

rules as to marriage, and also for the members of "The Christian Marriage Law Defence Association," formed on the occasion of the last meeting of the Provincial Synod, to carefully weigh the facts set forth in the following extract from an able paper in the *Church Eclectic* (Utica, N.Y.) for March, under the title "The Church in the United States of America." Referring to the duty of the Protestant Episcopal Church there of upholding a positive rule of faith and life, the writer continues:—

Especially must she set herself to a resolute defence of the sanctity of family life, and bear her witness, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, to the Divine law concerning marriage. In nothing has the moral decay of Protestantism, when it has broken loose from the restraints of Apostolic discipline, been shown more plainly than in the hideous confusion into which the marriage relation has been allowed to sink in America. Certain figures having reference to divorce in the five New England States may be put in evidence here. These States, it will be remembered, were in their origin distinctly religious; they have been less affected than many parts of the country by immigration from the continent of Europe; their example and influence has naturally been followed with even worse results in newer Western States. According to recent statistics the ratio of divorces to marriages in Massachusetts was 1 to 21.4; in Vermont, 1 to 14; in New Hampshire, 1 to 10.9; in Rhode Island, 1 to 11; in Maine, 1 to 10. It is safe to say that divorces have doubled in proportion to marriages and population in most of the Northern States within thirty years. This is the result of the gradual relaxation of the marriage law and the multiplication of causes for which divorce may be obtained. These divorces, it should be observed, are all, so far as the State is concerned, absolute, a *vinculo matrimonii*. The practical result of this facility of divorce is that in the New England States two thousand families are broken up every year, and four thousand persons divorced. Truly it is an appalling evil, whether we think of the persons themselves thus sinning and thus exposed to fresh temptation, being almost shut out, by the opportunities afforded for fresh unions, from repentance and reconciliation; or whether we think of the children thus deprived of the natural shelter and training of a home; or whether again we consider the probable future of a country whose moral and social life is thus honeycombed.

These figures become even more startling if from the general total of marriages registered in the several States those contracted and celebrated by Roman Catholics (who allow no divorce) are deducted. The ratio of divorces to marriages among all non-Roman Catholics then rises to so high a rate as to 1 to 14 in Massachusetts, in Connecticut to 1 to 8. Marriage thus becomes a temporary arrangement; and it is probable that many, and those not only in the lowest classes, enter upon the marriage state with the thought in their heads that if they do not find their present partnership for their happiness they can break it off, and draw another ticket in the lottery. A minister testifies that such language has actually been used to him by young persons in his parish.

It is obvious that such a terrible state of social life as these statistics disclose (and it should be noted that the facility and frequency of divorce has been accompanied in its increase by the growth of other forms of licentiousness) must be in part attributed to the failure of Christian bodies to uphold the Divine law on these matters, and to instruct the people in its requirements. At last the minds of many and of prominent men in different religious bodies have been awakened to the supreme import-

ance of the subject, as is proved by the formation of a New England Divorce Reform League, composed of gentlemen from all leading Christian bodies, both Catholic and Protestant, having for its object "to promote an improvement in public sentiment and legislation on the subject of divorce." Until lately the Episcopal Church has been most culpable for her failure to bear witness against these growing evils, either by the exercise of discipline or by careful teaching. Her rule concerning divorce has been within the last few years made plain, though it is to be feared breaches of its provisions are constantly winked at. Many clergy when called upon to perform a marriage ask no questions, and simply accept as qualifying for the Church's benediction the certificate which must be first obtained from the city registrar stating that the union is in accordance with the civil requirements, which requirements often fall far short of the lower standard "suffered" under the old dispensation for the hardness of men's hearts.

The Free and Open Church movement in England seems to be making headway. The list of patrons and members as published in the *Free and Open Church Advocate*, (which by the way we see has attained No. 141 of its 6th volume), contains the name as President of the Right Honorable the Earl Nelson, and as patrons and subscribers, the Archbishop of Canterbury, any number of Bishops, both English and Colonial, Earls, Viscounts, Deans, Archdeacons and Church dignitaries of all grades and prominent laymen. The twentieth report presented at the annual meeting, held on the 24th March last, says, that there seems much reason to be very hopeful that this great movement will henceforth hold a most prominent place in the eyes of Church reformers anxious to remove every abuse, in the hearts of pious men anxious to evangelize the masses, and in the minds of the Christian leaders of those masses themselves. A list of forty-six churches is given which have been made free, or have been built as free churches during the year; and the list is said to be imperfect. The Association seems to have been most active, and has, doubtless, done much good during the past year.

THE CHURCH VISIBLE.

We take the following paragraphs from a very striking article in the *Church Union*, a paper published in New York under editorial direction of men of different denominations, but advocating organic union amongst Christians as a matter of principle:

To preserve its own consistency in advocating the necessity of many and independent forms of corporate life, sectarianism represents those passages in Scripture which present the church as one organic visible institution, as teaching simply the unity of the spiritual and invisible church. Thus the Scripture likens the church to a net cast into the sea. A net is something visible: and to answer the purpose for which it is designed, should not be tattered and torn, but woven into one undivided fabric. But sectarianism, not like the disciples of old, who kept their nets well mended and whole, would first rend the net into fragments, and then claim that these several fragments were better for enclosing the fishes than the undivided whole. And yet, quite mortified with its tattered and fragmentary condition, it declares

that neither these fragments, nor yet the undivided fabric, is the real gospel net, but that it is a certain something, both spiritual and invisible. Such are the miserable inconsistencies and subterfuges of sectarianism. But if the church which the net represents be invisible, why should not the world of wicked men, which the sea represents, be also invisible? Then we should have an invisible church in an invisible world. Reverting to other similes, we should have an invisible "grain of mustard seed" growing up into an invisible tree, spreading out its invisible branches, which bear up the invisible fowls of heaven. We should have an invisible fold, with invisible sheep and invisible goats, with an invisible separation in due time between them. We shall have the invisible leaven put into the invisible meal until the whole is leavened into invisibility. We shall have an invisible kingdom, with invisible laws, invisible officers, invisible sacraments and invisible rites.

To say nothing of the manifestation of Christ in the flesh during His natural earthly existence, of His frequent appearance in the same form during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, of His ascending in that same human form, and sitting down at the right hand of the Father in heaven, of His promised return in the same visible form again at the general resurrection and final judgment. Why, if invisibility in religion is so much better than visibility, has not God the Father, who is a spirit and invisible, invariably revealed himself by invisible influences rather than by visible manifestations? Why should He have appeared to the Levitical high priest only in the form of a cloud on the mercy-seat? Why did He appear to Moses, when He would call him to lead His people out of Egyptian bondage, in the form of a flame of fire out of the midst of a burning bush? Why, when He would conduct them on their journey to the land of promise, did He constantly attend them in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and of a pillar of fire by night? Why, when He would give the ten commandments to his people, did He descend upon Mount Sinai in fire, and reveal himself in clouds and thunders and lightnings and smoke, in the terrible blast of the trumpet and in the earthquake? Why did He appear with the cloudy pillar at the door of the Tabernacle, and talk face to face with Moses, at the time of Aaron's idolatry? On the Mount of Transfiguration, why should the long departed forms of Moses and Elias have been reproduced? and why the Father's voice from the bright overshadowing cloud? Why did our Saviour, at the time of St. Paul's conversion, appear to him in a heavenly, overpowering light, and address him with an audible voice? When the great forerunner of our Lord baptized Him in the river Jordan, why did the Invisible Spirit take the visible form of a dove and light upon him? and why did the Father declare His infinite complacency with an audible voice from heaven? Why, on the Day of Pentecost, should the Spirit, ordinarily noiseless, as well as invisible, manifest His presence with a sound "as of a rushing, mighty wind?" And why should there have appeared and sat on each of the apostles "cloven tongues like as of fire?" Why should the Christian Church, as then commenced, be characterized as "the light of the world," and as "a city set on a hill?" Why, in all ages and all dispensations, have there been hundreds of such sensible manifestations in the interests of religion? Why has invisibility so often been changed into visibility, if the former alone is of especial importance? Indeed, the most important revelations of God to man have ordinarily been through his senses.—*The Church Messenger*.

[For Correspondence see page 5.]

Every duty we omit obscures some truth we should have known.—*Ruskin*.