

THE MARRIAGE QUESTION.

According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, to which Presbyterian ministers, elders and licentiatees are required to profess adherence: "Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity (relationship by blood) or affinity (relationship by marriage) forbidden in the Word; nor can such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful by any law of man, or consent of parties, so as these persons may live together as man and wife. The man may not marry any of his wife's kindred *nearer in blood* than he may of his own, nor the woman of her husband's kindred *nearer in blood* than of her own." In Lev. xviii. a man is forbidden to marry his own sister, aunt or niece—the first two expressly, the third by necessary inference, and, therefore, according to the Confession, he may not marry his wife's sister, aunt or niece.

In 1884, a Committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, appointed in the preceding year, submitted a report to the effect that while, in their judgment, the Mosaic Law of incest is of permanent obligation; yet that, in their opinion, the clause in the Confession—"A man may not marry any of his wife's kindred *nearer in blood* than he may of his own"—is not sufficiently sustained by the authority of Scripture; and that they recommend that Church discipline shall not be exercised in regard to marriage with a wife's sister, wife's aunt and wife's niece. *Only five members* of the Committee appointed by the Assembly were present when the subject was considered, and *only three*, including the chairman, were in favour of the above mentioned extraordinary opinion and recommendation.