

Our Contributors.

Marriage and Divorce.

BY REV. W. D. ARMSTRONG, D. D.

The question of divorce was brought up in Parliament the other day by Mr. Charlton's proposition to establish a Court of Divorce to adjudicate on cases of divorce instead of the Senate. A good deal of opposition was at once manifested to the Bill and it was withdrawn.

It has always been a difficult and expensive affair to obtain divorce through the Dominion Senate. The Roman Catholic church is strenuously opposed to divorce and Roman Catholic Senators stand by the teaching of their church.

Without discussing, at all, the merits of the proposed Divorce Court, we are inclined to think that, on the whole, Canada is the better for this obstacle in the way of divorce.

There are not a few who hold that divorce should be made easier and the process more simple and unexpensive. On this point we would do well to take warning by the state of affairs across the border.

The facility of divorce there has a decided effect in weakening the marriage bond. It is better perhaps to bear the ills we have than to fly to others that seem to be worse.

Certainly if we are to follow the mind of the Great Teacher we will find little encouragement toward laxity in the marriage bond. When the Jews plead for laxity on the ground of a mosaic enactment. Jesus, at once, goes beyond the enactment and grounds marriage in the great creative act of God.

He tells them plainly that the looser tie was allowed because of "the hardness of their hearts." He lays down the fundamental principle that marriage is a Divine institution and therefore the bond is one that man cannot dissolve by mere convention or law. "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." Jesus would recognize divorce as possible only on one ground that disrupts and destroys the marriage itself. He says nothing about divorce on the ground of "incompatibility of temper" "lack of sympathy" "unhappiness in the home" or "spiritual difficulties."

It may be easier for a man to get a divorce than to set himself to be a good husband, patient, considerate and governing his temper. It may be easier for a woman to get divorce than to be a gentle wife or bear the ills of an ill regulated home. Jesus Christ does not open the door for such divorces—That marriage is an indissoluble permanent union lies at the basis of His teaching.

Where divorce is easy men and women are known to have deliberately wrecked their marriage in order that they may be free to make a new matrimonial venture.

It is well to note that Jesus is very expressly opposed to re marrying after separation.

A separation may take place but not a re-marriage.

Law protects marriage but law can not make marriage. If it be looked upon as merely a union made by law, then law

can regulate grounds of divorce—but if the principle "What God hath joined together let not man put a-under" be allowed the place of law is limited. Legislation only seeks the "possible best" not "the best possible." This was so in the Mosaic enactment and under this principle Legislation may enact laws which are not ideally perfect "because of the hardness of men's hearts" because of lack of ability to enforce the higher law.

But in this matter our thinking as Christians is to be guided by the mind of Jesus not by the opportunism of legislation. All the teaching of Jesus looks toward the permanence and stability of the marriage tie.

Morality, religion, national life are all safe if the home can be preserved in its sweetness, unity and peace.

Sabbath School Pointers.

BY A PRESBYTERIAN ELDER.

I read in a United States Presbyterian Journal a few days ago, a description of Hon. John Wanmaker's Bethany Sabbath School in Philadelphia, with its 308 teachers and 5,258 pupils and its elaborate appointments for doing effective Sabbath school work. The whole story was interesting, instructive and encouraging, but two or three points attracted my notice, some of which may profitably be drawn to the attention of Sabbath school workers within the circle of DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN readers. Here is one point:

"Promptly, to the minute, Mr. Wanmaker stepped upon the platform, touched the bell and there was immediate silence in all that vast room. Another tap and the silence was intense."

What a contrast this is to many Sabbath schools where the opening exercises are disturbed by belated scholars coming into the room attracting the attention of curious scholars away from the solemn opening exercises of prayer, praise and reading God's word. Punctuality in attendance is something that should be insisted upon by both the superintendent and teachers and should be impressed upon the scholars by their own example.

Then the hush of silence which pervaded Bethany school when the superintendent touched the warning bell! How much of that do we observe in our Sunday schools? Is it not a fact that in many of our Sunday schools the superintendents have to again and again ring their bells in order to secure something like passable silence, frequently the hum of conversation does not cease until the singing of the opening hymn has commenced; and not infrequently whispered conversation is carried on all through the opening services. Such conduct betokens an astonishing want of reverence for the Lord's day, for the house of prayer and for the solemn acts of worship which form the opening exercises in Sunday schools. It is a solemn thing to come into God's presence for praise, prayer and study of God's word. Many Sunday school pupils seem to have no conception of this solemnity. Superintendents should continuous-

ly press this thought upon their schools until the lesson is thoroughly learned; and in doing so the superintendents should firmly insist, not only upon punctuality in attendance, but upon absolute silence in every part of the school before the opening exercises are commenced. Disorder of any kind and the confusion which it brings will mar the efficiency of any Sunday school and largely neutralize the effect of the most faithful teaching.

Here is another point worthy of notice: "The Superintendent then called for all who had Bibles to hold them up. The response was a magnificent surprise. Hands by the hundred, holding the Word of God, shot up out of that great gathering. He then called upon the galleries and the pastor's class; but he did not call upon any to show their quarterlies. The Bible is evidently studied from the Bible, and not from leaflets, as the show of hands would indicate. A class of little tots was called to the platform. Mr. Wanmaker told them how glad he was to see them, and how much good their sweet young faces did him. 'How many of you have your Bibles along this afternoon?' Every little hand in that class went up, holding its diminutive Bible."

Is it not a fact that in most of our Sunday schools the lesson helps largely take the place of the Bible—where one scholar brings a Bible six will bring the lesson helps. The latter are good in their place—they are intended mainly to aid in the study of the Sunday school lesson at home but they should be left at home by both teachers and scholars, and the Word of God itself should be the text book for work in the school. Even in studying the lessons at home it is possible to place too much dependence upon the helps. They should be simply used as guides in study. Faithful, efficient teaching in the Sunday school depends very much upon the extent to which teachers are saturated with the Living Word and taught by the promised Holy Spirit; and their scholars will be aroused with a desire to know more of the teaching of the Bible just in proportion as they become impressed with its value. No help can take the place of the Living Word.

There is another and very important point: "We pass into Bethany church, where Mr. Wanmaker meets with his class. Here another surprise awaited us. The auditorium was filled with men and women who had come to hear this prince of Sabbath school teachers. Vigorous youth and tottering age were there; the young man in his prime and the old man leaning, like Jacob on his staff. The topic was the death of Moses. Mr. Wanmaker having come from a sick bed, gave but a brief lecture. But as he told in his plain and sympathetic way, of God's dealings with his servant, of his goodness to him in his death, how in his full vigor he permitted his eyes to see the good land and then looked after his funeral himself, there were tears in many eyes unused to weeping."

Do we see any such stirring sights in any of our Sunday schools nowadays? The writer remembers well what he saw in the first Sunday school he attended some fifty years ago. Young men and young women in their prime did not think they were too old to attend Sunday school then. Sunday school helps were not thought of then. Methods of teaching were simple and somewhat primitive,