

Parker and the Bishops who drew up the table; but the marriages forbidden by this table had always been held unlawful by the Church of England, and for fifteen centuries such marriages were held unlawful in the Church at large. To return to the marriage service. Every part of it, especially the two solemn benedictions and the invitation to receive Holy Communion "at the time of marriage, or at the first opportunity after marriage," prove that it is no mere civil contract which the Church owns as marriage. If, then, persons married "otherwise than God's word doth allow are not joined together by God, neither is their matrimony lawful," and what God's word doth not allow is assured to us by our Church in the table of degrees, and in the 99th Canon; if we, as Canadian clergy and laity, have acknowledged the Book of Common Prayer (which contains the table of degrees) to be "a true and faithful declaration of the doctrines contained in Holy Scripture"; if, moreover, a resolution of both houses of our Provincial Synod declares, that no clergyman of this Ecclesiastical Province shall knowingly solemnize a marriage forbidden by the 99th Canon of 1603, how can we deny the force of such solemn obligations? I do not hesitate to say that if a clergyman of our Church do not consider himself bound by them, I cannot conceive any other that would bind his conscience, and I should distrust his declarations on any subject whatever. Besides, are we going to stop in this downward course of license? Already our legislators propose to go beyond the demands of agitators of the question in England. Our bill proposes to sanction the marriage of a woman to a deceased husband's brother. "Why then," as Lord Hatherly says, "should not a man's own brother desire his daughter in marriage, or look even to the reversion of his wife?" We may be sure that ingenious arguments would be found even for this revolting connection. But some are prepared to go even beyond this, and even bid us be of good courage and dare to do what St. Paul tells us "is not so much as named among the heathen," to take in marriage our father's wife. This language has, I understand, been supposed to be said in a joke, as if no man would desire it. In most instances it would, no doubt, be improbable, but it is far from being impossible. A man, we will suppose, marries early in life and his wife bears him sons who are grown up when his wife dies. He then selects a wife very many years younger than himself. Meanwhile one of his sons marries early, and his wife dies leaving children. Finally the father dies. Why then, if man's appetite is to be his sole guide, may not the son select his father's wife, no older than himself, to be the guardian of his children; and pretend that no one can possibly feel so much affection for them as his step-mother and be so suited to be their guide? Then if she bears children it is to one who ought to consider himself her son, and her children would be brothers and sisters to his children. This may be considered an exaggerated case, but it is perfectly possible, and if we are to follow advice given, either in seriousness or in sport, all the hideous consequences would follow. When we try principles we have a right to consider extreme and possible cases. The fact is, that the transgression of a Divine law always proceeds in a downward course and never ascends to the source of all purity, to Him who says, "be ye holy, for I am holy." I shall not dwell much on the social discomfort of this law, great as it undoubtedly would be. But I would observe that by it the happiness of the many would be sacrificed to the passions of the