians are enlightened. They have an intuition from the Holy one, and know all things. Their conscience is quickened, corrected, and rendered sensitive and intelligent; so that it discriminates keenly between right and wrong, and gives forth holy dictates for the guidance of the life. This is the result of regeneration—the imparting of a new life to the soul by the Holy Spirit—and that Holy spirit dwells, as in a temple, in every soul thus regenerated. Now, if a man thus enlightened, should see fit, with the concurrence of his conscience, to marry a deceased sister's husband, it cannot be wrong—for, such a marriage is sanctioned by divine grace in the soul. Such people do not need "the law and the testimony." For, as the Rev. B—— of London, says, in defence of such marriages, "Law is not made for such people—it is not necessary; they are taught of God after another fashion; and by the unctio of the holy one, and the instincts, so to