

ing degrees, gnawing also at our own young and favored countries. We refer in particular to the spread of divorce. Nobody needs to be reminded that the family is the foundation of the State. And the increasing facilities for divorce are fast severing the bonds that hold the family together. Keen observers look with deep uneasiness at the drift of divorce legislation. It was last week made the subject of a grave and warning utterance by the Coadjutor-Archbishop of Sydney. A few years ago the eminent Protestant writer, Professor GOLDWIN SMITH, said of the increasing laxity of the American divorce laws:—

‘Of all the thunder-clouds, none is darker or more charged with ruin than this. The responsibility, so far as it is legislative, rests not only on those legislatures which have perilously relaxed the divorce law, but upon jurists who, carried away by the generous desire of emancipating the wife from the dominion of the husband, have broken up the legal and economical unity of a family. To preserve its integrity, the family needs a headship. The necessity may be unwelcome, but it seems to be the fiat of nature.’

The future of the State, the standard of conjugal morality, the family tie itself, depend virtually upon the incidents of marriage. Among these colonies, New South Wales has, since 1892, attained an evil notoriety for the ‘advanced’ character of its legislative tampering with the unity and indissolubility of the marriage bond. In 1898 New Zealand also began—and with woful results—experimenting along the lines of greater laxity.

In New Zealand, the divorces granted in each year advanced from 25 in 1893 to 46 in 1899. In that year the late Queen gave her assent to the Divorce Bill of 1898. In the following year (1900) the number of divorces granted soared at once to 85. Later returns are not before us, but they will, doubtless, merely serve as a further evidence in support of the common experience, that divorce increases in proportion to the facilities with which it is granted. In the United States some 75,000 husbands and wives are annually put asunder by courts. There, as in these countries, divorces are, of course, almost entirely limited to the non-Catholic population. It is difficult to realise the world of domestic unhappiness, the ruin of home-life, the disintegration of families, that those fearful figures imply. ‘The nation,’ said Cardinal GIBBONS in a recent memorable utterance, ‘is sick, and the malady is all the more dangerous because the patient is unconscious of the disease. There is a social scourge more blighting and destructive of family life than Mormonism. It is fearfully increasing the number of divorce-mills throughout the United States. These mills, like the mills of the gods, are surely but slowly grinding the domestic altars of the nation, and, as if the different States of the Union were not sufficiently accommodating in this respect, South Dakota has the unenviable distinction of granting divorce for the mere asking of it, on the sole condition of a brief sojourn within her borders.’ ‘Tandem polygamy’ is the name aptly given to the re-marriage of divorcees.

The fact is, we are plainly verging back, in divorce legislation, to pagan principles. The so-called ‘right’ of divorce was practically unlimited in pagan Rome. Men of even the type of MÆCENAS continually changed their wives. Women displayed almost equal alacrity in repudiating their husbands. The Catholic Church taught, and teaches, the unity, the sacramental character of marriage, and its indissolubility except by death. The Christian world knew no divorce till the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century. Laxity of ideas regarding the unity and permanency of the marriage bond came with the Reformation. LUTHER permitted PHILIP of Hesse to have two wives at the same time. And the English Reformation had its origin in the Pope’s stern refusal to permit HENRY VIII. to exchange a faithful but faded consort of forty three for the fresh charms of beauty still in its teens. There is, happily, a healthy minority in the Anglican and American Episcopalian Churches who hold firmly, with Catholics, the inviolability of the marriage bond. But of the bulk of the Protestant denominations it must be said, with regret, that they are apparently satisfied to accept the woful condition of things imposed by secularist legislators, with, perhaps, at best, an occasional word of mild and unrepresentative

disapproval. Writing on this identical theme in the ‘Boston S. H. Review,’ Dr. STARBUCK, a learned Protestant divine, says: ‘I do not mean, for I do not believe, that Protestantism, as a whole, inclines to simultaneous polygamy. To the successive polygamy of indeterminate and indeterminable divorce, it is only too sadly plain that it does incline. Nor, as we see, has it been able, in any age, to give an authoritative and controlling voice against simultaneous polygamy.’ The existing legalised system of divorce with re-marriage—to use the late Mr. GLADSTONE’S words—destroys the integrity of the family ‘root and branch.’ A remedy will be in distant sight when the non-Catholic creeds shall have purged the pagan leaven out of their teaching on the nature of the marriage bond. The ultimate remedy must ever be in a return to the old and well-tried Catholic principles. ‘The Roman Catholic Church,’ said the Protestant Bishop BURGESS, of Long Island, in a recent discourse, ‘has stood like a bulwark against divorce. It has stood for the inviolability of the marriage tie and the unity of the home. Because of that, it is in the world to-day one of the greatest forces for the progress of Christianity.’

Notes

A Speculation

Our readers will readily recall the hurricane of hot feeling that blew through New Zealand over the alleged ill-treatment of boys in the Stoke Industrial School, conducted at the time by the Marist Brothers. Fierce stress was laid upon the statement that some of the boys had been flogged—a form of punishment that had been abandoned several years before in the institute. At the Burnham State Industrial School, Christchurch, James Denny, a lad of weak body and intellect, committed suicide a few days ago. At the inquest on Tuesday last, the punishment book of the school was produced. It showed that the boy had been flogged no fewer than four times since January, 1902. We are just now busy speculating as to what particular variety of hysterics some of our so-called ‘liberal’ legislators would fall into if James Denny had been an inmate of a Catholic Industrial School.

Rabbits

There are unamiable failings which, in Pope’s phrase, ‘we first endure, then pity, then embrace.’ Rabbits in these countries appear to be evils of this kind. We hired Pasteur to show us a way to exterminate the pest; we have spent many millions sterling in poison and wire netting for their especial behoof; and now at length we have come to look upon the ‘varmint’ as one of our national assets. In the three years 1899, 1900, and 1901, New Zealand alone exported 16,209,200 frozen bunnies ‘in the skin.’ In addition to these, no fewer than 20,704,549 rabbit-skins were exported during the same period, representing a value of £179,853. The frozen rabbits exported in 1900 and 1901 brought over a quarter million sterling into the country. John Bull has a fine taste in the matter of rabbit, and the plump, green-fed New Zealand variety seems to ‘touch the right spot’ in him every time.

The Songs They Sang

Home papers to hand continue to publish sundry reminiscences, of very varied interest, regarding the late Sir Charles Gavan Duffy. Here is one:—

‘The late Sir Charles Gavan Duffy had many amusing experiences as a Minister of the Crown in Victoria. For instance, when, visiting a Swiss settlement in the Colony, he inspected the local school, and asked the teacher whether the children could sing. ‘Certainly,’ was the reply; whereupon, to his amazement, the Swiss youngsters started in chorus a well-known Hibernian ditty. “We’re Paddies evermore.”’

‘The tale,’ says the Edinburgh ‘Catholic Herald,’ ‘has a recent parallel in the experience of an Irish visitor to South Africa. Calling at one of the orphanages maintained by the Sisters of Nazareth, he was greeted with a school chorus, “Erin, my country.” I sung by the children—including, among others, some colored youngsters, from whom the “touch of the tar-brush” did not drive away the charity of the Sisters of Nazareth.’

RIDE “ANGLO SPECIAL” CYCLES.