

they had broken it, they might have been entitled to more attention; but when they have committed an offence, they have no right to ask for such alteration in the law. In the collection of evidence that has been published in support of the change, it is stated by one of the barristers employed that he knew a most respectable gentleman, who kept his carriage—I suppose that was the test of his respectability—who, because the law was as it was, lived in concubinage with his wife's sister, and yet was not looked down upon, because the law prohibited him from marrying her. Is that the morality we are to adopt? If any ladies have been deluded into such marriages under the influence of the advertisements that have been put forward by the advocates of this measure, I sincerely pity them; but that is no reason for altering the law. One word more. It is our apathy alone that has allowed the question to advance to such a stage, that but for a majority of only ten in the House of Lords the bill would have become the law of the land. On that occasion we had the support of only eight of our Bishops. I trust on the next occasion we shall have the support of the whole of the Episcopal Bench—at least those who have not committed themselves on the question. None ought to oppose us, and thereby put the Church and the State in opposition, for I believe that not one of them has yet moved the repeal of the 99th Canon; but we want your power in every way, coming forward as you have done to-day, to say that the thing shall not be done. A friend of mine smiled when I said the other day I would rather hear of 300,000 Frenchmen having landed at Dover than of the passing of this law, but I said I knew we should soon get rid of the Frenchmen, but this law once passed, it was impossible to say that we should ever get rid of its consequences. Just at the decline of the Roman Empire exactly the like case happened. In the decline of Rome, when her ancient austere morals had been sapped, and Claudius, the third Emperor, was on the throne, he took a fancy to marry his wife's niece, a marriage which was forbidden by the Roman Law. At first so strong was the popular feeling against it that they scarcely dared to mention the subject, but a few parasites began to whisper it about gradually, to accustom the people to it; and at last it came before the Senate on an address made to them, which was almost word for word the same as the arguments of those who now demand the great change in our own law. If you read the speech which is put pithily by Tacitus (which I read in the House of Commons,) you will find that the effect of it is—this is an old story; our ancestors who made this law were not enlightened men like us of the present day—they once objected to cousins intermarrying—marriages ought to be free. Every one of these arguments was urged upon the Senate. The result was that the Emperor succeeded—the law was passed—and he married the lady, who afterwards poisoned him. That was the decline of the Roman Empire, and I call attention to it because I believe that the present movement is a sign of the decline of this country. If we allow our morals to be sapped in this direction—if we do not stand firm on our religious, moral, and social laws, with regard to the intercourse between men and women, we shall be lost. See what has already been developed by our Divorce Court. I don't speak of the remedy, I speak of the evidence it affords of the festering disease—the proof how our morals are being sapped at this moment. We are told that America does this, and that Germany does this. America sanctions divorce because people do not like each other, and Germany the same. Is that to be our own law of divorce? If you look to all these questions seriously, you will find that as in the decline of the Roman Empire, the Romans who had seen the Gauls in their city, and allowed it to be sacked, but still upheld the life of Rome by her Senate—who had seen Hannibal at their gates, and had ventured to give the full price of the ground on which his army was encamped because they believed in their own moral strength—you see them in the reign of the Emperor Claudius, when, instead of having their empire circumscribed by their own walls, as in the time of Hannibal, they appeared to be ruling the whole world, as we are now supposed to be ruling India and half the world, breaking their old moral code of marriage law. Then their morals began to decay, and the doom of Rome was sealed; and if we do not firmly, resolutely, earnestly maintain the morals of this country, a greater and more appalling calamity will fall upon us, for which our descendants will have reason to curse us, than anything which has befallen the country before or can befall it in the direct shape of physical character. (The right hon. and learned gentleman resumed his seat amidst loud and prolonged cheering.)

THE BISHOP OF OXFORD—My lord duke, ladies, and gentlemen—I can only say that it is a perfectly frightful thing for any man to have to second, at such a meeting as this, a resolution which had been moved in such a speech as that we have just heard. It we could but hear, as we do in another place, where we, my lord duke, often happily agree together—if we could but find any person weak enough or foolish enough to get up and attempt to answer such a speech, I should have the greatest possible pleasure in dealing with that answer; but when a resolution has been moved in a speech which has exhausted every argument and touched every string of feeling, what remains for the unhappy seconder to say? The learned Vice-Chancellor says that he hopes, when the question comes next before Parliament, a larger number of the Episcopal votes will be registered

against the passing of the bill. I can venture to assure him that if God gives me life and strength, he will at least see my vote registered against it. (Cheers.) For me it seems to be a ruled question even before I go into the sacred presence of God's revealed Word, and if I thought her wrong in that, I could not but conscientiously take one of two courses—either seek to alter her law, or else leave her community. As one sworn in the most solemn hour of life to take her interpretation of the Word of God and to act upon it, I, for one, as an honest man, could not stand up in the senate of my country and say, "Alter the law of the nation," when the law of the Church precludes such alteration. Perhaps you will allow me to stamp this conclusion again upon my own mind and upon the minds of all present—for it is all important—that we should have ready at every moment, as an answer to every assailant, the complete Scripture argument to their objections. The objections appear to me to resolve themselves into these separate heads. In the first place, when we quote to the objector the written word of God as contained in the Old Testament, he says—"Yes, but you must draw no inference from it, but take it as it stands." What is the simple answer to that? That he proves too much upon his own showing, for if we take it as it stands and draw no inference from it, we charge the Most High with allowing to His own people the marriage of the father with his daughter; and as no one of these gentlemen has yet gone so far as that, we have a complete answer to the argument which forbids our drawing an inference by analogy. The second argument we have to meet is this—"Yes, but supposing you may argue by inference and analogy, and by inference and analogy you condemn these marriages, yet there is another text which seems by one interpretation to contradict that position." The answer lies in a nutshell. It is this—that no law, human or divine, could bind any one, if you may interpret the plain by the obscure, instead of the obscure by the plain. We need not lose our time in proving the great obscurity of the second verse. The Vice-Chancellor just glanced at the high probability that what it intended to forbid was polygamy. But there is another view, a construction which has lately come over from America—namely, that that verse is really intended to be a limitation of that particular law of the Jewish ritual which, under certain circumstances, bade the brother marry the widow of his deceased brother—that it was the limitation of the Levitical law—and that it meant to declare that the law should not apply where such brother had already a wife living. It has been actually argued out in the document that has reached me from America, that in the case of Boaz and Ruth, where the nearer kinsman was challenged to perform the kinsman's duty and refused, he was not, as the law of Moses required, struck upon the cheek and branded as refusing to build up his brother's house, but his refusal was accepted, and the duty passed on to Boaz. And it is said he was not allowed to marry his brother's widow, because he was already married. This may be the true interpretation, or it may not, but if the case is capable of any such exceeding doubt of every kind, does it not come under the category in which the law meets those faltering consciences which seek, by some miserable subterfuge, to set dark things against plain, doubtful things against certain, in order to allow them the liberty they seek of gratifying their sensual appetites, as the rock of adamant meets the surges of the sea? (Cheers.) The argument next assumes this form—"Given, that it is forbidden in this chapter of Leviticus; I take my stand upon this position, that it is the law given to the Jews, and I have nothing to do with it." I wish they would hold to that opinion throughout. I shall have a word to say upon that presently, but let me clear the way as we go on. I say, be ready at once with this answer to every such objector—I grant your position, and I do not say that it is forbidden to us because it was forbidden to the Jews, or because it was in the law given to the Jews; but I say it is forbidden to us. The All-wise Legislator has revealed that there was a prohibition not grounded on any thing peculiar to the Jews, but on the law of universal purity and of universal right. It was a prohibition not for the Jews only. It was a part of that wonderful prescience which, as we scan God's Word, meets us in fresh developments in every page. It is written for us, the Christian men of this day, who have to wrestle with the enemy upon this accursed question. It was written for us that these things God hated in the Canaanite and Egyptian, as well as the man who was under the ceremonial law of Moses. This is the distinction—It is not forbidden to the Christian because it was forbidden to the Jew; but it is forbidden to the Christian as well as to the Jew, because it was an abomination in His sight as to any man. If we go a little further with the religious argument, I come to that code of the Gospel which is binding on every man who admits the truth of revelation. Is it in vain, think you—when you consider in the way in which God's Word teaches—that there should be recorded in one of the Epistles one strong and distinct censure, written, remember, under the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost, as to one of these unclean mixtures, and that that one selected instance should be an instance of affinity and not of consanguinity—setting at rest for ever that other miserable argument, that after all, the law of nature teaches us the evils of those consanguineous unions, but has nothing to do with unions of affinity? The law of nature? Whenever that argument is used I should like to ask the