

DIVORCE.

We have written about the decline of marriage and have given a few of the causes that are leading up to a general neglect of that state; but of all the curses that have come into the world since the dawn of Christianity, divorce is one of the most fearful and most dangerous. It is a plague that becomes contagious, and is a menace to the moral, social, national, and above all, domestic prospects of the future. The subject is so vast that we scarcely know how to treat it in the limited space at our disposal.

The origin of all society is the family; if the domestic ties are severed or rendered insecure, it naturally follows that peace is a stranger in the home, happiness deserts the fireside, security abandons the community, and the pillars of the state are shaken by a Samson strength that brings down, eventually, the whole fabric in ruins upon a ruined people. The moment the laws of a nation grow lax concerning marriage that nation is doomed. History is there to point with menacing finger to the desolation of Kingdoms, Empires and Republics, and to the cause of their destruction in the moral corruption and looseness of principles that permeated their systems. It was so in the days of Grecian splendor, not all her arts, her sciences, her literature could save Athens from the fate of Troy, of Palmyra, or of Thebas, the moment the scorpion of immorality dragged its slimy length over her social structure; to-day the shattered columns of the Parthenon at once tell the story of Grecian glory and Grecian degradation. Not all the power of her Emperors, the ubiquity of her commerce, nor the strength and number of her armies could secure to Rome the permanency of her power and the security of her possessions; the hour that beheld divorce become fashionable, immorality public and unabashed, like wise witnessed the crumbling of the Caesar's might, the scattering of Roman legions, the earthquake of destruction that brought down in awful crash the most powerful empire the world had ever known; and to-day the stupendous debris of the Colosium, the silent relics of the golden palace, and the disappearing remains of the ancient temples, tell to the stranger that moral Rome once flourished, that immoral Rome has vanished forever.

In our modern days the ravages of divorce amongst the nations of the world have been most terrific. Long ages did the pure Church of Christ interpose between hell and its prey; for centuries did the Spouse of Christ shield her children from the world, the devil and the flesh; but with the so-called Reformation a new spirit came into the souls of men and of nations. Luther cried out *non serviam*, "I will not obey," and with his perjured nun, he trampled under foot the vows he had taken, he desecrated the sacrament of Holy Orders, and polluted that of matrimony; he preached license and he called it liberty. Then came that man of lawless lust, the royal murderer and crowned adulterer, Henry VIII. He, too, became the head of a new religion, and cut himself loose from Rome in order to carry out his vile purposes—immoral and un-Christian. Such being the sources from which flow all sects opposed to Rome, is it to be wondered at that the Catholic Church alone stands up to protect the family, the state, the world, from the corroding influence of that immoral plague—divorce? From an impure spring no healthy or clean water can come; and Protestantism being poisoned at its very source must ever go on dividing into brooks and streamlets of moral bitterness. Alone of

all the churches the Catholic one will hold no compromise with the legislators who usurp the rights of God and declare that "what He has joined together," they shall sever. No human power can claim the right to sever the marriage bond, in the sense of divorcing the parties and permitting re-marriage. And yet the State claims that privilege—the Protestant, not the Catholic state.

If divorce is an open door to immorality and misery, the civil marriage is still worse—for it is the hallway that leads into the den of moral corruption. If civil marriage be allowed, divorce of course naturally follows; for what the civil magistrate can unite he also can untie. It is only what God "joined together that no man shall put asunder." In a word the degradation of marriage from the dignity of a sacrament—that is a source of grace—to the level of a human contract, is the logical outcome of every theory upon which Protestantism is based; and the denial of the sacrament leads to divorce, and divorce is a crime against the children of another generation, a cruel wrong to the innocent beings who must bear through life the stigma of their parents' shame, a menace to the peace of the home, the security of domestic tranquility, the hope of the future, the joy of the present, the honor of the past. In other words divorce is the embodiment of human defiance of Divine law, and the most dangerous and ruinous legacy that legislators could leave to their families and their country. To the family it means distrust, division, hatred, jealousy, adultery, crime; to the country it means degradation, weakness, insecurity, rottenness, premature decay and final destruction. Yet men calmly write about a divorce law as if it were a mere piece of legislation regarding the sale or exchange, the lease and hire of animals. We look upon it otherwise and from our Catholic standpoint do we purpose speaking of it.

In several of our leading magazines have recently appeared articles upon this important subject, and so varied are the opinions of the writers and in such different lights do they view the question that we intend analyzing a few of their effusions. However, for this week we will be satisfied with a general statement that under no circumstance and at no time does the Catholic Church countenance divorce. So important is the subject and so much does the Head of the Church depend upon the security of the marriage bond in the great warfare between the powers of corruption and the kingdom of God that he, Leo XIII. has ordered a Jesuit Father (we think Father Brandi) to prepare an article to be printed in the *Civiltà Cattolica*, dealing with the marriage question, setting forth the reasons expressed by the Italian episcopate against civil marriage taking precedence over religious ceremony, and also discussing the law of divorce. The document will bring under review the ideas of the most noted European writers and the statistics of concubinage where the divorce law exists. An encyclical is also to be issued by the Pope explaining his views and those of the Church on the subject of civil marriage.

In order to give our readers an idea of the abominable length to which the divorce law will permit the unscrupulous to go, we will close this week's article with the account of a "legal trade" of wives that took place two weeks ago in Baltimore, and which is simply a case of the State legalizing a promiscuous concubinage in two families. God help the poor offspring of these people: innocent creatures sacrificed at the shrine of their parents' unbridled concupiscence. Here is the account:—

"A romance without a parallel in fic-

tion is about to be consummated here between the families of Walter Wilkinson and Charles MacAllister. The families have long been connected with the most exclusive circles of Baltimore. Mr. and Mrs. MacAllister were very intimate with Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson. This has finally resulted in an arrangement by which there are to be mutual divorces in each family, and after that cross marriages—that is to say, Mrs. MacAllister is to marry Mr. Wilkinson, and Mrs. Wilkinson is to marry Mr. MacAllister. The first marriage will occur in the latter part of this week and the ex-wife and ex-husband will be among the guests. The affair has come about through a natural development of affairs and has not been attended with the slightest scandal. For this reason, the parties maintain their social positions, and the double weddings will be attended by the best people. Mr. MacAllister is one of the wealthiest men in Baltimore. He is now at his shooting box in New Jersey, but will come home this week to attend the nuptials of his ex-wife to his friend Wilkinson, and also to prepare for his own nuptials with his friend Wilkinson's ex-wife."

HOME RULE.

The cause of Home Rule steadily advances, but many are the obstacles that have yet to be overcome before the final triumph is secured. Even before the Lords receive the measure for consideration it has yet to be ushered out of the Commons after debate upon the Committee's presentment and the most important vote yet to be taken. And as if it were not enough to have the full Tory force, combined with the Liberal Unionists, opposed to Gladstone's heroic efforts, the friends of Ireland have another and more dangerous opposition to contend with in the menacing Parnellite faction. To any reasoning and sane man it is evident that Mr. Redmond and his followers are playing into the hands of the Salisbury-Balfour-Chamberlain-Saunderson-Church bill combination. What their motives are for such most inexplicable conduct is more than we can state; we would not wish to judge harshly, and we can only attribute their actions to want of reflection. It would be too bad to ever have to accuse them of worse—of a deliberate frustration of Mr. Gladstone's plans and a determined opposition to the first, best and only real attempt to give Ireland legislative autonomy. We would be long sorry to say that Mr. Redmond and his friends wish to help the Tory cause against that of Ireland's most successful advocates; nor would we ever wish to impute insincerity—which would be treason—to them. But decidedly the burden of the proof lies upon their shoulders. So compromising has their recent course been that if Ireland fails to secure Home Rule, and if the work of Gladstone is left unfinished, they shall have to bear the whole weight of the ignominy, unless they can, in some way justify their words and deeds.

To say the very least, the applause and approbation of Lord Churchill and other Unionist leaders savored of anything but genuine fidelity on the part of the Redmondites to the Irish cause. And, above all, the last move made by these gentlemen is the most compromising of all. On the very eve of the last great round in this struggle of grants, when all the strength, union and patience of every friend of Ireland is required, we find the Parnellites holding a meeting in Dublin, presided over by Mr. Redmond, and passing resolutions antagonistic to the Home Rule measure that has just issued from committee. No matter how honest and sincere these men may be, unless they are blind or mad, they must perceive that they are blunting the fine edge of the wedge which the Government is driving into the Act of the Union. Neither the name and memory of Parnell, nor of any other leader, no matter what his

great services were, can possibly justify such a suicidal cause. The Redmondites are simply doing the work of the Tories and doing it ten times as effectively as the arch-enemies of Ireland could ever hope to perform it. At this juncture all cries of faction, all personal ambition, all antagonistic opinions should be crushed under the weight of important events and be allowed to bend before the obvious exigencies of the situation. If not, the cause is lost, and lost, thanks to the hot-headedness and miserable egotism of a petty minority.

If the Redmondites do not plead ignorance of the great peril in which the cause stands, and of the crushing consequences of their attitude, they must be in league with the Tories for the purpose of making trouble for the Gladstone Government. Instead of proving to the world that the Irish people are capable of governing themselves, these followers of Mr. Redmond and their leader are giving strong evidence of the contrary: in fact they are, at every turn and in every breath, strengthening the hands of the enemy.

And yet these very men send out their manifesto asking the people of Canada and the United States to furnish them with funds to carry on a policy of national disunion and self-destruction. It is not to the Irish Nationalists of this continent that they should address themselves for money; they have no claim, moral, national, nor otherwise upon the Home Rulers of this country. The people, who look across the Atlantic and anxiously watch the struggle going on, and who have contributed financially as well as morally to the encouragement of the grand old man in his wonderful efforts to secure legislative autonomy for Ireland, have no money to give nor sympathy to squander upon faction and obstruction. If the Redmondites wish to raise funds they should address themselves to the same constituency that hailed Mr. T. W. Russell, and sent him home, with his pockets stuffed with bank bills and his head stuffed with lies about this Province. It is to the Sault Ste. Marie Orange Lodge they should apply. That institution sent funds to the Tory-Unionists of the North to frustrate the granting of the present Home Rule Bill. Decidedly, whether knowingly or not, the Redmondites are the most powerful auxiliaries of the Loyal Opposition; and as allies they should seek encouragement from those whose cause they are helping.

Granting for argument sake, that Mr. Parnell's plans and ideas were perfection, that were he alive he would differ on some points from the present leaders, and that he should be the head of the phalanx of Irish Home Rulers who form a guard of honor for the Premier during this great battle; even then there is no reason for creating a division at this most critical period. Whatsoever Mr. Parnell's plans or ideas would be under the present circumstances, neither Mr. Redmond nor any one else can ever know; but we do know that Parnell was too great a statesman and too consummate a leader, organizer and disciplinarian to tolerate for one moment the game that is being played by his so-called followers and under the safeguard of his name. Again, it is a certain thing that if Mr. Parnell's ability and services would entitle him to the leadership were he alive, the hand of death has put an end to that contention. He cannot return no matter how warmly called upon. Mr. Parnell did not bequeath his talent, tact, genius, or qualities of statesman to Mr. Redmond. Because Mr. Parnell would have had claims to the leadership does not transmit those claims to Mr. Redmond, who is a self-