

Marriage and Divorce

BY JAMES M. STROEDER

(Concluded.)

We find some married people who complain that they cannot provide for more than one or two children. What of these? Does not the proverb read, "Where there is a will, there is also a way?" The greatest blessing that parents can have are many children. Does this not clearly show that one-childed married couples lack confidence in God, Who said: "Increase and multiply?" For this class of married people two children are a burden, a misfortune, and a catastrophe. In place of happy children we not unfrequently find a menagerie of animals, favorite pets, and "poodles." Is it not disgraceful and unnatural to resort to unlawful and doubtful means where by the primary aim of matrimony may be frustrated? Can we calmly close our eyes to this state of affairs? How long can this condition last? Do not some spend small fortunes on their favorite "pets" and "poodles?" It costs more to raise a child than it does to keep one's "pet," they complain. Is this true? Granting the contention, however, which of the two is the more useful member to society? If this state of affairs continues, the time will soon come when the land will be depopulated. Look at the firesides of the poorer classes, especially those of our foreign naturalized American citizens, and what do you see? Peace and contentment, and a large family of bright, healthy, happy young boys and girls. Who are their parents? Poor, hard-working human beings, who often raise their children in want, hardships, and with great self-sacrifice. Here is the ideal home. Wealth alone is nothing.

Parents have certain duties to perform towards their offspring. The principal one is that of education. Education is the complete training of man's faculties in every direction. In the true Catholic home the child is taught the first lessons of prayer, veracity, and morality, and is cautioned to avoid everything evil and harmful. It is the doctrine of the Catholic Church and the dictate of sound reason, that the child belongs to the parents, who next to God are its cause, and the reason of its existence. After the child has attained legal age, parents are bound to procure for it a suitable and honorable station in life, so that it can sustain itself as also those who may depend on it in after life. In return, however, the child owes lasting piety and gratitude to its parents, and is obliged to honor and respect them, to receive the parental instructions and education in the proper spirit, and to be always obedient and dutiful. One other duty imperative upon parents is to ascertain and lovingly foster the vocation of their children. Enter our prisons, insane asylums, penitentiaries, and reformatories and see those poor unfortunates. Why are they here? Did not lack of parental care, lack of parental supervision, due to divorce cast many of them into our state criminal institution? Why so many orphans who know not their father or mother? If, therefore, divorce is such a great evil, why not root it out? Why tolerate it any longer?

From the preceding we may also conclude that polygamy is wrong and against the natural law. Polygamy is the "simultaneous union of one with many," a union contrary to the law of nature because of the dire consequences that follow in its wake. We distinguished two forms of polygamy; polygyny, or the union of one man with more than one wife, and polyandry, or the union of one wife with more than one husband. Of these two the latter is the greater evil, since it is not only against the primary, but also against the secondary ends of matrimony. The evils resulting from such an alliance are innumerable.

In both cases, however, the chief purpose of marriage is often frustrated, sometimes only partly, oftentimes entirely. THE home should be a haven of peace, conjugal fidelity, and happiness. Can this be possible in the homes of polygamists? Can one serve two masters faithfully and conscientiously? If divorce and polygamy are not deplorable states, why the Mann White Slave Act? Why so much legislation against this gigantic hydra? Are not adultery, fornication and kindred vices, and, in most states, polygamy, forbidden and punishable by law? Our opponents argue that in ancient times man was allowed more than one wife. Why? Simply because God, the Lawgiver and Creator, permitted it for a while, because conditions then were radically different from those of the present time. The human race sprang from one common seed, Adam and Eve, and in order to "increase and multiply" so as to fill the whole world, polygamy was necessary. Later, when people had become sufficiently numerous, God abolished it.

Concerning the union between man and wife, Christ says: "God made them male and female; wherefore a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and there shall be two in one flesh—what therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder." From this we see that divorce is never to be granted, since it is contrary to the divine law. Incidentally we may also quote St. Paul concerning the relations of husband and wife: "Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to their husbands in all things. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it." What, therefore, ought our attitude be toward woman suffrage? Is the wife not subject to her husband and his helpmate? Why do they wish to go beyond their proper sphere and place? The wife's duty is to stay at home and help her husband. The home is her lawful and proper place. Let men attend to those affairs that belong to men, and let the wife remember her duty and office. The ideal Christian marriage is a life-long union of love and concord. But what of mixed marriages? Without religion the home is a failure. The common evils of mixed marriages are unhappiness, loss of faith, quarrels, and children poorly instructed in religion. Can there be perfect harmony if husband and wife profess different religious creeds? "How can that be called a union where there is no agreement of faith."

Why did the mighty Roman Empire, the mistress of the then whole known world, crumble and fall into decay? Was it not because of the irreligion, immorality, licentiousness, and the bigamous family union? What will happen to us if the rate of divorces continues to increase?

Our fair country America numbers more broken-up homes than any other nation. A bold statement, but it is only too true. Someone has said that the United States grants more divorces in a year than entire Europe within the same period. Another writer says: "Canada grants less divorces in a year than the United States in a day." Statistics show that during the last twenty-five years our courts have dissolved over a million marriages. One divorce to every twelve marriages. Is this not a grave and desperate situation—one that saps the very foundation of society? What must the inevitable result be? It is claimed that 50 per cent. of those in the state reformatories of California are there because of divorce. The conditions in the other states are probably not very different. Yes, we must cease to grant divorce. It is a dark blot upon our honor and civilization. Listen to Judge F. D. Kinne of Michigan, a non-Catholic: "In my opinion," he says, "there is just one way to solve the problem. Let the next legislature enact a law that never again, for any cause whatsoever, shall there be granted a divorce from the bonds of matrimony in the state of Michigan. In certain cases let there be a decree of separation, but no dissolution of the marriage contract." Is this not also the teaching of the Catholic Church? Why not follow her admonitions and doctrine? She alone can solve this momentous problem. God's laws cannot be changed. Only remember her attitude and firmness against Henry VIII of England. Let us then banish divorce from our country. Let all remember the purpose of matrimony, and bring back peace, love, and happiness to every home. Divorce is causing our individual ruin, as also that of our native land.

BOLSHEVISM A SYMPTOM

Bolshevism in Russia is a topic about which the press never tires of relating the most dreadful tales, and a subject, too, on which countless speakers and writers feel free to discourse. But they as well as the press seldom, if indeed ever, point out the one important fact—the fact that the tendencies they condemn and the incidents they deplore are not mere incidents of a movement seeking to establish itself by force, but symptoms of a disease, and that this disease affects all of Russian society.

A Jesuit, Count Stanislaus Tyszkiewicz, brings out this basic truth forcefully in an article appearing in a new Catholic Austrian review. Writing under the caption, "Russian Bolshevism as a Symptom of Disease in Russian Society," this Jesuit Father substantiates his contention by tracing the inroads of the sickness through all classes of society, happily finding the rural population, though by no means in the best of health socially, the least affected by the dread malady with which the social body is infected. "Russian Bolshevism," he writes, "along with Nihilism, Anarchism and Tolstoyism, its near relatives, is by no means a passing apparition or perhaps even a party issue of Socialism; on the contrary, it is a symptom of disease affecting the whole of Russian society—it is 'Russian' in the broadest sense of the word (black type by the author). We can trace the bolshevistic instincts through all the ranks of the population of the former Czarism. A few facts taken from actual observation may suffice as illustrations. A wealthy, elegantly-dressed merchant of Moscow—one of those Russian millionaires against whom even Jewish High Finance was powerless—passes a florist's hot house. Without even a second thought he enters and demands to see the proprietor. 'I wish to buy this hot house,' he announces. 'It is not for sale,' answers the proprietor. 'I will pay 500,000 rubles,' the merchant insists. The owner yields, the merchant orders a gang of workmen to the spot; the beautiful palms are cut down and thrown with the orchids upon a pile of straw, and fire set to the whole. The millionaire is proud as a lord over his wonderful deed.

"Another man, accompanied by his cashier, walks into the most exclusive restaurant of the Capital. 'Waiter,' he orders, '20 bottles of champagne, the very best.' The twenty bottles are quickly brought, and our hero tosses them one at a time against the huge mirrors set in the walls around the entire room; he leaves it to his cashier to settle for the damages, which run up to a few paltry 100,000 rubles.—A lady of recognized social standing and wealth wishes to indulge in the caprice of a sleigh-ride in mid-summer; while she is still in the mood, the driveways and walks in the park are covered with a thick layer of powdered sugar.—Those gentlemen are also well known who habitually take pleasure in lighting their cigars with 100 ruble bank-notes; and there are many who, also habitually, use their dishonestly acquired wealth to indulge in the pleasure of wearing a different fur overcoat every day. Thus," Father Tyszkiewicz adds, "these people seek to ameliorate the lot they are forced to bear by a despotic state."

These facts of recent occurrence were preceded by worse happenings only a few decades ago. Then, says Count Tyszkiewicz, not only wealth, but also the life, liberty and happiness of thousands and their families were sacrificed to the bolshevistic caprices of the very wealthy. Now, the disease has spread further, until it affects, as we have stated, society as a whole. The Jesuit writer traces the disease through the field of literature also and of other intellectual effort, showing the correctness of his contention. It is this important fact which must be realized before a cure can be effected. And it is this fact also which must ever be borne in mind in all study of social ills and all efforts at relief and cure. Society is an organism, not a mere conglomeration of individual cells, unattached and independent of each other and the whole. And Society, says Pope Pius IX., is ill, but God has created it so that it can be cured. Therefore efforts to overthrow Society are wrong—just as wrong as indifference towards the welfare of Society. C. B. of the C. V.

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