

## THE TRUE WITNESS

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## THE DECLINE OF MARRIAGE

Last week we spoke of the young men who are greatly responsible for the decline in the marriage rate. In justice, however, to thousands of good, hard-working young men, whose circumstances in life debar them from the pleasure of establishing homes for themselves, we must say that the characters pictured in last week's issue, although too numerous, are yet of the minority. They are exceptions, but sufficiently strong in numbers to almost constitute a rule for their own class. They are principally the sons of well-to-do parents and they allow themselves to drift gradually into the current that carries them down to the great gulf of uselessness. There are countless other young men, to-day, willing and glad to make homes for themselves, but they are obliged to eke out a living upon small wages, and often to be the only stay and support of old parents or helpless children. Of these deserving young men we will have something to say later on. For this week we intend to speak about the girls—the marriageable young ladies.

All the blame for the declining marriage rate must not be left at the doors of the young men: the members of the fair sex are also much in fault.

It is very amusing to notice the "little ways" and "cute manners" of the girl in her teens. When in company with other young girls she is very much at ease, she speaks and laughs most naturally, she displays a good deal of sense—that is to say when she has any to display—and she strives to impress her companions with an idea of her superior knowledge of the world, and to out-do them in all the little accomplishments of life. But just let her hook on to a boy for an hour, and what a sudden transformation takes place! She simpers and lisps in her speech, she giggles and distorts her features in her laughter, she wiggles and twists in her walk, she tosses her head, puts on an air of triumph as much as to say: "I've got a fellow," and she plays, in general, a species of pantomime for the benefit of her beau, but to the annoyance of her less fortunate companions, the amusement of strangers and the disgust of sensible people. After a year or two she grows out of these little ways; she has gone beyond watching at street corners for the lad she likes, and pretending to play with other girls or to be in deep and serious conversation upon important questions, while casting her glances in every direction to catch a sight of her anxiously expected lover. She has commenced to look more seriously upon life; she puts on a longer face when she puts on a longer dress; she puts up her childish ways when she puts up her hair; she ascends to a higher pedestal, and awaits, like a statue in the great art-gallery of life, the approach of admirers, of critics and of men of taste who might like to own such a master-piece.

Into the great gallery throng the spectators; one by one, or in groups, they file past; each pauses in presence of the *débutante* and then proceeds to the next object of attraction. The admirers, at

first, are very numerous; this is a new figure in the world of art they have not yet heard of, much less had occasion to study, to admire, to fall in love with the recent *chef-d'œuvre*. There are no severe critics and scarcely one who has come seeking a life ornament for his home. It must be glorious to be only an object of admiration; surely, no nature could exist so harsh and soulless as to criticise the object of universal attraction! By degrees the admirers hear of other wonderful additions to the great gallery and they pass on. Some of them return to make comparisons and go away more favorably impressed with the latest novelty. A few still cling to their first idea that not even time can affect the beauties and perfections of this one. By degrees the critics begin to see blemishes here and there in the self-supposed model of perfection. They talk of the defects, they compare notes; then they proceed to rival each other in fault finding, even as the recent admirers were eager in out-doing each other's praises of the model. The serious lover of art comes along; he listens to the praise from the latter people, he weighs carefully the strictures and severe criticisms of the former, and he is influenced by neither one nor the other. He merely asks himself whether that statue would suit his own purposes or not. Perchance, in the vast and varied collection of the picture gallery, this particular masterpiece may be lost in the multitude of rivals; but in a home, in the sanctuary of domestic life, it might be an ornament of priceless worth, a glory to the happy possessor of so many perfections, and a source of constant happiness, refined pleasure and matchless enjoyment. The admirers have all been drawn away by succeeding novelties or have vanished at the breath of the shallow critics; but the one whose future home and life-long happiness is bound up in that one model remains steadfast, and is determined to transfer the precious treasure from the great public gallery of the vain, changing, inconstant world, to the shrine of unalterable love in the temple of his domestic existence.

Leaving aside our comparison, and coming down to simple facts: it is at this stage that the young girl generally destroys all prospects of a future home. Her head is turned by the adulation of meaningless admirers and heartless lovers; she hears not the criticisms, and imagines that none exist. She is whirled off in the tide of enjoyment, she is intoxicated with the incense of flattery, until she begins to feel herself as not of mortal clay, but made for the companionship of something celestial. She loves to drink in the opiate of meaningless attentions, and she becomes so blinded by the glitter of her own successes over hearts, that she fails to feel the true impulse when the one whose life would correspond with hers is before her; she fails to see her future happiness in the honest, determined, earnest man who comes to take her to his home. She prefers the butterfly existence, of darting from flower to flower in the great parterres of the busy world, than the sweet honeyed life of hived contentment in the sphere that God had marked out for her. And "time waits for nobody," the flowers fade, droop, and are buried, while the autumn blast that destroys them also kills the little, feeble life of the gorgeous butterfly; and the time lost in this sunny but brief existence has been seized upon by the more wise, and from the chill of adversity they are sheltered. Thousands of girls thus miss their opportunities, in fact lose their proper vocations, pass on to middle life, move down the decline of

years, and finally disappear from the scene, without ever leaving a relic behind to tell that they had lived.

The great error is frivolity. Flirtation—if we may use that term to designate an innocent, thoughtless confidence that the world is at their feet and will forever remain there—is the principal cause of the scarcity of seriousness and the declining number of marriages and homes. The girl who is everywhere, at balls, parties, concerts, theatres, and in every whirl of society, whose name is constantly before the public as a leader of fashion, as the attraction in public places, is rarely ever known to leave that circle for the narrower one of her proper life-sphere. Young men enjoy the company of such a girl; as they say together: "she is first rate to while away an hour with, or she is splendid for a waltz or two, or she is the best company in the world when a fellow has no place to go; but for a wife she is no good—she'd be a flirt to the end; there are too many girls in the world for a chap to tie himself down to one." And the serious man passes on without saying anything, leaves her to her frivolities and goes elsewhere to seek a helpmate.

## LOYALTY AND ROYALTY.

The non-Catholic press has been somewhat exercised of late over an incident that took place in London some time ago. The proposing, by the Lord Mayor, of the Pope's health before that of the Queen, has created quite an amount of adverse comment. The other evening the Daily Witness condemned the "practice of coupling the name of an institution or an individual with the Sovereign in a toast." It was with a special flourish of trumpets that the Quebec correspondent announced the toasting of the Queen before the toasting of the Lord Bishop of Quebec at the centennial banquet held there some days ago. In fact considerable discussion has been raised regarding this supposed disloyalty to royalty. The fact of the matter is that the most loud-voiced of these defenders of the Queen's prerogatives never pause to inquire what Her Majesty's own idea is upon the subject. We hold a penny that she fully appreciated the motives that actuated the Lord Mayor on that occasion.

It was not as a temporal sovereign that he regarded the Pope, when proposing his health before that of the Queen: it was as the Vicar of Christ, the spiritual head of the church to which he belongs, the representative of the Son of God upon earth. No matter what the creed of others may be, the Lord Mayor, as a Catholic, must believe in the infallible head of the Church, and must recognize in him the envoy of Jesus Christ. Therefore is it that he places the spiritual monarch before the temporal one, on the same principle that he would honor God before honoring man, that he would respect the celestial before respecting the terrestrial, that he would give preference to eternity over time, to things divine over things human.

It cannot be the same in the case of other denominations, as our religious Daily would argue, because none of the countless sects of Christianity admits that Christ has a Vicar on earth, no one of them claims any spiritual superiority even for its own head or founder. "Fear God—honor the King." Firstly we are told to "Fear God"—and we are told that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." In other words, if we are wise we will fear, that is to say respect, love, obey and glorify God, therefore the Son of God, consequently the one who has a special commission to represent the Saviour upon earth. And when we have done this, when we have bowed down

before Divine authority, then comes the injunction—"honor the King (or Queen)." But the honor due to the earthly monarch must be preceded by the honor paid to the One whose "Kingdom is not of this world." The Catholic, therefore, who actually believes in the Church as the pillar of Truth, who looks upon the Pope as the Vicar of Christ, must—to be consistent—pay his first respects to the spiritual monarch and then his homage to the temporal sovereign whose loyal subject he is. Otherwise he would be acting in a manner that Victoria herself could not sanction.

But the non-Catholic writers of our day do not seem to grasp the idea of what a Catholic's duties are, and in what they necessarily differ from those of non-believers in our religion. It would be a poor tribute of respect toward the Queen to say: "I know I must fear God—that is to say obey my conscience—before I bow before the monarch, but in order to please your majesty I will honor you first and God's Vicar afterwards. Of course I don't do so through any respect for you, but simply because it is the fashion." We can well imagine how the Queen would appreciate such an evidence of loyalty to the sovereign.

They tell us plainly, "if you honor the Pope before you honor the Queen you are not a loyal subject, you are an enemy of the sovereign." In other words the Witness expresses the same idea. It says: "So far as they succeed in doing so (that is in coupling another name—the Pope's—with the Queen's) they promote disloyalty to that flag, and they could not act thus if they did not love their party (or church) more than their flag, or if their party servility was not greater than their patriotism." Evidently these critics of Catholic actions know not whereof they write. At the dawn of Christianity, while yet the foundation of the unending church was being laid by the Divine One, when the Roman Proconsul—Pontius Pilate—was about to declare the Saviour an innocent man, as the Jews and the priests in particular saw their victim about to escape them, they cried out: "If thou lettest this man go, thou art no friend to Caesar." In other words: "If you act according to your conscience, if you decide to do justice in spite of our wishes to the contrary, then we will accuse you of being 'no friend to Caesar,' and your place is lost to you." Such was the meaning of the intimidation coming from the blood-thirsty enemies of Christ. Not that they cared for Caesar or what friendship Pilate had for him, but it suited their purpose to raise a false cry of loyalty. So it is with these men of our day. They say to the conscientious and loyal Catholic: "If you honor the Pope first, if you act according to your faith, if you follow the dictates of your conscience, then you are no friend to the monarch—you are disloyal, you are a traitor, and we will denounce you."

Perchance someone may ask: "What evidence have you to show that the Pope of Rome, the head of your Religion, is the Vicar of Christ?" We need but point to the history of nearly twenty centuries, the unbroken series of popes from Leo XIII to St. Peter, the triumphal progress of the Church despite all the assailants that attacked her, the march of Catholicity over the ruins of Pagan altars, and defunct heresies, the progress of the barque of Peter in defiance of the countless tempests that have lashed against it and that still surround it. Let our critically-inclined friends recall that passage in the Acts of the Apostles, wherein the envoys of Christ are the cause of an excited consultation between the Priests and Doctors of the Law,