

metal, which yet but for this would never have extricated themselves from the surrounding heap."

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE.

MANY causes concur to render the serious consideration of the sancity of Christian marriage a matter of very grave importance to the members of the church, and more especially to the ministers. It was inevitable that, in a new country like this, many of the restrictions imposed at home upon the celebration of marriage should be, at least for a time, relaxed; and this unavoidable necessity has, not unnaturally, led to a forgetfulness of the very important causes for which those restrictions were originally provided. For a long time the civil authorities in this country authorized the celebration of marriage by lay officers, and while we freely confess that the necessity of the case fully justified this proceeding, it cannot be denied that its natural effect has been to abate, in the minds of the people, the sense of the religious character of the marriage contract. Still stronger grounds existed for relaxing the requirement, made at home, that marriage should be celebrated only within the walls of a church. Where the services of a clergyman could be secured, distance often presented a most serious difficulty in respect of the celebration of the holy office in a church, or even in any other building used for the purpose of Divine service. Here again the effect has been, where no such difficulty can any longer be pleaded, to make it appear a matter of absolute indifference whether God's blessing is sought, on a most intimate and life-long union, in His own house, before His own Holy Table, or in some common secular apartment—the study of the clergyman—a room in a tavern—or a drawing-room in "the residence of the father of the bride." Again there is another restriction imposed at home which was here for some time with good reason relaxed, but for the relaxation of which it would be hard to assign any sufficient reason now; and this restriction relates to the hour of marriage. The canonical hours within which marriage may be lawfully celebrated in the Mother Country lie between 8 a.m. and 12 at noon, and no thoughtful man can fail to perceive, on consideration, the wisdom of this appointment, or the great danger which must result from its being, as it is among us, absolutely done away. Even in respect of the better informed and more moral classes of society there is a fitness, a decorum, in providing that so important an engagement should be contracted under circumstances which may remind all concerned of its solemn character, and there is but little ground for sympathy with those who would prefer for the celebration of marriage the latest instead of the earlier hours of the day. But the neglect of the rule respecting the hour for the celebration of matrimony involves, in the instance of very many, something far more than the injury inflicted on religious feeling or on moral sentiments; it materially affects the temporal happiness and the spiritual well-being of the parties concerned.

Were marriage restricted among us to the ceremonial hours, it is not too much to say that many a most ill-advised and unhappy union would be prevented, and many a most grievous transgression of God's most sacred laws avoided. What is too often the effect of our having dispensed, as we have done, with all rule respecting time and place? A conspiracy is formed to betray a thoughtless girl into a senseless, unholy marriage, at an evening party; she is surprised into the acceptance of some most unworthy husband, from whom even her small modicum of discretion would have prompted her to recoil, had she been guarded by laws which obliged her to act with more deliberate purpose—to present herself, for the purpose of contracting the marriage, at the house of God, and this at an early hour of the day, a time at least less fitted for the accomplishment of any heartless and profligate intrigue.

It is indeed a most serious evil that the force of custom should induce or oblige ministers of Christ to lend themselves to practices too often most fatal to the earthly happiness, and probably to the everlasting well-being, of the parties most nearly concerned; and while we are aware that the clergy have, in this country, no power of enforcing the church's rule respecting the time of marriage, they may and they ought to refuse to be parties to the breach of her most wise and wholesome rule respecting the sacred place of marriage. There is reason to fear that all have not duly weighed their deep responsibility in this regard—have neither considered, as they ought, the disgrace and peril of contributing, in any degree, to the lowering of the standard of morals among our population, and to the profaning of a most sacred ordinance of God; nor, on the other hand, the blessedness and honour which will attend them, if, in the discharge of their important functions, they strive by moral suasion, where they have no more potent weapon, and by a steadfast and self-denying adherence to the church's rule, where there remains to them the power of holding it, to raise the moral and religious tone of society around them, and to make men mindful that God's blessing is indeed needed, and is solemnly and devoutly to be sought by those whom He only can, according to His appointment from the beginning, "sanctify and join together in marriage. Can it be true that Christian ministers have not only cast God's holy laws behind their backs in this regard, but have also most unworthily and indecently made themselves accessory to attempts to evade the less stringent laws of man, thus disregarding not only the higher requirements of religion, but even the inferior safeguards which have been provided for the security of civil society? We would not without reason put the enquiry—we trust that we may never have cause to put it again.

There is, however, another particular, in which a word of warning is greatly needed, and that relates to the persons between whom marriage may be lawfully celebrated. What do we mean—or rather what does our church mean—by the table "of prohibited degrees?" Prohibited—by whom? By man, or by God

Himself? The question is easily answered. At the Reformation our Church and State resolved to do utterly away with every restriction upon marriage which was of merely human origin, and also of every relaxation of God's holy law which had impiously and immorally been sanctioned, in former times, by ecclesiastical authority. The Convocation and the Parliament of England alike accepted for our guidance, in this grave question of morality, the word of God alone, as may be seen by the statutes in the reign of Henry VIII. In the reign of Elizabeth, in order to make clear to all people the import of those statutes, Archbishop Parker was instructed to draw up the "Table of Prohibited Degrees." This was not the enactment of any new law, but an authoritative declaration of the meaning of a law already enacted, a law which still binds the clergy and the members of the Church of England. Some will tell us that the Church has misinterpreted God's law; but this is surely no question for any minister of that Church to entertain. Before he can act on the conviction that she has thus erred, and so venture to contravene her instructions, he must, if he would be a truthful and honest man, resign his ministry, and seek authority in some other religious body to celebrate marriages, which the Church has, whether rightly or wrongly, peremptorily forbidden. In the marriage service the minister is required to warn the persons to be married "that so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's Word doth allow, are not joined together by God, neither is their matrimony lawful." When the minister pronounces this warning, he speaks, not in his own name, but in the name of the Church—he uses the words, not in his own sense, but the sense of the Church; what that sense is, is made abundantly evident from her history—from the legal enactments by which she has provided for the guidance not only of her clergy but of all her members; and accordingly, if there is still to be any such thing as truth and honour within her borders, no clergyman can possibly solemnize, no lay member of her communion can possibly seek to contract, under the sanction of her holy service, a union which she has openly declared to be forbidden by Almighty God.

It is, however, a matter of no small importance to justify the conclusion at which our Church has arrived on this question, and to point out the very perilous consequences which a rejection of that conclusion inevitably involves; and as this has been accomplished most effectually by Archdeacon Hessey, in his primary charge, we propose to lay before our readers, in our next issue, an extract from that charge relating to "Marriage with a deceased's wife's sister." W.

IN MEMORIAM.

TO the many friends of the late Rev. FREDERICK ALEXANDER BETHUNE, the following memoir of his life will be acceptable. Born March 14, 1843, at Cobourg, where he received his preliminary education, he was sent at the age of fourteen to Upper Canada