

by the civil laws to be able to manage their own affairs, and to select for themselves that state of life which suits them best.—If, therefore, her priests do not marry, it is because they have voluntarily renounced marriage. Like others, they were free to marry at a marriageable age. They gladly chose to forego this privilege to enjoy a greater and a better one,—that of ministering at God's altar. This act, a most deliberate one, was entirely their own: and surely there can be no harshness on the part of the Church, in allowing her ministers to devote themselves soul and body to their God.

Indeed, to speak the truth, marriage often entails more hardships on men and women too, than celibacy. When once a man has made his choice of a wife, [and he is not always allowed to choose the one he would like best] he must take her for life, "for better for worse." He may soon repent of his bargain: his wife may bring him nought but disappointment. She may be good or bad, sickly or in good health,—death alone or Prussian law can separate them. Now, we know that many marriages are most unfortunate. I have often heard that married men with hoary heads, who had enjoyed half a century of connubial bliss, declare and protest, that if they were allowed to begin life again, they would not enter into the bonds of wedlock. On the other hand, I have never heard an octogenarian priest regret his having, in early life, vowed a vow to the Lord. Really, Sir, if you knew the Catholic priests, if you conversed much with them, you would not, I am sure, observe aught in them indicative of sorrow, or sadness or disappointment. Those who know them best, and wish them well, never think of compassionating what you deem their forlorn condition.

Who are they who pretend to feel so much for the unmarried clergy of Rome? Why, their worst enemies—their slanderers—the men who cannot believe in their superior virtue—the Voltaires, the Humes, the Gibbons, the sensualists, the Sybarites, the libertines and unbelievers in every country. I do not, honoured Sir, rank you with these worthies, but I regret that you should unwittingly adopt their language, and throw away your compassion on a body of men who need it not. I was pained to see one of your most respectable journals, the *Scotsman*, when reviewing your book, say that on the subject of clerical celibacy, your opinions were identical with those of M. Michelet. Without intending it, this was doing you a positive injustice. You declare you do not credit the evil reports levelled against the priesthood. Michelet pretends not only to believe them, but he himself is the author of some of the most atrocious of them all. Men, whose innocence was to all France and Europe as conspicuous as their genius,—Bossuet, Fenelon, St. Francis de Sales,—were, according to M. Michelet, sensualists like others less famous than they. But observe, this is the language of Michelet when he had quarrelled with the Church—of Michelet the champion of the French University, and jealous of the equal learning and superior qualifications for teaching of many of the priests. Michelet, the Historian of France,—Michelet, who in his better days, and ere literary pride had rendered him insane, spoke and thought differently of clerical celibacy. In his History of France, written ere he had fallen out with the Church, he thus expresses himself:—"It is not I, certainly, who will speak ill of marriage; the married life has also its sanctity. Nevertheless, would not that virginal union of the priest with the Church be disturbed by a union

less pure? Will he who has given birth to children according to the flesh, remember those whom he has adopted according to the spirit? Will not the mystic father yield sometimes to the natural one? The priest could stint himself for the sake of the poor, but he cannot stint his children. And even were he to do this, were he to fulfil all the duties, I fear he would hardly preserve the spirit of the priesthood. No, in the most holy marriage, in the wife and in the family, there is something of a softening nature, which breaks the iron and which bends the steel. The most robust heart loses in marriage some portion of its strength. The priest was more than a man, married he becomes like other men . . . and that poetic solitude—those ennobling and strengthening pleasures of continence—that fulness of charity and of life, where the Christian soul embraces God and the world, think not that they can exist in the nuptial bed. . . . Christianity would have perished if the Church, softened and enfeebled by the marriage of her clergy, had sunk down to the common-place cares which families require. From that hour she would have no interior energy—no soaring towards Heaven. A Church with married priests would never have seen within her bosom those prodigies of religious art—nor the soul of a St Bernard, of a St Vincent of Paul, or of a St Francis de Sales, nor the genius of St Thomas, nor all those religious orders,—nor the profound and learned Benedictines.—Nothing can form such men, but the indulgence in solitary meditation, or the adopting the whole world for one's family.—Christ almost forsook his mother to devote himself to mankind, ere he died; that one only thought, the salvation of the whole world, might occupy his mind, he placed her under the care of St John: hence the model and justification of clerical celibacy. But this noble idea, as old as the Church itself, could only in the course of time, be perfectly developed."—(His. de France, vol. 2, p. 168.

The idea that a God of purity should be ministered to by virgin priests, is anterior to the Christian Church: before the coming of Christ, it was prevalent even among the heathens. It should, I think, be reckoned among those great and primitive traditions which, indelibly engraved on their minds, the human family carried with them into every part of the habitable world. If we consult ancient history, we shall every where find that chastity was considered essential to the sacerdotal character.—"It is," says M Du Maistre, "an opinion common to men of all times, and of all religions, that there is in continency something celestial, which exalts man and renders him agreeable to the Divinity,* that by a necessary consequence every sacerdotal function, every holy ceremony consorts not at all with marriage." The able and religious author whom I have just named, remarks, that the laws of every country imposed certain restrictions on the legitimate sensual gratifications both of priests and

* The innate excellency of a pure and virgin life was never called in question by any considerable portion of mankind, until the "magnanimous parent" of the Reformation, having laid aside the safeguards, (fasting and prayer) found it irksome to observe the laws of chastity. Like the fox in the fable, having lost his chief ornament, he succeeded better than Reynard in persuading his companions that he had met with no loss whatever. His doctrine was pleasing, easily learned, and he had apt disciples. The fruits of those lessons he taught, are now visible enough in the immorality characteristic of Northern Germany and Sweden,—countries whose enormities would put to shame the comparatively innocent cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.—Save among those who have adopted the doctrines of the Reformation, virginity is still, as it always was, held in the highest estimation; and if bards, who are nature's prophets are to be relied on, the animals that range the forests, have felt in it a virtue, and acknowledged an influence which modern reformers alone deny.

"Harpers have sung and poets told,
That he in fury uncontrol'd,
The chaggy monarch of the wood,
Before a virgin fair and good
Hath satisfied his savage mood."