

passions, she caused them to stoop to the gentle Sacrament of Marriage, and to acknowledge the nuptial bond as one, holy, and indissoluble. Throughout Spain, France, England, Germany, in the halls of the kings and in the cottage of their serfs, one wife was recognised, in rank her husband's equal, whose place during her life none could take.

Then for a period of five hundred years these new monarchies formed a stable alliance with the Church older than themselves. Frequently they exerted their utmost power and the alliance of their sovereignty with the Church, in order, if it might be, to corrupt the judgment of their Father, the Pope, in the affairs of their domestic life reserved to his cognisance. One slighted queen appeals from her husband to the universal justice of Rome for restitution of her conjugal rights; another, wrongfully divorced, fears to be supplanted by a younger and fairer rival; a third has to defend the sterility of her marriage against a husband greedy for heirs; in all these, and similar cases, never did the Popes consent to sacrifice the indissoluble bond of marriage for fear or for reward. It stands recorded to their eternal honor that they suffered a powerful kingdom, and still more powerful race destined to dominion, to break away from their obedience, rather than surrender the right of one deserted wife; for in her right lay the right of all wives, and the sanctity of all marriage.

And now we live in a period of entirely different tendencies. Not kings only, not the rich and the noble, but society as such is striving to emancipate itself from any law but one self-imposed—a law, not of Christ, but of its own, with parts gathered from paganism, and parts retained from Christianity, the end of which, as it conceives, would be social ease and comfort, material wealth, and worldly prosperity. Humanity, with the resources bestowed upon it by centuries of Christian faith and practice, rises up against anything above itself. It calls law the expression of the general will, not the command of One revered as superior, not the choice of One loved as good. Before this spirit of self-will assuming the guise of liberty, and sweeping over modern nations as the flame over the prairies, the Church maintains still the self-same law of marriage, as the last defence of the weak against the strong, the last rampart of the family and of society against their invaders. When that mighty and commanding genius, that Caesar of modern times, the symbol and embodiment of his age, Napoleon, called upon Pope Pius VII. to annul the marriage of his brother, Jerome Bonaparte, with Miss Patterson, as beneath his soaring ambition, the Sovereign Pontiff, after thorough examination of the circumstances, declared it was impossible for him to annul it; thus proclaiming again, in the noblest manner, that no seduction and no threat could induce him to dissolve a legitimate marriage, though the mightiest ruler on earth was the postulant, and a Protestant of humble degree the wife assailed (see letter of Pius VII. to Napoleon, June 27, 1805).

Now to complete the demonstration by contrast. Look around and outside of the one Church, you will find no civilised nation, no uncivilised tribe of man, in possession of the complete Christian marriage, in its unity, sanctity, and indissolubility. The Turk, the Hindoo, the Chinese, are polygamists. Their domestic life inspires one with horror. The Jew, wherever the law of the land permits it, as far as his own law is concerned, is a polygamist and a divorcer. So much for the civilised non-Christian man. Among the uncivilised races the old heathen abominations prevail. Nay, take nations which boast of being in the van of civilisation, and leading the march of progress in science and art, whose pride is self-government, liberty; but which have rejected the gentle rule of the Church. We see them all incapable of maintaining the perfect Christian marriage, its unity, sanctity, and indissolubility. Already three centuries ago the very patriarchs of the revolt met in council in order to allow a princely adherent, who dutifully laid before them the confession of his incontinence, the privilege of a second wife. And now divorce prevails in a frightful degree, and with appalling increase in Protestant nations. Even the Greek and Russian communions allow it; so that there is no marriage sacred and indissoluble upon earth, save where, to use again St. Augustine's words, 'from the first union of two human beings nuptials carry a Sacrament, in the City, among the people of our God.' As the ancient civilisation was powerless to prevent unspeakable abominations, so the modern—forthwith when it leaves the sanctuary of the Church—becomes unable to sustain the idea and practice of Christian marriage; and only the one, the holy, the perpetual Spouse of Christ can uphold the nuptial bond of which she bears the mystery in herself.

To sum up, the Church has restored the position of woman in four great points: (1) As a human creature she

has taken a rank by man's side unknown to the Greek, to the Persian, the Roman, the co-heiress of all his hopes, of all the Divine promises; (2) as a wife and companion of man, her subordination has been preserved, but an impress of a glorious likeness, full at once of exaltation and tenderness, has been set upon it; (3) as the mother of the family, the creatrix of that home so dear to man, which neither Athens in her science, nor Rome in her power possessed; (4) as the nurse and educator of her race and man's, in that primary and precious education upon which the future growth and perfection of man depend.

Marriage is the germ of human society; the family, tribe, nation, are but expansions of it in one line; the village, the town, the city, the league, the Empire, are but aggregations of it. It is the spring of man's social growth, the point at which individuals combine to make the race. Accordingly, a false idea of it corrupts the whole social structure. Never was there a people great or good in which the marriage-bond was defective.

In the work of Christian marriage the Creator and Redeemer were revealed together; the same who established it in innocence restored it after the long night of the Fall as part of His organism for the renewal of all things. Therefore, when a nation repudiates the indissolubility of marriage, it repudiates the basis of human society as given to man before the Fall, the basis of human society as restored by God when He became man. So far as it can, it removes the foundation-stone of Christian civilisation, and resumes the errors and immorality of the heathen as to the two sexes. The only security against this is the unerring voice of God's Church repeating from age to age: 'What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.' The social plague of divorce calls for a radical cure; and the remedy can be found only in the abolition of our mischievous legislation regarding divorce, and in an honest application of the teachings of the Gospel. If persons contemplating marriage were persuaded that once united, they were legally debarred from entering into second wedlock, they would be more circumspect before marriage in the choice of a life partner, and would be more patient afterwards in bearing the yoke and in tolerating each other's infirmities. Besides leading to ill-assorted and hasty marriages, divorce stimulates a discontented and unprincipled husband or wife to lawlessness, quarrels, and even adultery, well aware that the very crime will afford a pretext and legal grounds for a separation. It raises fierce litigations between the parties about the custody of their offspring. It deprives the children of the protecting arm of a father or the gentle care of a mother, and too frequently consigns them to the cold charity of the world; for lack of conjugal affection usually accompanies lack of parental love. In short, it fills the household with blight and desolation, which no wealth or luxury can repair.

Nor is the Catholic Church, in proclaiming the absolute indissolubility of marriage, open to the charge of cruelty. She merely enforces the observance of the law of her Divine Founder, and His law, however rigorous, is mercy compared to the cruel consequences of easy divorce. It is spurious philanthropy and false philosophy for legislators, in their insane endeavor to improve on Divine teaching, to lose sight of the interest of the race and of society while they devise means to alleviate the hardships of individual cases. Cases of married infelicity are indeed plentiful, but it is better to legislate for the good of the community than to degrade the community to the level of the individual.

Our duty, then, in common with all Christian believers and true friends of civilisation, is to deplore the havoc wrought by divorce laws of this and other countries—laws which are fast loosening the foundation of society. Our duty is to inculcate that such divorces are powerless in conscience. Our duty is to teach Catholics to enter into marriage through worthy and holy motives, and with the blessings of religion, especially with the blessing of the Nuptial Mass. Then, far from wishing for means of escape from their union, they will regret that it can be dissolved even by death.

In conclusion, Dearly Beloved Brethren, remember that all Christian society, the whole magnificent fabric of Christian civilisation, rests upon the Christian family, the Christian home. Remember that the basis of the Christian home is Christian marriage, which Our Lord has raised to the dignity of a sacrament. Remember that home-life moulds the character of men more than any other agency. Remember that religious, pure, peaceful, and sweet home-life causes a rich growth of all the virtues which hallow and adorn life like flowers in genial spring, whereas, if the bud of childhood is blighted in this its earliest sanctuary, then farewell the hope of fragrant blossoms and ripe fruit in after life. Remember that

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