

to every English sojourner on the continent that the number of divorcees or equivalent separations among persons of the higher classes in society is immensely greater than in England.

In the course of the last few years a considerable agitation has been carried on in and out of Parliament, with a view to the abrogation of the Table of prohibited degrees, or at least to the excision of two out of the number—namely, the marriage of a man with his deceased wife's sister, and the marriage of a man with his deceased wife's niece. The parliamentary agitation commenced, indeed, some years earlier, when Lord Francis Egerton moved in 1842 for leave to bring in a bill to alter the prohibited degrees.

No controversialist ever gained anything by mis-stating or under-stating the case of his antagonist. We will endeavor, therefore, as fairly as possible, to represent the views of those who advocate the alteration of the table of prohibited degrees.

They state in substance—"That in the first instance at the Creation, marriages, which no human being would now contemplate without horror, were lawful, because necessary; that, when the necessity ceased, God implanted in his creatures a sense of shame, and repugnance, and disgust at the very thought; and that they have never since been imagined to be possible, by either Jews or Christians. That, when God separated one nation from the rest of the world, and gave them peculiar laws for their government, He not only confirmed this natural horror against such marriages by express and formal prohibition, but added other limitations which in His infinite wisdom He then judged to be necessary for the existing state of society into which He had brought His people; that these limitations, being *pro tanto* an abridgement of the natural right and capacity of the two sexes to marry at their discretion, must not be extended beyond their very letter, lest we should be wiser than God, and should forbid that which he has not thought fit to forbid. That a prohibition, like a penal law, ought to be construed strictly, and ought not to be made to include more than it specifies; it being equally easy for God to have added this or that prohibition to the list, if the restriction had been