

Hebrew Bible, Exod. xvi. 17—"Two tenons shall be set a woman against her sister." English Bible—"Two tenons shall be set one against another."

Let us see now how the Hebrew speaks of persons. Hebrew Bible, Exod. xvi. 15—"And the children of Israel said a man to his brother." English Bible—"And the children of Israel said one to another." Here, in the Hebrew, the Israelites are called *brothers*, although of different families and of different tribes.

Hebrew Bible, Gen. xxvi. 31—"And Abimelech and Isaac swear a man to his brother." English Bible—"And Abimelech and Isaac swear one to another." Note here, that though called in Hebrew, *brothers*, they were not brothers at all by blood relationship.

Now had it been females that were spoken of in these two verses, the expressions in Hebrew would have been, "they said a woman to her sister"—they swear a woman to her sister, and yet no blood relationship would have been implied—the English would be—"the women spoke to one another—they swore to one another." In like manner, if a married Jew were to take an additional wife, though she were no relation at all to the first wife, he would be said to take a woman to her sister, which in plain English would simply mean, taking one wife to another, or taking another wife. This may explain the true readings of Lev. xvii. 18, and give the true meaning of the verse.

Hebrew Bible, Lev. xviii. 18—"Thou shalt not take a woman to her sister." English Bible (margin)—"Thou shalt not take one wife to another."

Thirty-five times this kind of expression occurs in the Hebrew Old Testament, and in every instance it is translated into the English form, in the English Bible, except in this verse—Lev. xviii. 18. It appears, then, from what has been said, that this verse should have been no exception: that the verse simply forbids having more wives than one; and that consequently the verse has nothing to do with the question under discussion.

We are confirmed in this opinion by a consideration of what we now proceed to show, namely:—That marriage with a wife's sister is forbidden in the 16th verse of this chapter. If the 18th verse, therefore, be construed into a prohibition of such a marriage only during the lifetime of the first wife; then the 18th verse is not only a tautology, but it permits the law of the 16th verse to be broken; and it allows a man to marry as many wives as he please during the lifetime of his first wife, provided that the other wives are not *literally* sisters in the English sense of the word. All which is very improbable. We hasten now to the prohibitory law.

Lev. xviii. 16,—"Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife—it is thy brother's nakedness."

Lev. xx. 21,—"And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing—he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness."

These two verses are the foundation of the Canon Law on this question—a law which existed long before the Reformation from Popery—a law which has ever guided Christian Churches and government, in this matter, throughout Christendom.

But what have these verses to do with the question. This will specially be seen by considering two things, namely:—1. That the whole of the Moral Law in the Bible, is addressed to the man as the head of the woman. This may be illustrated by Lev. xx, where the man—the man—the man is continually addressed by name. Where this is not the case in other parts of the Bible, it is the man who is implied as the person addressed; as in the Ten Commandments, where the reader finds this

form of address come out only at last, in these words—"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." The 2nd thing to be noticed is, that what is *sin to the man*, is *sin to the woman*. Although the Ten Commandments are, in form, addressed to the man, they are binding nevertheless as a rule of duty on the wife, she being "one flesh" with the husband. While therefore the husband reads "thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife,"—the wife reads, "thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's husband."

So with the two verses in question. While the Law (Lev. xviii. 16,) addresses the man, "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness"—the woman is expected to read therein her duty thus,—"Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy sister's husband: it is thy sister's nakedness." And so with the parallel passage in Lev. xx. 21. Dr. Gibson well remarks here that, "if the woman cannot marry the widower, the widower cannot marry her."

Most willingly, would we end the argument and this lengthy article, at this point; but feel constrained to answer as briefly as possible, a few plausible objections to the conclusion at which we have arrived.

1. We cannot see any blood relationship between a man and his sister-in-law. We answer, that in Lev. 18th chapter, there are more distant, much more distant relationships forbidden in marriage. A man is forbidden (in verse 14th) to marry an aunt-in-law; and, in verse 17th, a grand-step-daughter. Yet these far distant relations of his are called (in verse 6th) "near of kin"—or in Hebrew, "*remainder of his flesh*." How much more the sister of his own wife—that wife being one flesh with himself.

2. These marriage laws in Leviticus belong to the Jewish Economy which has been abolished. We have, in effect, anticipated and answered this objection. We have only to add, that if the objector can show anything ceremonial or typical about these laws, and demonstrate to us the things typified—the substance fore-shadowed, we shall greatly admire his theological acumen and brilliancy of genius. But, we believe that that objection arises mainly from not seriously reading over the whole of the degrees of relationship forbidden in marriage. Let any one do so, and he cannot but conclude that these laws are intended for all times and all nations, as well as for the Mosiac economy, and the Jewish people who live under it. Dr. Gibson, proves by a large induction of facts, that where these laws of the Bible are neglected in any community in modern times, such neglect is followed by the most disastrous consequences, both physical and moral: which proves that these laws are founded in divine wisdom, goodness, and justice, and are intended for universal observance.

3. But does not God himself permit, and even command, when a husband died without issue, that then his brother should marry the widow and raise up children to the deceased husband. True, that is an exception to Lev. xviii. 16—but the exception only goes to establish the rule or general law. This exception, or law of Levirate (Deut. xxv. 5, 6,) was intended for a special purpose in connection with the prophecies which pointed to the coming of the Messiah; and such a law is now necessarily null and void. There is nothing now in nature, or in morals, or in social requirements demanding such a law. God who made the law in Lev. xviii. 16, had a right to make the exception; but we have no right to plead the exception for disregarding or breaking the general rule.

4. But does not the Apostle Paul tell us that when husband dies, "the wife is released from the law of her husband." Does not this prove that death snaps asunder the link of relationship that binds a woman to the kindred of her

deceased husband, or that binds a husband to the kindred of his deceased wife? If so, then the sister of a deceased wife is no relation at all to the surviving husband, and if he should marry the sister, he marries one who is no relation to him. The relationship ceased when the wife died. This is plausible, but it does not stand investigation. The Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 7, is referring to well-known laws of marriage;—that a woman is bound to be faithful to her husband while he lives—she cannot marry another. That is the law as given in the 7th commandment—binding on the wife, as well as the husband. To her it is the law of her husband, or that which binds her to be faithful to him. If he die, she may marry another—but whom? Though released, by his death, from the law of her husband, she is not released from that part of the Law of God which is to regulate her in marrying again. Is her deceased husband's brother no relation of hers? Let the Bible itself tell. See the law of Levirate as illustrated in the Book of Ruth. Naomi's husband is dead, and Ruth's husband is dead, and yet Boaz, kinsman to Naomi's husband is recognized as the "near kinsman" of both Naomi and her Moabitish daughter-in-law Ruth. Apply the principle now. The deceased wife's sister—is a sister still—she is a near kinswoman—the tie of relationship has not been snapped by death.

(The writer, after expressing a most decided opinion as to the illegality in the eye of the law of scripture, and of our church, of the marriages referred to, concluded with an earnest appeal in behalf of those who have ignorantly married in this forbidden degree of relationship. As such pleading, however, might have had the effect of tending to perpetuate the evil complained of, he has been induced, reluctantly, to withdraw the plea, and permit the article to be published without it. The writer has done this as a duty to the church and to the community, and not without deep sympathy for those who have ignorantly married in the relationship referred to.—EDITOR.)

NEW YORK CORRESPONDENCE.

Sir,—The Anniversary week at New York has just closed. The interest in the meetings was not quite so great as formerly. For this there are several causes, which may be mentioned. In the first place the old Tabernacle which formed the grand focus of interest in the Anniversary week has been torn down, in order to make room for business establishments. In the second place there had been much quiet excitement produced by the recent revival which has so greatly blessed the City; and this excitement has begun to subside into steady Church action. In the third place the question which has been agitating the Tract Society absorbed the attention of the religious public. And these causes, but especially the last, together with the continued rains of the week, greatly impaired the interest of the season.

Not being a life-member of the Tract Society, I did not attempt to gain admission to its meeting, from which indeed all others but life-members were excluded. The question which formed the subject of controversy last year, was the propriety of issuing Tracts on Slavery. It was then resolved by a unanimous vote, that a tract should be prepared and issued on the duties of Masters to their Slaves. The publishing committee had one prepared by Dr. Thomas of Charleston, a man of great learning and ability. The tract was understood to consist chiefly of extracts from the writing of Southern