

fail, the true episcopal succession was obtained, an independent branch was founded, and now with less than a century of corporate existence the American Church stands before us a marvel alike to friend and foe. Her gates so broad, her ritual so reverent, her prayers so deeply spiritual, her charity so great, her faith so certain and changeless, is daily attracting to her bosom, faithful souls and earnest hearts, who, wearied by fitful fanaticism and bald services, and above all terrified by the fearful strides that infidelity is now making among sectarians, are seeking for a sure haven of rest. That haven of rest must be an historical Christianity, and that historical Christianity can be found only in the Church. As the editor of the *New York Independent* says: "The Protestant Episcopal Church has in recent years been taking long strides forward. It has had the reputation of being a fashionable and easy-going church, with little aggressiveness in its composition; but it is now showing an energy, a purpose, and a determination which must result in substantial gains." "The Church is internally united and at peace. Never in its history has there been greater harmony than now, and instead of fighting each other as the parties used to do, they now work together, in a spirit of peace, for the advancement of the interest of the church."

These are generous words coming from an opponent; but they are true, as a few facts culled from a recent address by the Bishop of Long Island will show. The Episcopate now consists of 66 bishops, assisted by 3,435 clergy. There are 450 candidates for Holy Orders, 3,200 duly organized parishes, and 1,200 missions, with 3,500 churches. The annual confirmations number about 30,000; 35,000 of the laity assist in Sunday schools, having 300,000 children under their care. "To the poor the Gospel is preached," not only by the preacher in the House of God, but the Church acts the part of the Good Samaritan by carrying on at her own expence 108 hospitals, asylums, and homes. Her care for education is shewn by 130 colleges and schools, and 16 theological institutions.

As it is only by comparison that we may gauge the advance we learn from *Whittaker's Almanack* for 1881, that during the past year the increase in various particulars has been, bishops 5, clergy 111, baptisms 2,487, communicants 20,846, Sunday school scholars 16,082. The offerings for the year amounted to \$7,018,762; being an increase of \$430,783 over the previous twelve months.

Her Ministry of Apostolic origin, though until lately an occasion of controversy, and often of bitter prejudice, is now becoming a power of attraction. Not a few earnest men in the ministry of Dissent are beginning to feel the value of a commission whose authority none can question; and so the spectacle is presented, almost weekly, of true ordination being conferred on men who had hitherto laboured without it.

One more fact and we will have finished. Last year 47,963 baptisms took place in the American Church, of that number at least 7,297 were adults, an absolute gain from nothing-arianism. Truly, we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears the truth sung by the Psalmist of old, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God."

IS THE PROPOSED CHANGE IN THE MARRIAGE LAW EXPEDIENT?

THE proposed change in the law of marriage suggests not only the enquiry "Is it lawful?" but also the enquiry, "Is it expedient?" It is, indeed, most true that no seeming expediency can

ever justify us in consenting to that which is, in itself, unlawful; yet that which is prescribed to us by the law of God, may also commend itself to our moral sense by its obvious tendency to secure and to advance the happiness of man. We do well to note, as we often have occasion to note, "how pleasant in itself" is that which "pleases Him." And, besides this, men will look at this most important question from different points of view; and the arguments of those who urge the provisions of a law, which they hold to be Divine, against the change proposed, may derive most valuable support from the reasoning of those who, independently of the consideration of Divine authority, insist that the change proposed would be deeply injurious to social interests. Let us then contemplate the question under this aspect.

It is to be regretted that the advocates of the change confine their view to special and exceptional circumstances, and shut out from their field of vision the general and invariable consequences of the proposed legislation. They point to the case of a widower, left with young children who greatly need a mother's care, and have been accustomed to receive care next a mother's from that mother's sister, and are thus prepared to receive her, rather than any other, to fill the mother's room. In thus contemplating the effect which the change may have, when the first wife shall have died and have left a family, they wholly overlook the inevitable effects which it must have produced long before those events can have occurred. Men's eyes are, as we conceive blinded to the real nature of the change proposed, because they forget that the benefits, which, under the existing law, are now unconsciously enjoyed while the first wife is still living, must necessarily cease if the change proposed is carried into effect. They find now that, during the fatal illness, and after the death, of the first wife, the intimate services of a beloved and trusted sister afford unspeakable relief, and they exclaim, "How monstrous is it not that any law should forbid that she, who alone can render such services, should be permitted to assume the closest relation both to the widower and to his children." They forget the disastrous transformation of relations, which if the proposed change shall be effected, must have taken place long before: a transformation which will effectually preclude the possibility that the wife's sister should render the intimate services which are so highly valued, and which appear to render her permanent establishment in the household so desirable. The bill proposed has been not unaptly styled, "A bill for the abolition of sisters-in-law." Is it not most true that the position of trustful intimacy and affection, which a wife's sisters occupy in the household of her husband, is wholly due to the relation in which the law, as it now exists, places them in regard to him? They are as near of him as his own sisters. They feel, in respect to him, the same innocent confidence which they instinctively repose in their own brothers. They move as freely in his family circle as they would under their father's roof. There is no painful apprehension of trusting too freely to one, who bears the sacred name of *brother*. The law both of God and man, as they undoubtedly believe, has thrown the *egis* of its protection over them, and under it they may rest in quietness and confidence.

The marriage of their sister has involved a happy widening of the family circle; another home has been opened for them; the sacred limit, within which domestic joys and sympathies may be fearlessly cherished, has been most beneficently enlarged. Can we look on this good, and doubt that it comes from God? Even were there no express Divine

law, men might safely trust that, in thus framing their own civil and social laws, they were surely seeking after and finding Him, who is the Author of all purity and peace.

The present Chief Justice of England, in a speech made in the House of Lords in June last, most forcibly urged this view of the case. He spoke of "passionless affection," as being one of man's choicest social blessings, and he observed how greatly this blessing is extended by the maintenance of the existing law of marriage. It is quite true that, if the law were changed, the blessing in question might still be enjoyed by pure-minded and noble characters; the inestimable value of the law is, that it absolutely *secures* the blessing to all, guarding men's best instincts by public sanction and authority; that it assures all that brotherly and sisterly intimacy cannot possibly subject them to any inquietude on their own part or to any injurious suspicion on the part of others. No man, who is capable of reflection and feeling, can fail to value this safeguard, under which the intercourse of daily life is placed, by the confidence that they who share in that intercourse, can never entertain towards each other more than "passionless affection." And all this *must* be changed, in respect of a wife's sisters, if the law be altered. They will no longer be the sisters of her husband. They will be, in regard of him, on precisely the same footing in his house, as women belonging to another family. "Passionless affection" will find no place; it must give way to frigid decorum and reserve, unless domestic peace is to be imperilled. And, should the married sister's need of kindly aid and sympathy become aggravated by sickness, this will itself prove an additional bar to her receiving that aid and sympathy from those, from whom she would most naturally seek it, because the protection will have been withdrawn, under which her own sister might have regarded, her husband's house as a home, and himself as a brother.

There may be minds which will fail to appreciate these arguments; there may be those who can be taught effectually, by experience only, what must be the consequence of removing the barrier under the shelter of which society has so long been placed; there are again idiosyncrasies, which cannot readily be accounted for. We have heard of wives who, on their death beds, implored their husbands to marry their sisters; but we believe such cases to be most rare, and we are satisfied that women, as a class, feel very keenly that the proposed change in the law would render inevitable a very painful derangement of those sisterly relations, which marriage, under its present conditions, leaves wholly undisturbed.

We are satisfied, therefore, that if it were the only change to be apprehended, the change proposed is, in itself, highly inexpedient; but we are also satisfied that it cannot be regarded as a change which will not too surely induce further changes.

This consideration greatly aggravates its own inherent inexpediency.

We have, indeed, been told that this is the unreasoning and timid cry, which is constantly raised against all useful reforms, and *The Globe* has assured its readers that the advocates of this change neither propose nor desire any other.

In order that we may duly appreciate the worth of this declaration, let us bear in mind the following facts: 1st. That the bill of last Session *did* propose another most revolting change in the law, whereby a man would be permitted to marry the widow of his deceased brother; 2ndly. That a writer in *The Globe* has urged that, if liberty be given to marry a deceased wife's sister, liberty