

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

DURING the Parliamentary session in the winter of 1881, D. Girouard, Esq., M.P. for Jacques Cartier, brought down a bill to legalize marriage with a deceased wife's sister. The Roman Catholic members were willing, in fact anxious, that it should pass; for, although such marriages are not permitted in the Roman Catholic Church except by dispensation, it has always been a complaint in Canada, as in England, that their dispensations were thwarted by the civil laws. The Protestant dissenters were also anxious for the passage of the bill, for, disbelieving the doctrine of the Roman Catholic and High Church that union by religious ceremony creates connection by blood, and finding no Scripture to justify such a prohibition, they were desirous of abolishing every unnecessary restriction to marriage, as well as to remove a social grievance and legal disability from the numerous families—many of the highest respectability and social standing—in which such marriages had been contracted.

Under such circumstances, while the great body of the people were not only favourable to the measure but absolutely ridiculed the idea that such a prohibition should exist in Canadian law, it may seem strange that Mr. Girouard's bill, after having been carried by a large majority in the Commons, should have been defeated in the Senate. This result was brought about by the official and social exertions of the Right Rev. J. Travers Lewis, D.D., LL.D., Lord Bishop of Ontario.

His Lordship's efforts, and those of his clergy, to flood Parliament with petitions from all parts of the country, as well as his pleadings with certain members of the Senate, would have done him credit in any cause involving the real welfare of the people. Making himself, however, the head and front in a struggle in itself purely secular, he fairly became the object of so powerful an assailant as the authoress of the *GUNHILDA LETTERS*. These were published during the session of 1881 in the *Ottawa Citizen*, and certain it is that no communications in a public newspaper have ever awakened a greater interest among women as well as men, or produced a more profound impression on the public mind, both in Canada and the United Kingdom.