

# LIVING ISSUES FOR PULPIT TREATMENT.

*The world will not let die a religion which helps it to solve its vital problems.*

## Divorce—An Alarming Evil.

*Every one that putteth away his wife and marryeth another, committeth adultery: and he that marryeth one that is put away from a husband, committeth adultery—Luke xvi: 18.*

Among the social problems which are forced upon us for solution, none are more radical in their relation to society at large than the matter of divorce; none are charged with greater danger for the future of the United States. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. xi: 3.)

### I. THE LAW OF CHRIST IN RELATION TO THE SUBJECT.

This is found in the passage given from Luke; also in Matthew v: 31, 32; xix: 3-9, and Mark x: 2-12. Observe how Christ increased the scope and strictness of the Jewish law (Deut. xxiv: 1) and put the woman on a footing of equality with the man. According to Christ's precepts marriage is dissolved by adultery, so that the innocent party may marry again, *but for no other offence*. And yet divorcees have come to be granted for other causes; causes often of the most trivial character. Human law is thus brought into direct antagonism with the divine law.

### II. THIS SIN AND SOCIAL EVIL IS SPREADING LIKE A CONTAGION AMONG US.

Recent statistics are appalling. Where we should least expect it, as in New England, the land of the Puritans, the evil is assuming large proportions. The ratio of divorce to marriage in several States is now as one to ten, or even greater in some States, and in one State the ratio has within twenty years increased from one to fifty-one, to one to twenty-one! In this city, in only three of our courts, nearly 3,000 divorcees have been decreed since 1870, and the number in 1882 was almost double that in 1872. Whereunto will this grow? Is it not time to sound the alarm? Is not the marriage bond fast becoming a mere rope of sand?

### III. THE CAUSES OF THIS TERRIBLE LAXITY.

They are manifold. Among them may be specified—

1. The tendencies of modern social life. Extravagance in living. The attractions away from home life. The general loosening of moral restraints.

2. Secrecy in obtaining divorce. Instead of the publicity of an open court, cases are now generally sent to a referee. This favors collusion. "Detectives," too, are employed to collect or manufacture testimony.

3. The rapacity of a class of lawyers, who agree to obtain a divorce without publicity, for a consideration.

4. The extreme laxity of divorce laws in several States, by which every facility is afforded for annulling the marriage contract.

5. The recent decision of the Court of Appeals of this State, which practically removes all restraint upon the subsequent marriage of persons, even where they were divorced for acts of marital infidelity.

### IV. THE REMEDY.

1. The Church has a duty to perform. (1) To vindicate the law of Christ in relation to divorce. (2) To maintain discipline and duly punish offenders. (3) Her ministry must refuse to marry divorced persons, unless they have a clear right to remarry, according to Christ's precepts.

2. Our courts have a duty in the case. In the interest of morality and public virtue, they are bound to frown upon this growing laxity, and lay a strong hand upon the evil to the full extent of their power. Also to take the lead in a movement for a reform of State divorce laws, and to secure a national law that shall be uniform and wholesome in its operations. "No more important question can come before Congress than that of preparing for a national divorce law by a constitutional amendment. Eminent judges and lawyers favor that