

by the mind of God to prevent its enactment which has been manifested by those who, to suit their own private ends, are trying to effect the change, their puny voice would be unheard amidst the universal condemnation. Scotland, to a man, is against it. England in its moral instincts, in its religious convictions, in its family life, is almost to a man united against the measure. It is but the old story—a band of a few, thoroughly in earnest for private ends, using money, means, voices, public political influence, bringing them to bear on men whose seat is trembling in the balance in certain boroughs, and to whom the question is put—“Will you have my support and give up the wife’s sister, or will you protect the wife’s sister and lose my vote?” Then, I say, let every man of us be in earnest—let every woman be in earnest—let us show in our demeanour, in our language, and in our conduct, that this is one of those questions which we will not suffer to be stirred without marking our disapprobation of the stirrer. The mischief is half done when the question is stirred at all. In those deep interests affecting morality and family life, the very declaration by that respectable carriage-keeper—(laughter)—that it is lawful to do it—the very publication of that opinion has done harm somewhere. It is like those states of the atmosphere predisposing countries to some diseases. Let the seeds of that disease fall where they may they are sure to find some one predisposed to receive them. Depend upon it, on this great moral question, a strong moral disapprobation of the troublers of moral law is never misplaced. In that which God has from time to time signally honoured and specially rewarded, go, I pray you, forth, one and all, determined that so far as your influence goes, the very debating of this question shall be put down, and, God helping us, England is safe. (Loud and continued cheering.)

The resolution was put and carried unanimously. The BISHOP OF ST. DAVID had to propose a resolution which was simply the necessary complement of that which had just been passed. The previous resolution expressed the unanimous conviction of the meeting as to the dangerous tendency of the proposed change in the law: his proposition pointed to the most simple, obvious, and necessary mode of carrying that conviction into practical effect. It was—“That this meeting promises to use its best endeavours to promote the signature and presentation of the following petition to both Houses of Parliament:—*To the Right Hon. the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.* The humble petition of the undersigned, being inhabitants of —, sheweth—That your petitioners view with alarm, the attempts which have been so perseveringly made to bring about a change in the law of marriage. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray your right hon. house not to pass any bill that has for its object the legalising of marriage within the degrees now prohibited by law.” He was not tired to disclose a reflection that came across his mind as he entered the room, as to a peculiarity of his own in regard to this question. Nevertheless, he would do so, for he enjoyed a certain degree of consolation under it, and it was just possible that it might afford consolation to others. There was this peculiarity in his own case with respect to this subject—that whereas the opinions of some persons had always been stationary, his own had undergone considerable variation. He was not ashamed of making this statement in that or any other assembly, because the same admission had been made by the late Bishop of London. That right rev. prelate stated in the House of Lords that he had not always taken the same view of the question, and he (the Bishop of St. David) was disposed to think that the view last expressed by the right rev. prelate very nearly resembled his own. There were some people who seemed to suppose that the whole matter lay in a nutshell, and that it was no very hard matter to crack the nut and extract the kernel. Now, although no doubt it was a great blessing and a great comfort to those who could say as much of their own powers, his consolation was, that perhaps after all those who enjoyed that comfort might have paid a higher price for it than he should be inclined to pay, and that their uniformity of opinion might possibly arise from their having looked to only one side of the question. He, on the contrary, had endeavoured to look on the subject from all sides. That to him was one source of comfort. Another was, that although there had been some variation in his opinions, it had always been a variation in the same direction; his view had not altered except in so far as it had grown much clearer and stronger than it originally was. He had also a third ground of consolation, which was, that, however his speculative views might have varied, his practical conduct with regard to the subject might have always been the same. He had never been one of those who had changed both their principles and their votes. And he would state why it was, that when his view of the subject was somewhat less clear and strong than it was now, he had not felt the least hesitation as to the course he was bound to pursue. The reason was that he had, he trusted, in common with the immense majority of his fellow-countrymen, an instinctive horror of any innovation in that part of our institutions which related to the law and order of family life. He conceived that any change in those institutions, however apparently for the better, must be a change fraught with infinite and incalculable evils. To make such a change, except upon the clearest evidence of its lawfulness, its ex-

pediency, its necessity, would be one of the grossest he would not say mistakes, but crimes, which a Legislature could commit. And, therefore, when he did not see all the bearings of the case as he did now, he felt that if there was a doubt or a difficulty in the matter, the greater was the strength of the argument against any alteration of the law; and he must say that he was astonished when he heard the doubts and difficulties that were said to beset certain theological arguments on the question adduced as reasons for changing the law, instead of as reasons for refraining from such change until such doubts were cleared up. But, in another point of view, he must consider himself in rather an unfortunate position. His own convictions, as he had said, had become clearer and stronger, but then he felt disheartened by the fact of finding himself continually voting in an increasing majority. And hence it was that many very excellent persons had an advantage over him. They had changed both their opinions and their votes, and always in the direction in which they conceived the current of public opinion was flowing. (“Hear, hear,” and a laugh.) Still, this was an advantage which he could not bring himself to regard with envy, but he rather looked upon it as a fact deeply to be deplored. But when he looked at the history and position of the question, there were two or three things which seemed to him to afford a sufficient explanation of that fact. He was very much and very painfully struck, on the last occasion when the subject was debated in the House of Lords, by one circumstance, which, so far as he was aware, was entirely new in the history of this question. Their chairman would probably remember that some years ago a night, on which otherwise neither house might have met, was given to the discussion in the House of Lords, on the ground that the question was entirely free from the influence of party—that it was one with which party feelings had nothing to do. On the last occasion—and he should never forget it—one of the speakers who gave the weight of his high character, his judicial reputation, his close and argumentative mind in favour of our cause—he meant Lord Cranworth—opened his speech with an expression of regret that he was not able to agree with his noble friends around him. He (the Bishop of St. David) then perceived for the first time, with great pain and uneasiness, that the question had become a party question, and that, too, in the House of Lords. That was a fact which he deeply lamented, but he could only say that whatever side he might take as a politician, his views on this subject would not be influenced by the political party to which he might happen to belong; and he contended that those who took the other view forfeited their right to vote or give an opinion on the question. There was another disagreeable occurrence which struck him during the last debate, though it was by no means a new one. He should never forget a few words which a noble lord whose circumstances connected him peculiarly with the mercantile interests of the city of London, and who had on more than one occasion been charged with petitions from large bodies in that and other great towns in support of that change in the law of marriage which he and those now present predated. That noble lord, on the last occasion on which he presented one of these petitions—a petition in which, if he (the Bishop of St. David) mistook not, the whole strength lay in the number of heads of municipal bodies who had signed it, as mayors and heads of corporations—he expressed himself in a certain tone of indignation that persons could be found so wilful and obstinate as to withstand or resist such a manifestation of public opinion. (“Oh, oh!” and a laugh.) Now, he would put a case. Let him suppose their noble chairman intrusted with petitions signed by every member of the Bench of Bishops, by all the dignitaries of the Church, by a great number of the beneficed and unbeneficed clergy, praying for the adoption of a decimal coinage, or some modification of the tariff, or some change in our navigation laws, or any other point involving profound and abstract questions of political economy—he should like to see the expression of countenance which would be assumed by that same noble lord who presented that petition on the subject of marriage, signed, no doubt, by many most respectable men, but whose personal opinion on such a question could not be more valuable than that of the Bishops and clergy on a point of political economy. (“Hear, hear,” and laughter.) The questions would really have been exactly parallel. But what was the practical conclusion as applied to the resolution he was going to propose? It showed the necessity of petitioning, and the signatures of those who understood the subject under discussion would certainly be as valuable as those of the heads of corporations, including even Alderman Salomon’s himself. (Cheers and laughter.) The petitions in favour of the bill, and the statement made by the petitioners that such marriages did take place, was a fact to be regretted, but it did not induce him to change the opinion which after mature investigation he had formed; on the contrary, he had considered it an additional argument in favour of the kind of united exertion they were now commencing in support of the law. During the twenty years which he had been connected with his diocese, he should be rather going beyond than falling short of the mark if he were to say that he had never heard of more than three cases where marriage of the description contemplated by the promoters of the change was desired. He had never heard of more than one such marriage actually taking place, though he had been asked once or twice by clergymen whether they should comply with the request of parties who wished to contract such unions, and he was by no means satisfied that in the one case he referred to