

dead and rifled their pockets. They coolly remarked when arrested that they were sorry to kill two men for so little money—about \$4.50. The bodies were found two days later. "How long, O Lord, how long." *Erzrum, Aug. 25th, 1880. W. N. CHAMBERS.*

### MARRIAGE WITH THE SISTER OF A DECEASED WIFE.

MR. EDITOR,—In your last number there is a letter from "Presbyteros," on the above subject, which leads me to think that the position occupied by this Church upon the question should be closely looked into, and patiently considered. We should either maintain vigorously and honestly the position hitherto held, or intelligently reform anything that may be found destitute of Scripture warrant. If the Church is divided in opinion we still may agree upon one mode of procedure for all the churches, and not continue to have individual ministers and sessions acting in a way which is inconsistent with the professed standards of the Church, and permitting in one congregation what is strictly excluded from another, in the same Church.

In stating the position of the Church, as I regard it, I do not wish at present to argue its accordance with Scripture. This may be done at another time. I purpose merely to shew that the Assembly was justified in appointing a committee to watch legislation and oppose any measure legalizing the marriages in question.

1. The Westminster Confession of Faith contains the recognized exposition of the doctrine of marriage held by this Church (Chap. XXIV). The Scotch-Irish and American Presbyterian Churches accept this doctrine. Whatever practices may have been tolerated, winked at, or condoned, none of these Churches has so far made any change in the doctrine of our common Confession.

2. In the Confession we have the following clause: "The man may not marry any of his wife's kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own." Therefore, as he may not marry his own sister, aunt or niece, he may not marry anyone standing in such relation to his wife. Thus, beyond question, the Confession forbids marriage with a deceased wife's sister, aunt, or niece.

3. Again we read, "Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden in the Word." The references in support of this statement are Lev. xviii.; 1 Cor. v. 1; Amos ii. 7. Accepting these passages as bearing upon marriage, there cannot be a doubt that by Lev. xviii. 16, marriage with a brother's widow is expressly forbidden, and, by verse 14, marriage with the wife of an uncle (that is an aunt in law), and *implicitly* with their child.

4. Hence such marriages are, according to the Confession, within the forbidden degrees of *affinity*; and being such are incestuous.

5. Now it is further said, "Nor can any such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful by any law of man or consent of parties." The Bill before Parliament, last year, proposed to make these marriages legal. The Bill is, therefore, according to the Confession, contrary to the Word of God. And surely it is the duty of the Church to take steps to prevent the passing of a law which, by the Church, is regarded as legalizing incest and immorality. So long as this Church holds to the Confession of Faith, as it is, she is, in Christian consistency and honour, bound to oppose such legislation, and, should the Bill in question become law next year, the Church cannot honestly allow her ministers to celebrate such marriages, which she declares to be incestuous.

6. But the Confession may be wrong. If the Church is of this opinion she is equally bound to correct that which is wrong in her standards; and this ought to be done in a regular and constitutional manner. This then raises the questions, Is the Confession wrong? Should there be a change? It may be answered: If the Church is convinced either (1) that the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus is not a law of incest, and was not intended to regulate marriage at all; or, (2) that while, as a law, it was binding on the Jews, but is no longer binding upon Christians; or, (3) that the particular prohibitions regarding a brother's wife and father's brother's wife, had reference to certain peculiarities of Jewish society, which do not exist in modern society; or, (4) that while marriage with a brother's widow and aunt by marriage is forbidden, that prohibition does not fairly imply that a wife's sister, or niece, or aunt is forbidden. If the Church

is convinced of any one of these positions, then there ought to be a change. To meet any of the first three alternatives might require the removal from the Confession of the whole of Section 4 of Chapter XXIV. To meet the fourth, the removal only of the clause quoted above under 1.

7. Now if "Presbyteros," or others, think that a change should be made in the Confession let them say so, and indicate what the change should be. Let them also give their good and sufficient reasons for making such a change. The *onus probandi* lies with the reformers, not with the majority, who are to be regarded as satisfied with things as they are, and not given to changes. A temperate and intelligent discussion of the subject will be of use at the present time and may serve a good purpose by preparing the Church for harmonious and intelligent action so soon as the proposed Bill is again before Parliament, and when the subject comes again before the General Assembly by report of the Committee. The question is one which has two sides, and is surrounded with difficulties, and the greater number of thoughtful persons in the Church would like to read the views of write on both sides. Meanwhile, the Committee appointed by last Assembly will only do what the doctrine of the Church requires if they oppose the proposed legislation.

JOHN LAING.  
*The Advocate, Dundas, Sept. 27th, 1880.*

### INTERRUPTION OF WORSHIP.

MR. EDITOR,—I remember that when, a small boy, I accompanied my father to the Scotch church, the only one then in the township of Finch, the officiating clergyman preached first in Gaelic and then in English, so that all might be edified. Now, after a space of about forty-five years, my business led me into the same neighbourhood. A new church had taken the place of the old one, the day was Saturday, and numbers of people were assembling. I inquired the reason, and was told that it was the preparation for the sacrament of the supper, which was to be administered on the morrow. I passed in and took a seat, the congregation increased until the church seemed full, and the time for beginning the service had arrived. The Rev. J. Fraser commenced the service in the usual way, but yet the people came in, or stood about the door, even after he announced his text—Luke vii. 50—he sat down to give all an opportunity to be seated somehow, either in the gallery or in the body of the church. He commenced to expound the text and yet they came, very much to the annoyance of both minister and people. The reader may be ready to ask, why write all this? Simply to be able to draw attention to two things, the one good and very commendable, the other not good and not commendable. It is pleasing and commendable to see a remnant of the early settlers with their children and grandchildren assembling in such numbers upon a week day to hear the same Gospel that gladdened the hearts of their forefathers upon their native Highland hills, and to see them, young and old, each for himself or herself, passing up, with right hand extended, to receive a token of admission to the Lord's table, it should be an admonition to those who stay at home upon preparation day and receive tokens by proxy, shewing thereby a lack of love to the Saviour, whose death and sufferings they purpose commemorating.

But it is anything but commendable to be late at divine service upon any day. Better to be ten minutes early than one minute late. These good friends may have some excuse; as the service is still in both languages, they may have intended hearing the Gaelic service only. Be that as it may, they disturbed a very solemn service, and I feel sure they will all agree with me in saying that it is not right, but very wrong.

T. E. C.

BETTER be upright and want, than wicked and have superabundance.

THE fullest and best ears of wheat hang lowest towards the ground.

LIFE, as we call it, is nothing but the edge of the boundless ocean of existence.

A YEAR of pleasure passes like a floating breeze, but a moment of misfortune seems an age of pain.

THE cases where women ruin their husbands by extravagance are exceptional. As a rule, the men are the bread-winners, but the careful managing and contriving comes from the women.

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### THE FUTURE OF SABBATH SCHOOLS.

At the session of the Sabbath School Centenary in London, which was held at Exeter Hall, Dr. Wm. M. Taylor, of New York, made an excellent address, from which we copy a few pointed paragraphs:

Let me begin by remarking. In my judgment, the Sabbath school of the future will be in full harmony with the Christian Church. A distinguished minister in New York city said some months ago, at a public meeting there, that in many trans-Atlantic churches there were unhappily three parties; the party of which the choir were the nucleus; the party which gathered round the active Sabbath school workers; and the party which followed the leadership of the official representatives of the church. I know not how it may be on this side of the Atlantic, but I do know that on the other side, sometimes, it has been a question whether the Sabbath school is for the church, or the church for the Sabbath school. Now, in my judgment, in all cases where that question has arisen there must have been faults on both sides, and I think that in the future of Sabbath schools there will be fewer far of such controversies. How this is to be brought about it may be difficult to say. Some have said the minister ought to be the superintendent of the Sabbath school, and that has been the plan followed during a very long ministry—and very successfully followed—by Dr. Tyng, of New York city. Whether it should be universally followed or not is a very grave question to me. In my opinion that minister is the best organizer who follows the advice given by a wise old pastor to a young brother in the ministry: "Young man, never do yourself what you can get another to do for you as well." If there be among the members of the church one qualified, competent, and willing, to take the superintendency, I think the wiser part is for the minister to give him, with the concurrence and election of the teachers, that superintendency.

But not only should the superintendent be in full sympathy with the minister; I think there ought to be a closer link of connection between the Church as a whole and our Sabbath school teachers as such. It is the glory of our own Sabbath school army that their active connection with us is voluntary; and I would not have anything done by anybody, least of all by the Church, that should in the least degree interfere with it. Yet, at the same time, I think there ought to be some ecclesiastical or congregational recognition of this voluntary service. I think the superintendent ought to be chosen by the teachers just as your volunteer officers are chosen by the regiment. But just as your volunteer officers' commissions come from the Queen, so, after the teachers are elected, their commission and appointment should come from the Christian Church; and I think that by some public service, such as designation or recognition by the church, of the superintendent or chosen teachers, their appointment should be marked; and the benefit of that, I venture to say, will be felt by all concerned.

Now I pass to another point, and say that the Sabbath school of the future, in my judgment, will be characterized by a more thorough study of the Word of God. There is a wide-spread ignorance of the Word of God among us, far wider than multitudes would imagine. Let any minister on this platform venture to give out on the Lord's day in a crowded congregation a text from the book of Zephaniah, and let him see what a shuffling of leaves there will be among the audience. And if there be such wide-spread ignorance as to the very locality of the book, who shall be surprised at the much wider ignorance regarding the man Zephaniah himself, or regarding the prophecy that goes by his name! This is only one illustration.

Another thing in which the Sabbath school of the future will be above that of to-day, will be the matter of libraries. I am glad to see so many Sabbath school libraries and so many good books in them; but I should like to know why they should, to so large an extent, be comprised of little novelettes. I have no fault to find with fiction, if it be only true. You laugh; but wait a moment, let me finish. The proper antithesis of fiction is "fact," not "truth," and a thing may be true without being a fact. To take an instance from my own experience: I had two friends,