

were at one time harmless, have been made crimes by statute. Many things which a century ago were looked upon as deeds of evil are now treated as ordinary acts in the lives of respectable citizens, and, conversely, the pleasures of the past are in some cases treated as sins in the present generation. It is impossible to fix a uniform, continuing standard for many of our motives and actions. It is equally difficult to determine the exact limits of moral conduct. Even in important questions relating to religion, very learned and pious divines have been known to differ. Let us, therefore, eliminate the religious aspect entirely, and this may be done on sufficient grounds, because granting of divorces is an established practice. Whatever our individual views may be, divorces under a recognized practice, and subject to well-defined principles, are granted, and are legal and effective. We must accept this state of affairs as beyond our control. The only enquiry open to us, therefore, is that relating to the methods of obtaining a divorce, and the grounds upon which it should be given. In order to understand the situation more clearly, I propose to deal briefly with one or two matters which lie at the threshold, and to examine the foundation on which the fabric of marriage rests.

It is generally considered that the marriage ceremony is a contract, but in addition to this, a large proportion of the body politic treat it as sacramental in its character, and hold that the marriage tie should not be interfered with under any circumstances. As I have stated, it is interfered with by virtue of legal authority, and a discussion on any other basis is to a great extent purely academic. We must take conditions as we find them. Indeed, the subject itself which I have been asked to discuss implies the continued existence of a right to obtain a divorce, and thereby to sever the marriage relationship.

Omitting, therefore, the proposition that marriage is more than a mere contract, and confining ourselves to the contention that it is partly in the nature of a contract, voluntarily entered into between a man and a woman and made legal by a compliance with existing law, the question forcibly presents itself to one's mind in this way: Why