

CARDINAL MANNING ON THE CHURCH.

But perhaps some will say, "I admit your description of the Church as it is now and as it was in the days of St. Irenæus; but the eighteen hundred years of which you have said nothing were ages of declension, disorder, superstition, demoralization." I will answer by a question: "Was not this foretold? Was not the Church to be a field of wheat and tares growing together till the harvest at the end of the world? There were Cathari of old, and Puritans since, impatient at the patience of God in bearing with the perversities and corruptions of the human intellect and will. The Church, like its Head in heaven, is both human and divine. "He was crucified in weakness," but no power of man could wound His divine nature. So with the Church, which is His Body Its human element may corrupt and die; its divine life, sanctity, authority, and structure cannot die; nor can the errors of human intellect fasten upon its faith, nor the immoralities of the human will fasten upon its sanctity. Its organization of Head and Body is of Divine creation, divinely guarded by the Holy Ghost, who quickens it by His indwelling, and guides it by His light. It is in itself incorrupt and incorruptible in the midst of corruption, as the light of heaven falls upon all the decay and corruption in the world, unsullied and unalterably pure. We are never concerned to deny or to cloak the sins of Christians or of Catholics. They may destroy themselves, but they cannot infect the Church from which they fall. The fall of Lucifer left no stain behind him.

When men accuse the Church of corruption, they reveal the fact that to them the Church is a human institution, of voluntary aggregation or of legislative enactment. They reveal the fact that to them the Church is not an object of divine faith, as the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar. They do not perceive or will not believe that the articles of the Baptismal Creed are objects of faith, divinely revealed or divinely created. "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins," are all subjects of faith in a divine order. They are present in a human history, but the human element which envelops them has no power to infect or to fasten upon them. Until this is perceived there can be no true or full belief in the advent and office of the Holy Ghost, or in the nature and sacramental action of the Church. It is the visible means and pledge of light and of satisfaction to all who do not bar their intellect and their will against its inward and spiritual grace. The Church is not on probation. It is the instrument of probation to the world. As the light of the world it is changeless as the firmament. As the source of sanctification it is inexhaustible as the River of Life. The human and external history of men calling themselves Christian and Catholic has been at times as degrading and abominable as any adversary is pleased to say. But the sanctity of the Church is no more affected by human sins than was baptism by the hypocrisy of Simon Magus. The divine foundation and office, and mission of the Church is a part of Christianity. They who deny it deny an article of faith, they who believe it imperfectly are the followers of a fragmentary Christianity of a modern date.—*Cardinal Manning in the North American Review.*

DIVORCE.

The family was the patriarchal unit of society, never the individual. Around the primitive institution centred all legislation, and in it inhered all blessings and sanctions. Nothing is more remarkable in the history of those ancient days than the supreme importance of the family, and the jealous care with which it was guarded and fenced in every direction. "Thou hast set the nations of the earth in families."

With the coming of Christ upon earth the twilight of the early dispensation passed into the clearer radiance of the coming day. "That which was in part was done away, that which was perfect" had come, and our Divine Lord raised marriage to the full dignity of a sacrament, and set upon its

indissolubility the seal of his most awful sanction in those words: "Whom God hath joined together let not man put asunder." It is impossible to exaggerate the full significance or the tremendous importance of these words. Upon this sacrament rests the whole structure of civil society. Marriage creates the family, and the family is the citadel in which are guarded the hopes and the destinies of humanity no less than the eternal weal or woe of its individual members. Unquestionably, it is to the sacramental character of marriage that woman in all civilized countries owes whatever of moral and material well-being she now possesses. No refinements of art, no advanced culture of the intellect among men, have secured to her the proud position which is now her birth-right whenever and wherever she may choose to claim it. Can one imagine a higher state of artistic and literary culture than is presented by the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome? Can human history present a more profound degradation of womanhood?

When these effete civilizations were overwhelmed by the flesh life of the barbarous tribes of Northern Europe, the change would have been for woman only that from being the degraded toy of voluptuaries and tyrants, she should have become the household slave and burden-bearer of the savage conquerors. But the Catholic Church, by her firm maintenance of the two great sacraments of Holy Orders and of Matrimony, saved Christianity and constituted the Christian state, of which these two sacraments became the joint foundations. When the church's law of marriage became incorporated into the civil law then arose the morning star which heralded the dawn of woman's emancipation.

It is true that this earth was not a paradise for woman through the Middle Ages, and that she has had her full share in the frightful struggles and calamities of all the centuries. But on the whole her elevation has been commensurate with the elevation and progress of the Christian Church. Never let it be forgotten that nothing but the assertion of and the protection by the Catholic Church of the sacramental nature of the marriage contract have secured to her the fruits of this progress.

At the Reformation this sacramental nature of marriage was rudely assailed and persistently denied. It was sought to degrade it to a mere civil contract, and to place it under the sole guardianship of the state. In all Protestant countries and communities this attempt succeeded, and surely no consequences of the Reformation have proved more disastrous to society. Under the plea of obtaining relief to persons suffering from various evils incident to ill assorted marriages, the whole social fabric of family life has been undermined, and a threatening shadow thrown upon the honour and dignity of every Christian home; for surely if marriage be not a sacrament, but merely a civil contract with no warrant of indissolubility, as a state of life it loses inconceivably in dignity and sacredness.

When the sensual and irreligious seekers after easy divorce cry out, "Prophesy unto us smooth things only," make the convenience and the passion of the individual the supreme law, we turn in admiration to the heroic struggles by which in fiercer and less civilized ages the Pontiff, of the Christian Church upheld this great corner stone of society. Happy indeed for us all, Catholics and Protestants alike, that they breasted for our sakes with unshaken fortitude the wrath of kings and emperors, and faced with unswerving fidelity the shock of wars, the threat of imprisonment, and even death, rather than betray the cause of any helpless wife who appealed to them for protection. When the vicious King Lothaire, of Lorraine, wished to repudiate his wife Thietberga, that he might marry Waldrade, sister of the Archbishop of Cologne, the grand old Pope Nicholas I. took upon himself her cause; and surely the pages of history cannot furnish a more sublime instance of courage and chivalrous devotion to study than this story and sequel. The haughty monarch determined at all hazards to succeed in his designs, resorted successively to every expedient of fraud and violence. He first compelled the queen to falsely accuse herself before an assembly of eight bishops at Aix la Chappelle, and again to repeat her confession before a second assembly at Frankfurt. The unhappy woman appealed to the Pope in these touching words:

"Should it come to the knowledge of your Holiness that I