

## MARRIAGE WITH A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER.

A LADY'S LETTERS TO THE BISHOP OF ONTARIO.

"As no acquisition is more to be esteemed than peace, when it leaves us in possession of our honour and lawful rights, so, on the other hand, whenever it is joined with loss of freedom or with infamy nothing can be more detestable and fatal."—*Polybius*.

### LETTER I.

MY LORD BISHOP,—The Bill brought before Parliament last session by the member for Jacques Cartier to legalize marriage with a deceased wife's sister, though passed by a large majority in the Commons, was, I am credibly informed, mainly by your personal and clerical influence—an influence which your position as ecclesiastical head of this section of our church secures you, and the consequent freedom with which you move in the circle that surrounds the court and the throne—defeated in the Senate. With the prospect that it will be again before the Commons, Your Lordship again hovers upon the horizon, not alone, however, as before, but with a great company, to secure the extinction of any liberty that may be accorded to women. I am, My Lord, a plain, unlettered woman, while you, I believe, enjoy a classic and finished education. But before I shall have done with you it may appear that if the position you have assumed is not unclerical it is at all events unscriptural, anti-Christian and ungenerous.

In all ages of the world society has suffered from the encroachments of the ecclesiastical on the civil prerogative; and the period when slavery, both physical and mental, and the humiliation and debasement of mankind were the most general and complete was when the church may be said to have gained universal empire. Two beings were then the special objects of contempt in the eyes of priest and bishop—the philosopher who declared that the earth was round and she who is accused of having induced our first male parent to taste of the forbidden tree. It is this period Your Lordship can look back with pride to as having endowed you with those civil but papal insignia, the staff and the ring, which on great occasions Your Lordship still flourishes, to the delight of the high church party in Canada. Dr. Mosheim, a Protestant divine, and the most accurate and careful ecclesiastical historian since apostolic times, says, in his History of the Eleventh Century, that "it had long been customary with the emperors, kings and princes of Europe to