

THE
CHURCHMAN

OCTOBER, 1888.

ART. I.—IMPROVIDENT MARRIAGES OF THE CLERGY.

A DISCUSSION is being carried on with considerable warmth on the subject of clerical improvidence, in the columns of the *Guardian* just now and for some time past, and the subject is worthy of attention. The tone of serious animadversion on the part of well-to-do clergymen reading a homily on abstinence to "poor curates," and the replies of the latter in a tone of irritated asperity, which comes from a sense of disappointment and unjust treatment, running through this correspondence, is not pleasant reading to one who looks on the subject impartially. But such an one may take the liberty of stepping in between the disputants, to give expression to his own opinions, formed independently on this subject of early marriages of the younger clergy, which may not be without its value. That is the object of the present paper, prepared originally by the writer for the benefit of students in a theological college, and written for didactic purposes, and now rewritten in view of the present controversy, and by courtesy of the Editor admitted into the CHURCHMAN to serve a more general purpose.

It is to be clearly understood at the outset that the marriages of ordained persons, as such, are considered throughout this paper both to be lawful and expedient in all cases where it is not *prematurely* entered upon. The married state, except in some peculiar cases where the natural bent or spiritual disposition amounts to unwillingness and even reluctance to marry, and where neither rules or counsels of perfection are necessary and discussion superfluous, is the most natural state, and matrimony is preferable to celibacy when the external conditions are favourable. We approach this subject, therefore, without any endeavour to dislodge radical prejudices in disfavour of the

married state, such as may exist in the mind of quasi-misogonists or misogamists on principle. It is only with improvident marriages that we are here concerned, and such which to all appearances are likely to become that. For the same reason it would be out of place to make an *ex parte* statement in favour of these in showing off, as some have done—fortifying their position by a beautiful passage taken from Jeremy Taylor—the poetical charms of connubial bliss, the sympathetic union of kindred souls, and the softening influences of female companionship. All this may be true as a picture of domestic happiness; but it is no argument in favour of leaving butchers' and bakers' bills unpaid, though the substantial guarantees of at least bodily comfort, as one branch of home-life, depend on a well-sustained credit with these and similar providers of home comforts. We must confine ourselves to the practical side of the question, however prosaic it may seem: prose has its just claims as well as poetry. We will consider, then, the *economic, social, and religious* aspects of this matrimonial controversy.

(i.) Taking first the economic standpoint, we are immediately confronted by the fact that a number of benevolent societies exist whose object is the relief of poor clergymen and their families—apart from special appeals, often harrowing in their details, appearing from time to time in the religious press—as well as the gratuitous, or partially gratuitous, education of their children. This is proof positive that some marriages of an improvident nature have been contracted in *early* life, sufficient in number to call such institutions into existence, for it may be assumed that clergymen in a later stage of their intellectual, moral, and spiritual development have not been thus rash and imprudent. The number of cases where unforeseen losses and a sudden collapse in well-founded expectations have driven them, to appeal to the charitable, is too small to call into requisition a machinery of relief such as we allude to here. Now, imprudent as some of these marriages have proved, we are very far from commending prudential marriages, contracted with a basely calculating spirit, which counts up all the chances of temporal advancement, and in meditating on matrimony puts the marriage service on one side and the multiplication table on the other. With us this is not a money question, but a question of morality; it is the ethical aspect rather of an economic question, and from this point of view it was first approached by the present writer in the course of his economic and social studies. Is it right, he asked himself, for a man, still less for a clergyman, to fix and determine for better or for worse the probable future existence of beings yet unborn by

rushing heedlessly into the married state? Providence will provide is the consolation of some pious believer in the Divine connivance at thoughtless precipitancy—we will not say thoughtless self-indulgence. The true student of the ways of God with men and the divinely appointed laws of social life knows better. Practical experience teaches that men have to bear the consequences of their ill-considered actions sometimes for life. Early improvidence becomes the source of gnawing cares and anxieties at a later stage. According to the theory of Malthus, who was himself a clergyman, there is no room at the banquet of nature for the offspring of parents who have merely followed their “natural instinct,” having married without sufficiency of means. And this is one of the ways in which the sins of the parents are visited on the children. The desire to found a home is natural enough, but, like other natural inclinations, it demands the exercise of self-control and self-restraint. A young curate may disregard economic considerations. The bitter consequences of this inconsiderate, false step on his part—and *her* part, who becomes a consenting party but too willingly—are often discomfort and sometimes distress in the newly-founded homestead, and with it the absence of peace, quiet, and contentment depending on relative competency, without which there can be no really happy home. It is a notorious fact that many clergymen and their families do literally starve, requiring the well-worn and all but worn-out clothes of their more prosperous brethren to cover their own nakedness. Now, clerical pauperism, like that of other people, tends to dependency and degradation, loss of dignity in character, and that want of consideration from others which above all things ought to be avoided by those who are in the position of public teachers. Early marriages nowadays, when a certain amount of social comity is required in the social position occupied by the clergy, are, therefore, to be “enterprised” only when on economic principles it is permissible and feasible so to do.¹

¹ We have not entered into the financial aspect of the question above from what may be called the professional standpoint. Much might be said to point out the duty of the laity to make better provision for the increasing number of clergymen rendered imperative by the masses in large towns. Mr. Armfield and Mr. Humble in former papers, which have appeared in *THE CHURCHMAN*, have put the case strongly, to show how with this increased demand for curates without a proportionate increase of benefices, the rate of promotion has been considerably retarded of late years, and from this we might point out the incongruity and injustice of asking thousands of clergymen thus doomed to remain curates for life to remain single, too,—especially as rectors with small incomes are scarcely better off than curates. But it is not our purpose here to enter into the question of clerical incomes and clerical poverty, except so far as it touches the question: What is the duty of clergymen with small

(ii.) If it be wrong, to use the words of a character in "Shirley," a well-known story written by a clergyman's daughter, "for two beggarly fools agreeing to unite their indigence by some phantastic tie of feeling," it is equally inexcusable, apart from pecuniary considerations, for clergymen on social grounds and with a due consideration to their social duties, to depress the status in society now happily occupied by the clergy of the Church of England, unique in its kind, and as such affording special facilities of Christian usefulness not enjoyed by the national ministry of other countries. Standing, moreover, as the clergy in England do socially, midway between rich and poor, they are, or ought to be, examples of Christian self-denial to both. The advice, in laconic phrase *don't*, was administered by *Punch*, the recognised moral and social satirist in this country, a few years ago, to laymen of position intending to marry, because the demands made on men of position in the present day are so much greater than they used to be, in proportion to their income. And it is a well-known fact, often lamented by the possessors of marriageable daughters, that young laymen possessed of tolerably good fortunes follow this bit of advice and postpone marriage *sine die*. In the case of the labouring poor, J. S. Mill and other Economists are never weary in showing that *their* wretched condition and inability to raise themselves from the low level of sordid dependence and grovelling poverty is mainly owing to imprudent early marriages. Now, the young clergyman who has to battle against similar difficulties ought himself to be a pattern in this matter, and ought to be specially prudent in his choice between the married and the single state, not only with a view of avoiding personal inconveniences to himself and obstacles to the happy and unconstrained performance of his official duties, but also with a view to be a living example of self-restraint to those around him, both rich and poor. Being a clergyman, he has frequent opportunities of getting married. He is tempted to take the fatal step by young ladies and middle-aged spinsters who idolize "the cloth." The

incomes in relation to marriage, things being what they are? Until better provision is made for them it is a serious matter to incur the responsibility of founding a home without a sufficiency of means in maintaining it.

At the same time it is an equally serious question for moneyed laymen to ask themselves whether this state of things is what it ought to be, and whether it is not their duty to supplement, out of their own liberality, the miserably small incomes of the clergy, who, whether beneficed or otherwise, are the only body of men who are precluded by their peculiar position from a fair share in the increased wealth and prosperity of the country, whilst their social status renders them liable to spend more in proportion.

feminine love for uniform gives preference to the young officer in the Church militant, enamoured as often by the order to which he belongs as the individual qualities of the person, real or imagined. It is, therefore, a matter of considerable difficulty to use sufficient caution so as not to take the hasty, irrevocable step, more especially in the case of those young curates who are of a naturally affectionate temperament or specially susceptible to the exhibition of favour on the part of the fair sex, who, like the chaplain in Wordsworth's "Excursion" possess, if they possess nothing else :

Sensibility to love,
Ambition to attempt, and skill to win.

Men in love, or in the incipient stages of it, have such plausible arguments to allure them as these, that early engagements are a great safeguard, that the prospect of early marriage acts as an incentive to "get on in the Church," to use the phraseology of those concerned. That a clergyman should seek in the early engagement his main safeguard to keep him out of mischief argues a very unsatisfactory state of mind and heart in a man taking on himself so sacred a profession. So, too, the ambition of the man whose efforts require such a spur as the hope of an early settlement in life is scarcely the best specimen of a true follower of the Apostles. But this only by the way. Early engagements, with their alternating feelings of fear and hope, and early marriages, with their but too early cares and difficulties in providing the means of a decent livelihood, have a distracting and disturbing influence on the mind, turning it away from what should be its main aims, and preventing the young clergyman from concentrating the best of his powers at this early stage of his ministerial career on the important work he has undertaken. The fact that in advertisements for curates the expression occurs frequently, "without family," points to the reluctance of rectors and vicars to work with curates accompanied by "impediments" and "incumbrances." It is possible that the wives of rectors and curates are generally too eager, like the mythical wives of the Ancient Britons, to become actively engaged in the conflicts of their militating husbands, or apt to endanger cordial co-operation where it exists. The fact is, that rectors and vicars are slow believers in the utility of the better-halves of their clerical subordinates, and regard them for one reason or another as a hindrance rather than a help in the work. Whatever may be the reason or unreason of this opinion, it prevails, and the unmarried in most cases are preferred, whilst the married do not invariably obtain preferment. This is, therefore, another reason in favour of waiting, especially as in so doing the young curate, being unmarried and unhampered, maintains a position of greater independence in relation to his superior.

(iii.) We come now to the last, and the most important, the religious point of view. Here the question resolves itself into this: How far may the wife become a coadjutor in spiritual work, and how does this consideration act as a counterbalance to the *prima facie* objection to marriage when means are barely sufficient? For a helpful wife in the school and the parish counts for much, and therefore not a little stress is laid on this point by those correspondents in the *Guardian* who are in favour of early marriages, though undesirable for social and economic reasons. No universal rule can be laid down here. Each case must be judged on its own merits, according to circumstances and conditions peculiar to itself. All reasons, pro and contra, have to be weighed impartially, and that step taken at last towards which the balance tends after carefully, and we may add prayerfully, looking at the question from all sides. We hear it often said that "Marriages are made in heaven," as an excuse for ill-assorted marriages from want of conscientious forethought and the due exercise of private judgment. There ought to be no such shifting of responsibilities. We have heard it said, on the other hand, "There are as many Lucifer matches," a flippant phrase, no doubt, but conveying a substantial verity, that evil and good are mixed up in marriages undertaken from mistaken motives and where unhallowed influences are at work. But really here, as in other matters, higher influences, Divine or demonic, are invoked to explain and excuse facts resulting from purely human volition or want of power of will, when the exercise or suspended action of the common understanding are at fault. In such an important matter, waiting on Providence is well enough if it means patiently waiting till Providence paves the way; but anticipating Providence by prematurely entering into the married state, and leaving it to Providence to register the hasty step by providing for the family afterwards, is a tempting of Providence for which there is no excuse. The wife may be a good adjutant, but where the general has not the sinews of war—to what service is the best of adjutants in such a case? Much here must be left to individual discretion, but every "discreet minister" must be fully assured in his own mind whether marriage will make him a better or worse officer in the Church he serves. The Church of Rome is not wanting in sagacity, whatever its defects may be in other respects, and the Church of Rome finds that the efficiency of her clergy is not impaired by the fact that they have no family ties, though female influence is exercised in more than one direction. On the other hand, the reduction of the whole body, or even a considerable portion of it, into a priestly caste of this kind hinders them from becoming proper citizens of the commonwealth and complete members

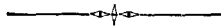
of the body politic, though it makes them to all intents and purposes good ecclesiastical tools. There is here, as in other cases, a safe middle course between extremes, that of temporary and voluntary abstinence from marriage until the circumstances or the necessities of the clergyman's position make marriage desirable; to defer marriage until, with the maturity of early manhood and with the corresponding ripening of the judgment, promotion comes and the power of making a right choice of one who shall be a help-mate in sacred things and the bright angel of the household. As in some Continental countries until quite lately, and in some communes still, no young man during the first three years of military service could marry without State authority, or settle in a village without showing that he was possessed of the necessary means of founding a home of his own, so as to prevent his family from becoming a charge to the community, so in the Church militant the younger officers should remain single during some years of probation, and before choosing a partner for life they should be able to give some security of being able to maintain a family with some power of redeeming "those hostages to fortune," to give which, Lord Bacon assures us, is the effect of peopling the world with human beings. Under such conditions the gain in sympathy and gentle influence on the part of the wife, and the widening of the sympathies of the husband in family life, are invaluable as aids in supplementing the manly character in the model minister by the womanly graces of the minister's wife.

St. Paul prefers, under certain temporary and abnormal conditions, the unmarried state altogether. Under entirely different circumstances, the married state may be preferable in furthering the cause of religious progress in the world, and, in so doing, also advancing the individual and social well-being of those immediately concerned. Where there are ample, or at least sufficient, means, or disposition and surroundings, all calling for female companionship and co-operation; where the work, carried on single-handed, would prove less efficient; there the duty of following the voice of reason and sentiment, conscience and convenience is plain enough: let them marry. In many such instances, feminine influence is a power much needed. Where the instinctive vision and delicate monitions of a refined tact, as in the case of Pilate's wife, foresee dangers ahead which the denser view of masculine judgment, warped by the disturbing actualities of life pressing on all sides, would overlook, or obstinately ignore, there the faithful *alter ego* of the hard-working clergymen often proves a blessing.

Of this we may be sure, that where young men thus, for a

time, prefer the single state to marriage, from a conscientious regard to the law of self-denial, there the reward will come in the greater calm of a happy-married life later on; nor will such be troubled much by vain regrets if the boon is denied: theirs has been a noble discipline, which bears the fruits of peace, that follow all acts of self-conquest. On the other hand, where the married state has been entered into at an earlier period from high motives, under a sense of duty and without violation of the Divine laws, economic or social, and without religious compunction as to the step taken, there the evil results of which we have spoken above, arising from an imprudent following of early inclinations, are not likely to follow. But in all cases where selfish motives and inconsiderate wilfulness have led to improvident marriages, individual pains and penalties, social inconveniences, and ministerial inefficiency will follow as a matter of course, with all their attendant baleful consequences, extending far beyond the circle of those immediately concerned, and perhaps influencing for evil the life and conduct of those who are yet to follow through many generations.

M. KAUFMANN.



ART. II.—THREE EXEGETICAL QUESTIONS ON PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

I.—MEANING OF ἀνεπαίσχυτος IN 2 TIM. II. 15.

A GREAT deal has been done of late in the department of exegesis in the New Testament, but more yet remains to be done. Even the simple verification and closer examination of a reference, which has for a longer or shorter time gone the round of editors and commentators, will sometimes furnish us with an unexpected and gratifying result. This is actually the case with regard to the first of the questions, which I propose to consider in the following pages, viz., the true meaning of ἀνεπαίσχυτος in 2 Tim. ii. 15.

Here—adopting the rendering of the unjustly traduced Revised Version—Paul urges Timothy to “give diligence to present himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (ἐργάτην ἀνεπαίσχυτον). The Vulgate translates ἀνεπαίσχυτος by *inconfusibilis*, and the English fairly expresses the Latin, though I think it will be found that it is far from expressing the point of the original Greek.

Let us first consider the sense or senses of the verb ἐπαίσχυνομαι in the New Testament, where it occurs ten times.