

were ten years of age, so young that they were not competent to make a choice, even if they had been allowed to do so. They were held in absolute bondage, and, by fear of the most dreadful punishment, forced to celibacy until they were forty, when they were free to marry. Their enforced chastity was only external, and was no proper symbol of the purity of Agnes, whose soul, by her own deliberate choice, had become the domicile of her divine Spouse. Judged by the Roman standard of that day and by the laws of climate, she was a mature woman when she made her vow, an act of heroic self-sacrifice honored in that Church alone to whose jewelled crown Agnes adds the splendor of her virtue. Even the Christian sects sneer at the vow of virginity. Their founder condemned it, and asserted that it was impossible for human nature to keep it. By his teaching and his practice he revived the pagan idea in regard to it; and the divorce laws of the modern state, as well as the erotic tendency of certain schools of modern art, literature, and drama, are the natural consequence of his loose doctrine and a further proof of the inherent concupiscence of human nature, and that the virginity of an Agnes is a purely divine gift. To no temp-