

hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Here the same argument holds good. Even if justifiably put away—for the cause of fornication—the wife's remarriage by another is adultery, for the bond still exists which precludes the remarriage of either—clearly showing that the exception made, "except it be fornication," applies in reply to the "putting away," and not to the "remarriage" of either husband or wife. Our Lord in the first instance, in the Sermon on the Mount, tells us that the man who put away his wife for any other cause than that of fornication caused her to commit adultery, in other words would be responsible for that sin if she committed it; while in the second text He goes further and tells us that if the husband, in addition, married another, he himself would be guilty of adultery. In view of the importance of the subject, I know you will bear with me if I quote just one text further. St. Paul, in illustrating another subject in the 7th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, incidentally defines the law of Christian marriage in terms which there is no mistaking. He tells us, "The woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man."

We see, then, how clear and binding is the Word of God in reference to this most important matter, and it is not strange it should be so, touching as it does, the very core of family and national life. Many of you will marvel—perhaps for the first time—that in the face of all this there should exist upon the Statutebook of England an Act, which not only legalizes remarriage after divorce, but positively throws open the churches of the land for what must be in truth nothing short of blasphemous service. True, no clergyman is compelled by law to celebrate such a service, but if such a man can be found, the law provides for the use of the church.

Such a law was unknown in this Christian country previous to the year 1857, when the Divorce Court with all its attendant abominations was set up. The Bill was carried through both Houses of Parliament almost altogether owing to the persistent efforts of one man, but it never could have become law had the members of the Church realized what the Divine law was, had they understood the teaching of their Bible, or had they known the conditions of holy matrimony as laid down by the Church of Christ.

Now that social vice is being galvanized into ever-increasing activity by the legalized licence of this miserable enactment, thoughtful people are everywhere turning their attention to the subject. They are beginning to realize what it means and leads to. In former days, when our fair young daughters exchanged the sanctity and safety of the early home for the equally sacred and secure surroundings of married life, fathers and mothers were able to feel that God and themselves, their Church and their country, were at one in hallowing and protecting the union that had been entered into. All that is now changed. The State—this Christian State of England—with violent and profane hands throws open the portals of the new home. Intrigue may freely enter, strengthened by the infamous hope that the law of the land will one day enable it to crown its lustful labour with success. The scandal caused by divorced persons attempting to obtain remarriage in the Church and by the Church has indeed been a grievous scandal, but that, too, has not been without its good results. Had they been content with the merely secular contract which they could have entered into before the registrar, the feelings of the nation would not have been disturbed as they have been. No doubt many husbands and wives and fathers and mothers amongst you are in the habit of occasionally reading over the marriage service. Certainly all husbands and wives should read it—and read it prayerfully—at least every anniversary of their wedding day.

Those of you, then, who know what the service is, and what it requires, must surely be shocked and pained to the last degree when you hear of divorced persons attempting to take part in that service when actually living in a state of violation of its vows. What are these vows that have been taken? The husband takes the wife to live together after God's holy ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony. To love her, to comfort her, honour and keep her in sickness and in health, forsaking all other and keeping only unto her so long as they both shall live."

The wife takes the husband "to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony. To obey him and serve him, love, honour and keep him in sickness and in health, and forsaking all other, keeping only unto him, so long as they both shall live." Elsewhere in the service each takes the other, repeating with their own lips the following vow, "I take thee to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight my troth." And, lastly, listen to the prayer that concludes the service: "O God, who didst appoint that out of man (created after Thine own image and similitude) woman should take her beginning; and, knitting them together, didst teach that it should never

be lawful to put asunder those whom Thou by matrimony hadst made one: O God, who hast consecrated the state of matrimony to such an excellent mystery, that in it is signified and represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and His Church. . . . bless them both, and grant them to inherit Thy everlasting kingdom through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I ask, my brethren, can wanton profanity go farther than that persons who have already broken these vows, and are at the moment living in open rebellion against them, should thrust themselves afresh into the presence of God and take part in such a mockery as such a service must be?

As a last word, my brethren, why do I today in God's name, bring this matter before you? Because it is one of the deepest and most far-reaching concerns of your lives. Because the evils I have pointed out are sauntering the foundations of our family, social, and national life; and, finally, because we can all bear a powerful and noble part in creating a pure and holy public opinion, which must in time permeate our nation and our nation's laws, averting, we humbly hope and pray, the just judgment of an offended God, which, otherwise, must surely, sooner or later, overtake us.

ST. THOMAS' DAY—DEC. 21.

Monday, Dec. 21st, was St. Thomas' Day. About the life of this apostle we do not know much. His personal name was in all probability Judas, the name Thomas simply meaning "a Twin." After the dispersion of the Twelve, he would seem to have gone and labored in Parthia. It is generally believed that he preached the Gospel at Edessa, where there is reasonable ground for supposing he was buried. His name is also associated with an ancient Christian church in the extreme south of India, found there in the year 1500 A. D. by Vasco da Gama to whom they maintained St. Thomas was their founder. This church can at any rate be traced back to the sixth century. The feast of St. Thomas was in the first instance, as might be expected, an Eastern one, and may be carried back to the beginning of the fifth century as a local feast of Edessa, and to the middle of the fifth century more generally, when Theodoret speaks of the change of the festivals of heathen gods into those of saints, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Thomas being the only names mentioned. As regards the West, the observance of the festival was apparently later, because of its absence from many ancient calendars and liturgies. As has already been said, the Western church observes Dec. 21st in commemoration of St. Thomas. The day observed by the Greek church is Oct. 6th.