

*Divorce*

Marriage for life is the best assorted to the wants of families and the most favourable to individuals.

Marriage is a contract of natural law, unique in its essence. Civil law can regulate it, but never dissolve it.

Divorce is contrary to morals, which all stable laws must respect, follow and sustain. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, can you put morality into marriage by injecting into it a sufficient quantity of legalized adultery? Our law is based on the divorce law in England. Divorce was first granted here for grave cause, and it was looked upon then as a tragedy. To-day it has reached the point of comedy, if not of farce. An hon. gentleman speaking a moment ago referred to England. Does he know that the Protestant Bishop of Rochester said one day to Lord Mulgrave that for ten divorces on the ground of adultery, nine were prepared by the husband with some obliging fellow who would look for Milady and prepare proofs and testimonies for submission to the court of justice? Can you dream of a more immoral law than that which transforms vice into an instrument of procedure and gives it a judicial premium?

Divorce is contrary to politics—that word so dishonoured is interpreted here not in the usual sense which we give to it while speaking of that eternal and confused skirmish disputed between the government and the people; but in its high and useful significance, as the science of keeping the nation in good health. Modern nations drink politics as they drink coffee; they cannot get along without it. The Chinese prefer opium.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I would ask the hon. member this question: Is not provision for divorce included in the British North America Act?

Mr. FOURNIER: I will answer my hon. friend in a few minutes. Governments ought to have only one mission in dealing with civilized society, namely, to establish order and promote the common welfare by a just distribution of rights and duties. A government is, by its fidelity in fulfilling its mission, the artisan of its good fortune and glory, as it is by its incapacity, its weakness and its prevarications, the source of its own ruin. The duty of a legislator is to recognize marriage as the first of human institutions. A law which in some way regulates evil and consequently admits it, a law which manipulates disorder to manufacture order, and which uses the shining folds of the nuptial dress to drape vice's shoulders, is a law of masquerade and nothing else.

Divorce is also contrary to religion, which is the principle of everything on earth.

[Mr. Fournier.]

Christianity raised man above his ignorance and corruption, purified his nature, rendered his will firmer. It taught the world that duty and love, sacrifice and liberty, are one thing under different aspects, and it gave to the individual, by him to the family and by the family to society, virtue which is force, and force which is liberty.

Divorce also wounds and breaks the hearts of many. It ruins the home; it destroys the happiness and sanctity of married life; it depreciates the dignity of womanhood, for she runs the risk of being deserted after having ministered to the pleasures of man. It also wounds the innocent heart of the child and ruins its future prospects. Needless to say, the love of home is eternal; it is co-extensive with the life of the human race; it came with the first and will go out with the last. Home implies affection for others, and besides, it provides the incentive of progress. And being a source of religion, it is the origin of unselfishness; and this, incredible as it may seem, has been the germ of state and political growth.

Divorce constitutes the gravest menace to our institutions, of which home is the very foundation. Home! Who can estimate its sacredness, its tender associations, or the flood of fond memories which its very mention evokes in the mind of the storm-tossed mariner of life? Who knows? Perhaps in prison; perhaps when far away upon a sick-bed, tossed with fever, or when embittered with the reverses of fate, with fortune, friends and hope all gone; perhaps when suffering beneath a cold world's scorn; then the thought of home steals before the mental vision of the weary wanderer and he trembles to tears as he hears again the loving accents of mother's voice and learns once more those never-to-be-forgotten lessons of goodness acquired at her knee.

Home is the verdant spot of recollection; palms and a fountain in a burning desert; a fragrant flower about which like busy bees cling tenaciously the fondest memories of affection, grief oppressed—

Deep as first love and full of all regret.

—as the great Tennyson has so truly said. Thus does home arouse the soul and strike the chord of love, of father, mother, sisters, friends. Nothing but death can quench that strain. What loving and never-dying sentiment binds us indissolubly with our home! How can we eradicate from memory the hallowed place wherein the incense of morning and evening sacrifice rose to the Almighty, the sweet savour of family worship.