

PREFACE

The purpose of this volume is to furnish to the lawyer, legislator, sociologist and student a working summary of the marriage and divorce laws of the principal countries of the world.

There are no geographical boundaries to virtue, wisdom and justice, and no country has as yet monopolized all that is best in creation. The mightiest of the nations lacks something which is possessed by the weakest; and there is no branch of comparative jurisprudence of more general consequence than that treating of marriage, which is the keystone of civilization.

By "civilization" we do not mean community life according to the standard of a single individual or nation, but in its broader and better sense, meaning the civil organization of any large group of human beings.

This book is not a brief in favour of, or against, any particular social system or legal code, nor has it a mission to assist in the reformation of any country's marriage and divorce law. In the compilation which follows our endeavour is simply to set forth positive law as it exists to-day, leaving its correction or development to the proper authorities.

The editor has lived among the books of the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale and other great libraries for years, seeking in vain for just such a compilation as is here humbly presented. We hope, therefore, that whatever may be its imperfections the book is justified, and will be welcomed as the first of its kind.