

identity of love, hope, interest, and life (cheers). The great contemplative poet of our age has put it thus:—

"Wedded love with loyal Christians,
Lady, is a mystery rare;
Body, heart, and mind together,
Make one being of a pair."

And from this old conception of the marital relations has always been deduced the inference that the kinship of the wife should be held the kinship of the husband; and that the wife's sister should never be the husband's wife. This great principle has, unquestionably, been maintained since the early days of Christianity. It was proclaimed in the Apostolic Constitutions before the Nicene Council. It became a part of that great system of jurisprudence which was generated when the Christian civilization rose on the ruins of the effete and corrupt Imperialism of Rome; based the hope of the world on the strictness and continency of the family relations, and raised up woman from her low estate to soften and purify the rude society around her (hear, hear.) The Theodosian Code condemned the practice which we are asked to approve, and declare the marriage with a deceased wife's sister to be unlawful. And thenceforth for many a century, down even to our own time, the doctrine of that Code was maintained intact by the great doctors and the solemn Councils of the Church. It was the doctrine of Basil and Ambrose and Augustine. It was the doctrine, equally, of the East and West. It was affirmed by all ecclesiastical assemblies in the various countries of Christendom, as they were comprehended within the Church, and it commanded their universal assent. The dispensing power claimed by the Latin Church was, at first, resisted and denied by some of the theologians of the time, on the ground that the prohibition was absolute and mandatory by the law of God. And when that power was established it continued emphatically to witness the impropriety of a practice which was permitted only in the most special circumstances and for the gravest causes, and to prevent worse results (hear, hear.) So it remained at this hour; for although in the Roman Catholic Church, dispensations are obtained, they are got with difficulty, after anxious consideration and because of plainly coercive exigency (hear, hear.) This bill has nothing to do with marriages so allowed. It gives universal licences. The Greek Church, whatever may have been its decadence and short-coming, is a venerable witness to the discipline of Christian antiquity, and in its marriages of this sort are deemed to be incestuous and incapable of being validated at all (hear, hear.) If we pass from the ancient Churches and come down to the Protestant confessions of later days, we find that the unlawfulness of such a marriage was asserted equally by Lutherans and Calvinists in Scotland, in Geneva, and in France. Then the fact relied on by the advocates of this measure, that on the Continent of Europe such marriages are allowed in many countries, comes rather in aid of the argument against them; for, in most of those cases, they can only be legalised by special dispensation. The commissioners who reported on the question in 1818 put the matter thus:—"Protestant states on the Continent of Europe, with the exception of some Cantons in Switzerland, permit these marriages to be solemnised by dispensation or licence, under ecclesiastical or civil authority" (Rep. p. vi.) *Excepto provat regulam.* The need of dispensation shows that the act is disapproved. It may be otherwise, in some parts of Germany and America, to which my noble friend so confidently referred; but the result of the abrogation of the old Christian strictness there is surely such a state as should deter instead of attracting us, and furnish a solemn warning instead of an inducement to imitate. We cannot approve of indiscriminate connections, lightly formed and dissolved as lightly, on the first gust of temper, or the first assault of ungoverned passion, which it is a mockery to dignify by the sacred name of marriage (cheers.) Therefore, my lords, on the issue of authority raised by my noble friend, we have the testimony of the Christian world, from the earliest times, against this innovation; and for my own part, I should require the most potential reasons to overbear that testimony—

Securus judicat orbis terrarum.

We are the "heirs of all the ages," and we should not lightly set aside the teaching which they give (cheers.) If you would maintain a Christian civilization in the world, lift high the ideal of the Christian marriage. Do not abase its dignity—do not dim its brightness. The time is not apt for meddling rudely with that great ideal, or, as you are asked to do to night, with any of the principles which are its bulwarks, and from which it derives its beauty and its strength. Old landmarks are vanishing away. Doctrines of international law and political justice, which long governed the public conscience of mankind, are losing their power. The elements of socialistic anarchy are working through the nations; and we should beware of precipitating the time when laxness as to the marriage bond may help to bring us to the condition of Rome, as described by Gibbon, when "marriages were without affection, and love without delicacy or respect;" and when corruption, in that regard, was one of the worst instruments in the overthrow of the mightiest of empires (cheers.) But, my lords, if all I have said were to be disregarded; if there were no tradition, and no authority, and no religious prohibition to warrant the rejection of the bill, I should still oppose it in the interests of society, and for the maintenance of the dignity and purity of the family life (hear, hear.) I should oppose it because it is calculated to alter the relations of the sexes in a way most serious and most mischievous. The connection of brother and sister is delicate and tender, and so ought to be that of the brother-in-law and the sister-in-law—a connection of love and trust and mutual helpfulness, without the taint of passion or irregular desire (cheers.) And so it will continue if you refuse to make legal marriage possible between them. Temptation is bred of opportunity, and dies when it departs (hear, hear.) Give the prospect of the marital union which this measure validates in a household now peaceful and harmonious, and will the husband remain free from the evil thoughts and wrongful aspirations which he never before indulged, because necessarily incapable of action, fruitless of results? May not the wife find her hours of suffering made more miserable, when she feels herself tortured by jealous thoughts of the probable relations of her husband and her sister begun in her lifetime and in her presence

and to be consummated as soon as the grave has shut her from their sight (cheers)? And for the maiden sister, would she not be precluded, just in proportion to her modest delicacy or womanly fear of misconstruction, from entering a household where she would be a "ministering angel"? And if she did, notwithstanding, enter it, resolved to exhibit the unselfish devotion and heroic self-sacrifice that so enoble the nature and the life of woman, would there be no cause for fear that she might sometimes be distracted by the bewildering and corrupting thought that she may be allowed, by the license of the law to mount, as her nuptial couch, the bed on which that sister lies in her agony awaiting dissolution (cheers)? I repeat if there was no question of religious policy or authoritative teaching in the matter, for social reasons only we should be earnest in our resistance to this bill. And why should we ignore the wisdom of the past, and imperil the hopes of the future by such a measure? Three reasons seem to me to have been suggested in the course of this debate for the adoption of it. It is said that we have no right to limit the freedom of action as to a matter like this, if not absolutely immoral and forbidden. But are those who argue so prepared to press this contention to its consequences? Will they do away with all prohibitions on the score of affinity, and refuse to allow the state to impose any in any circumstances? Will they tell those who urge that polygamy is lawful, and cite the authority of Milton to sustain their opinion, that the state must not interfere, and passion shall have its way? They cannot and they will not. The Legislature must have power to regulate, more or less, the conduct of the people for their moral good. Then it is said that, because so many suffer from the present restriction upon marriage, it ought to be abrogated. A bold argument, involving an evil consequence, if deliberate lawbreakers are to trample down the restraints to which they were bound to have submitted, succeeding all the more by reason of the very flagrancy, and extent of their offences. And, finally it is said that this is a poor man's question. I doubt it much. I am assured by those who know England well that the persistent agitation of it for so many years has been maintained not by the poor but by the rich, who have a personal interest in it, as leading to the condonation of their own illegality. And I do not know that the poor man does not need to be guarded as much from doing what is evil, dangerous to himself and injurious to his family as the rich (hear.) Nor do I know that there is any necessity upon him to act against the law as it exists. In my own country, where such marriages are practically almost unknown, the poor feel no need of them, and no desire to have them (hear, hear.) And this observation brings me back to Ireland, which, I repeat, in my opinion, does not want this measure, and should not be forced to have it. We are, so far, and I thank God for it, saved from the infliction of a Divorce Court such as you have in England. I do not believe that any class or denomination of Irishmen desire such a law, with its train of temptations, evil examples, and inevitable corruptions; and yet I fear that of it this bill, if successful, would surely be the herald. In these matters we, Irishmen, desire to be let alone. We have had much to endure—we have had penury and persecution—we have been cursed by intestine dissension, and disgraced by social outrage; but through all chance and change we have preserved very rich possessions in the sacredness of the Irish hearts and the purity of Irish womanhood, and from these we shall not willingly be parted. Better times have come—material progress carries us onward—civil strife passes away—and equal laws establish the reign of justice. But we will not lose in the happier day these precious things which we have inherited from the struggles of the past. I fear that measures such as this would bring them into peril, and, therefore, I oppose it. I grieve that my conclusion is not in accordance with the views of most of those with whom it is my good fortune to act politically in this house; but I cannot falsify my own convictions, and I am coerced to vote against the bill (cheers).

THE CRIME OF DRUNKENNESS.

A RECENT publication by the Sisters of St. Clare, Kenmare, says:—"If people would only try as earnestly not to commit sin, as they try to make money, or to do their daily work, they would certainly succeed, for God gives His holy grace to those who ask it; but we must keep out of the way of temptation. If a man who is tempted to drink goes into a public-house, he puts himself in the way of temptation, and he has no one to blame but himself if he commits sin.

Listen to what our holy bishops say to us in their pastoral letter:—"How the Church mourns for thousands who in Ireland render fruitless all her constant care for their salvation by their persistence in the awful crime of drunkenness, which is the fertile source of so much sin." Do we not all know how fearfully true this is? Where is the bishop—where is the priest—who has not to mourn over many members of his flock who are lost through this dreadfully dangerous vice? Do we need to tell you of the misery which it causes, of the evils to which it gives rise? Even if drunkenness were not in itself a deadly sin, how many sins it causes. It might be said—it is said frequently—that crime would be almost unknown in Ireland, if it were not for sins of drunkenness. It is the shame of the Irish people that this should continue. Why should we be reproached with such a fault? but what matter what men think of it, let us think of how fearful a crime it is in the sight of God and His holy angels.

God has given man the noble gift of reason, and man of his free-will deprives himself of it. He becomes like a beast; he becomes worse than a beast: for a beast has at least instinct, and never loses that by its own fault. How can a man feel that he is a man, when he degrades himself so deeply?

Surely we have need to make reparation to God for this crime. Let us implore God's pardon for the past; let those who have been guilty of this crime make the best reparation by taking the pledge; let those who have been the means of enticing others to sin remember that they must answer to God at the Last Great Day for the evils they have caused.

Above all, let us take care of the young; let us give them no bad example: and let those who are not tempted to this deadly sin do all in their power, by word and example, to help those who are in danger.