

# The Church Guardian

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## CALENDAR FOR APRIL.

- APRIL 1st—Tuesday before Easter.  
 " 2nd—Wednesday before Easter.  
 " 3rd—Thursday before Easter.  
 " 4th—GOOD FRIDAY. Pr. Ps. M. 22, 40, 54. E. 69, 88.  
 " 5th—EASTER EVEN.  
 " 6th—EASTER DAY. Pr. Ps. M. 2, 57, 111. E. 113, 114, 115. Pr. Anth. instead of *Venite*. Athan. Cr.; Prop. Pref. in Com. Service till April 13th incl. *Notice of Monday and Tuesday*.  
 " 7th—Monday in Easter week.  
 " 8th—Tuesday in Easter week.  
 " 13th—1st Sunday after Easter.  
 " 20th—2nd Sunday in Easter. (*Notice of St. Mark*).  
 " 25th—St. Mark's Day. (E. & M.).  
 " 27th—Third Sunday after Easter. (*Notice of St. Philip and St. James*).

## THE SERIOUS INCREASE OF DIVORCE.

The present age has witnessed, and is now witnessing, most serious and dangerous attacks upon many of our social and religious institutions, and we have become so used to these attacks that, except now and then, when one more outrageous than the rest takes place, we cease to be astonished, though we cannot help feeling indignant. Of late years the most serious of these attacks has been made against the institution of Marriage, an institution in which, for all those who have not entirely given up the Christian ideal, the social and religious elements are fused and blended into something sacred and hallowed alike by Divine and human ordinance. It is not very long ago that the most conspicuous of these attacks on marriage was made by a married woman in the pages of a well known review; and the topic was taken up with the vulgar alacrity of a sensational press, and the question, 'Is Marriage a Failure?' has served as a standing jest ever since the appearance of the query in that bald and unpleasant form. Last month we noticed signs of a revival and increase of the strife about Marriage and Divorce in three

totally distinct and independent quarters, and simultaneously, too, in three different countries—England, America, and our Australian colonies—and it is to this renewal of a discussion which is fraught with so much difficulty and danger to our modern life that we wish for a moment to draw careful attention.

Once again, in a leading review (though not in that in which her first article appeared), Mrs. Mona Caird attacks the results and the whole system of marriage as it exists among us at present. At the same time we notice in a leading American quarterly a lengthy and thoughtful article upon divorce suggested by the appearance of the Report of the American Commission on Marriage and Divorce in the United States, including reference to marriage and divorce in European countries, the article in question being written by a clergyman, the Rev. Samuel Dike. And last month, too, the Royal Assent has reluctantly been given under the stress of Colonial blustering, to a Divorce Act passed by the Victorian legislature which aims at making divorce far more easy than it is at present.

Such being the case, it will be seen how widely the question of divorce is being discussed, and how universal, unfortunately, seems to be the desire to weaken the bonds of that which we, at least, in our English Church, have ever been taught to regard as a *holy estate*, not to be entered upon lightly or lightly to be put away. But that there is an increasing tendency to make the bond of marriage more and more easy to break can be seen from the American Report referred to above, which includes, it must be remembered, a consideration of the facts of divorce in Europe as well as the United States. The Rev. Samuel Dike sums up the Report in one sorrowful and significant sentence—'The Report shows that the movement of divorce is an international one; that it is of great magnitude; and that its advance is constant and rapid.' We have not here the space to quote all the world-wide statistics which this Report has collected, and which Mr. Dike has carefully considered; we only ask our readers to think carefully of the great and pregnant meaning of the grave and weighty sentence in which the sum and substance of the whole matter is given. The Report, by the way, was issued some time before the new Victorian Divorce Bill, so that this latter fact only adds an additional weight of evidence to the statement thus put forth. Only one set of figures from Mr. Dike's article need be quoted, but they will be quite sufficient to show the fearful increase of the modern tendency to the breaking of the marriage tie. Between 1867 and 1888 there has been an increase of over 156 per cent. in the United States, while on the other hand (to show that this cannot possibly be explained by an increase of the American population) the increase of population has only been 60 per cent. At the same time we are glad to notice that the best citizens of the great Western Republic are striving to obtain greater uniformity in the marriage laws of the United States, so that the present system of marriage in one State and an easy divorce in another, which is so fruitful of evil results, may be finally abolished. The National Divorce Reform League, also, which met at Boston in January of this year, suggested an International Conference, so that in view of the constantly increasing intercourse between Europeans (especially the English) and Americans, an attempt might be made to secure, at least among the English-speaking nations, the adoption of some common standard—firstly, as to what is necessary to constitute a valid marriage, and, secondly, to justify the annulling of such a marriage.

But, on the other hand, we find Victoria attempting to make divorce still more easy, and to introduce various regulations and anomalies that can only help to create confusion rather than uniformity throughout that populous and

important colony. And when we come to Mrs. Caird's utterances upon the subject, we feel that the close of this century is indeed witnessing the beginning of a serious crisis in relation to the whole question of marriage at large. We are told—as an inducement we presume to help in forwarding that extraordinary millenium, 'the emancipation of women' from their present slavery to the conditions of modern life—that 'if woman's claim were granted, if she should secure liberty as great as that of man in all relations of life, marriage as we now understand it would cease to exist, its main foundation would be undermined.' Apart from any feeling of indignation that might naturally be aroused by the complacency with which the destruction of our system of marriage is regarded, we may fairly and dispassionately ask, What then will take its place? Mrs. Caird suggests a simple contract with stipulations to be written down in black and white by each party, such a contract to last only as long as this agreement subsists, and to be dissolved when any of these stipulations are broken. And this cold blooded, selfish contract, with its mutual stipulations and freedom of dissolution, is all that is to be offered to mankind in place of that close and personal and social relationship which is used so frequently by inspired writers as a symbol of the wondrous and mystical union that unites Christ and His Church on earth.

We give credit to the authoress of this new attack upon marriage in our modern social state for sincerity of intention in her hopes of reforming some of the notorious evils with which our present society is unfortunately entangled. We even admit that in some respects more is expected of the woman than of the man in certain social duties and relationships, and we heartily agree that justice should be meted out equally and fairly by society to woman and man alike. The obligations of morality are equally binding upon both. But we deplore the rashness of the proposals laid before the world so readily and so fluently; proposals which cannot fail, whatever may be the intentions of their authors, to have unfortunate and disastrous results at the very time when we require a severer sense of what is good and pure and holy in the institution of matrimony, as upheld by the Christian Church. It is the very worst way of reforming the evils which undoubtedly occur in many marriages to begin by making divorce easy. If marriages can be lightly broken, they will be lightly entered upon; for people will readily think more lightly of objections to any particular marriage, such as that it is not likely to be happy owing to the unsuitability of the two who are concerned therein, if they know that the bond can easily be broken, and that it does not require very grave reasons to dissolve it. There is little doubt that in some points the woman ought to be protected by the law more than she is at present, and this can be done with but little alteration in existing legislation. But these wild attacks upon marriage in general, and the serious growth of divorce in Europe and America, which is a simultaneous appearance with these attacks, must cause all of us who still regard marriage as more sacred than a business contract, and more socially important than any other social institution, to exert our influence seriously, with what strength we may, against proposals, whether legislative or otherwise, that will tend to intensify the unfortunate tendency to divorce which we at present observe in so many quarters.—*G. in Church Bells.*

## EASTER IN WESTMINSTER AND ST. PAUL'S.

The Dean of Westminster preached in the Abbey on Easter Day from St. John, xi. 25:—'I am the resurrection and the life.' After narrating the circumstances of the conversation between Christ and Martha, the Dean sought to concentrate attention on the two words which