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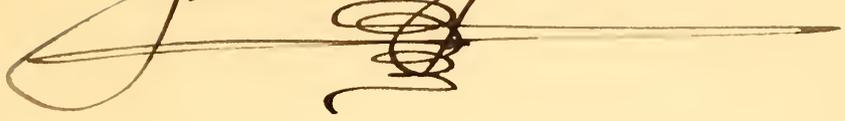
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Re. John B. Grant.
St. Sulpice,

THE FAMILY. *Paris*

1882

France

BY

REV. AUGUSTE RICHE.

Priest of St. Sulpice.

(*This book is out of print*)

TRANSLATED BY MRS. J. SADLIER.

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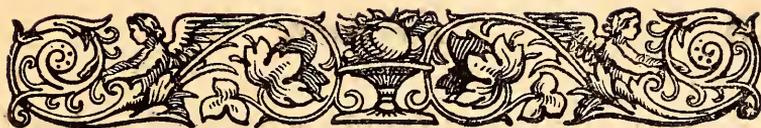
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PREFACE.

THE most widely spread objection against Catholicity in our day is that it is no longer in accordance with the actual condition of society. This is a prejudice ; but it has been represented in a manner so insidious that it has actually become a conviction in very many minds.

To combat this prejudice, and to

answer this objection completely, it is necessary, in the first place, to study Christianity historically, in its relations with society in past ages ; then to observe it in its relations with the society of the present day, and afterwards deduce what society would, at least probably, become in the future without Christianity.

This threefold study has long engaged the attention of the Abbé Riche. In a journey which he made into Italy he made known to the Holy Father the intention he had of publishing a book on this subject, and, his Holiness having kindly encouraged him to do so, he went to work.

It seemed to him, in the first place, that it would be useful to confront Christianity with pagan antiquity in each of his studies. With that object in view he began by examining what society was in the pagan world in regard to the particular question which engaged his attention. He afterwards showed what Jesus Christ did for it by His doctrine, His example, and His institutions. In the third place, he studied society in its present state, and demonstrated all that it still retains of Christianity, notwithstanding the too real decline of faith. Then, finally, he showed the ruin which the destruction of Catho-

licity would entail by the complete and general denial of the divinity of Christ.

The great questions studied in this order of ideas are: dogma, worship—with a particular study on the worship of the Virgin Mary and on virginity—man, the family, civil society or the state, and religious society or the Church. Finally, too, studies on the religious orders and Christian art complete the plan.

In his general introduction the author characterizes in two words the spirit of his work. "It is a work of faith," he says, "and it is also a work of love." Such are, in

fact, the two principles which guided him in his task, and such is, indeed, the general character of his book.

One thing was, however, to be regretted, namely, that this work was not in all respects adapted to every reader. Not that questions were treated in it under a form inaccessible to certain classes of readers. Not so, for, lofty though they be, the author made it a point to present them with a clearness and simplicity intelligible to all; but the whole of this work forms an octavo volume, and there are few readers for such works in the times wherein we live. And then, large books cost

dear, and there is little money in small purses.

Abbé Riche, therefore, decided on publishing separately, and at a very moderate price, the principal studies of his book—amongst others, that of the family—and he did so with a view to their circulation by means of committees, libraries, and all Catholic institutions of charity and of propagation.

The Holy Father informed Abbé Riche by a Brief that “he accepted with gratitude the dedication of his book, and considered the work very opportune and of the greatest utility.”

This high testimony was followed

by that of H. E. Cardinal Donnet, Archbishop of Bordeaux, who wrote as follows to the author :

“REVEREND SIR :

“ Your book on ‘ Catholicity considered in its relations with Society ’ is a remarkable progression of ideas which leads to a conclusive demonstration. It is clear, attractive, worthy of its subject. It fixes the uncertainty of semi-believers, overthrows the prejudices of prejudiced men, and defeats the attacks of our enemies, however insidious they may be.

“ Its inspiration, full of faith and charity, springs from the benedic-

tion of the beloved and holy Pontiff Pius IX., to whom you made known your pious project. Of its success there could be no doubt from the moment his paternal goodness accepted the patronage of it.

“ You have raised, Reverend Sir, to our holy religion a fine monument, which has its base in the sublime dogma she teaches ; its majestic proportions, in the worship in spirit and in truth which she consecrates to the glory of God ; its admirable interior dispositions, in the full satisfaction she gives to all the wants of man, the family, and society ; its capital, in fine, in the riches of her sacraments, the source of consola-

tion and grace for the present, the pledge of hope and of glory for the future.

“ How charming, how divine, then, is Catholicity, thus studied, thus applied to the various conditions of human life ! With what clearness of perception, what unction, and often with what eloquence you have penetrated the souls of your readers with these great truths !

“ How shall I acknowledge the compliment you pay me in sending me such a work ? By praise ? It would be far beneath what is due to you. By congratulations ? My pen refuses to write them. I choose, rather, penetrating your intentions,

to offer to God the expression of my gratitude, and thank Him for this so eloquent work of priestly zeal.

“FERDINAND CARDINAL DONNET,
“*Archbishop of Bordeaux.*”

Almost at the same time Bishop Dupanloup wrote to Abbé Riche:

“It is a grand and beautiful subject that you have broached in this work, and one of the most important that can be treated at the present day. What I have so far been able to read of it announces a grave and lofty work, which will, I doubt not, do real good, and dispel more

than one sad misconception, more than one prejudice. I hope, Reverend Sir, that God will bless your efforts, and that this book will do honor to the Church and enlighten souls."

In another letter, written to the author only a few days after the publication of his book, Monseigneur Plantier, Bishop of Nîmes, thus summed up his appreciation of it :

" REVEREND SIR :

" It is a very seasonable question that you have made the object of your book. Many others in our time have broached it before you ;

but they have only treated it partially and under limited aspects, whilst you have embraced it entire and on a scale that takes in everything. With so vast a programme it required the art of condensing, the secret of which you have happily discovered. Under the various headings which I have glanced over, you have clearly and soberly summed up the principles of doctrine, the teachings of history, the solutions of controversy. To those who have studied, your volume brings back innumerable recollections; to those who have not read, it will teach many things. Both one and the other will read it with

the greater profit that they will read it with pleasure, because you have succeeded in being brief without being dry.

“The passages you have borrowed from my ‘Conferences’ surprise me by the honor you have done them. They are, as it were, a stray piece of stone in an edifice of marble.

“✠ HENRY,

“*Bishop of Nîmes.*”





THE FAMILY.

HOWEVER perfect he is supposed to be, Man is, nevertheless, not complete whilst he possesses only the qualities and the virtues of personal life. On the threshold of life he finds himself in the family, and that situation creates for him duties and rights no less important than those of the individual. In fact, the family is, as it were, the heart of the great social body. It is it that forms, maintains,

and vivifies each particular individual; and that work of individual preparation produces in the body of society a general result which constitutes its greatness and its strength.

The family is composed of three elements: the father, the mother, and the child. It is on the particular condition of each, and their mutual and reciprocal relations, that its morality, the happiness of its members, and the advantages they procure for society depend. We are going, then, to examine, under these different relations, first, what was the state of the family in the ancient world; secondly, what was

the regeneration produced by Jesus Christ ; thirdly, what is the actual position of the family under the influence of Christianity ; and fourthly, what it would inevitably become in the destruction of Christianity by the negation of the divinity of Jesus Christ.





THE
FAMILY BEFORE JESUS CHRIST.
MARRIAGE IN PAGAN ANTIQUITY.

IN order to form to ourselves a just idea of the family before Christianity, it is always in Roman civilization, and at its best epoch, that we shall study it. Let us see, therefore, what marriage then was, and in what respective conditions father, mother, and child lived.

There were at that period, in usage as well as in law, two sorts of

marriages, the patrician and the plebeian marriage. Originally the former was almost always made by *confarreatio*; that is to say, by a religious ceremony in which was offered *far*, or flour bread, which was intended to give to the union of the spouses a character of duration and stability. The latter, which was the more common, and became subsequently almost the only mode by which spouses were legally united, was the marriage by *coemptio*, that is to say, a regular purchase. By this marriage the husband bought the wife, who, legally speaking, became his slave. She was sold by her father, or guardian, in presence

of five witnesses. It is true that this sale was rather symbolical than real, since the price of the woman sold was only an *as*, one of the smallest Roman coins; but its effects were none the less positive, for the husband thereby acquired over his wife a complete right of ownership. In fact, he could abandon her as he had acquired her, and he had even the right to lend her, precisely like a piece of household furniture the use of which one would give up for a time. With that power and those rights the most moderate use the man could make of them was simply to repudiate his wife. But in that case she would not recover

her liberty. She only returned to her father's tutelage or that of her nearest relation.

As to slaves, we have elsewhere said that there was no marriage for them. Their union was not recognized, and, the legislator regarding it only as the transitory and fortuitous coupling of animals, the fruit thereof naturally reverted to the master of their person.

It is easy to understand that marriage established on these bases offered no solid security to society for the propagation and maintenance of families; and, in fact, towards the latter times of the republic the citizens became so dis-

gusted with it, and the population became thereby so seriously imperilled, that a whole system of legislation was found necessary in order to encourage marriage and punish celibacy. Such was the origin of the *Pappian* laws, which held a considerable place in Roman legislation till the reform of morals introduced by Christianity rendered them useless.

Another cause of the dissolution of the family in ancient times was divorce. In the thought of the legislators themselves marriage was only considered as an association which was to last as long as the parties agreed together. It was

thought that, where a good understanding no longer existed, there was no longer any possible companionship; and hence it was concluded that to prevent this evil it was requisite that a marriage which had become nothing more than a disunion might be legally dissolved. These ideas had so prevailed that divorce and polygamy were universally authorized by legislation among the different nations of antiquity. The Indians, the Thracians, the Persians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, had admitted them into their moral code; and in the latter times of the republic and the empire the Romans had carried divorce to

the most shameful lengths of immorality and corruption.

Divorce must not be confounded with Repudiation. The former was the dissolution of the patrician marriage, and the latter was that of the plebeian marriage. Divorce was an act between free persons equal in rights, and it might be demanded by one or the other of the parties. Repudiation was an act of master to slave, and it never came but from the master—that is to say, from the husband. Divorce recalled by its very name the independence of those who had a right to have recourse to it. It signified separation of the parties, who went

each their own way in consequence of the incompatibility of their temper or of their habits. This separation had to be established and perfected in a manner as authentic as the marriage itself. Hence the intervention of the ministers of religion was again necessary, because they alone could unbind what they had bound together, and that *confarreatio* had to be destroyed by *diffarreatio*. As to the marriage by coemption, which was that of the great majority, its annulment was extremely simple. Concluded in the form of a sale, it was nullified by a sale, or, rather, by a purchase. The wife had been, as the juriscon-

sults said, *mancipated*; that is to say, bought by her father or her guardian. He who had bought her—her husband—*mancipated* her in turn as a slave whom he no longer wanted. Only it was those who had first sold her who bought her back; or, to speak more exactly, she was given back to them as she had been purchased—by a sham sale.

Divorce was a serious act, and it necessarily had, in the limits of the law, an irrevocable character. But it was not so with repudiation. In that case it was a master who did what he would with his slave. He took her, he left her, and no one

had a right to call him to account for his caprices. For the rest, incompatibility of temper and barrenness were, with adultery, the principal causes of repudiation and of divorce, or, at least, they were those that were formally pleaded in such separations.

So much being said, it must be remarked that divorce no more than repudiation prevented a wife from marrying again as soon as she wished. When morals had reached the last degree of corruption, this right was so abused that separations appeared as an inevitable and quite natural consequence of marriage. Under the reign of the emperors

there were many women of the first families of Rome who might, so to say, have counted their years not by the number of the consuls, but by that of their husbands. It had come to the point that wives had also acquired the right of divorcing, even in the absence of their husbands; and it happened to more than one husband, on returning home after a long journey, to find in his house only the wife of another. Evidently, as Martial observed, the woman who married so many times and so easily was not married: she was an adulteress by law. That which set the plebeians, moreover, quite at their ease in this

regard was the conduct of the patricians and of the emperors themselves. When Augustus, for example, was seen to put away his first wife, to take from Tiberius Nero his wife, who was on the point of becoming a mother; when men like Mæcenas, Cicero, and other grave personages, were subsequently seen to act in this manner with the same facility, people thought themselves sufficiently authorized to walk in their footsteps. Hence the slightest motives really sufficed to bring about a separation between spouses. Advanced age, some slight illness, a passing infirmity, or simply satiety, was enough

to cause divorce or repudiation. Now, with such principles and such monstrous abuses, it is easy to infer to what degree of depravity morals must have fallen. There was no more marriage, and consequently no more family. It was a universal debauch.

CONDITION OF THE WOMAN IN THE
PAGAN FAMILY.

WHAT we have hitherto said of the state of the woman in marriage may already give us an idea of her abasement and degradation; but all is not yet told. I know not whether it is to be attributed to the primitive traditions, which blamed the

woman as the cause of the original fall; but certain it is that pagan antiquity never considered woman as the equal of man, and that it even placed her in a degree of inferiority that is only explained by a deeply-rooted contempt. "The souls of men shall be punished in the second generation by passing into the body of a woman," said Plato, "and in the third by passing into that of a brute."

According to these ideas it is not surprising to find woman everywhere and always under the tutelage of man. Before her marriage, in the family, she was the property of her father, and consequently un-

der a tutelage which no majority destroyed; and after her marriage that tutelage continued without anywise changing her dependence. In fact, whether she was married, as a patrician, by confarreation, taking the title of matron, and then she was freed personally from her husband only by remaining under the tutelage of her father or grandfather; or she became subject to her husband, and then it was the latter who became not only her tutor or guardian, but her absolute master. The wife had, however, the title of *mother of family*, even when she had no children; but that title merely signified that she was

the mother of the slaves of the house. In fact as in law, she was never mistress of herself. In relation to her husband she had only the rank of a daughter, and when she became a mother it was only to remain the sister, *consanguinea*, of her own children. For the rest, in one case as in the other, she was deprived of the right of property, or at least possessed it only in the way of a child; for her goods were always under the guardianship of her husband or her father.

This inexorable subjection of the woman to the man ceased not even at the death of the husband. Before his death the latter had a right

to give his wife a tutor of his own choice; and when he did not do so the widow fell back again, quite naturally, under the guardianship of her father, or her nearest male relative, as before her marriage.

It is needless to add that, with such usages and under such legislation, the mother had no authority over her own children. We have already said that she shared all their dependence, in relation to those under whose guardianship she lived, and consequently all right was denied her.

In fine, the woman passed her whole life in the slavery of man. The property of her father before

her marriage, the property of her husband after her marriage, she became again, in her widowhood, the property of her nearest relative, or of a tutor chosen by her husband; that is to say, she passed from hand to hand, like any other property, and she could belong to all without ever belonging to herself.

In this state of personal abasement, it is easy to understand that the wife would seek some desperate indemnity; and, as she found no other compensation within her reach than that of sensual pleasure, it was not surprising that she should rush into it with avidity. This was

precisely what happened. Luxury when it was possible, refinement in all voluptuousness, these became the grand business of life with the woman of civilized antiquity. And, as voluptuousness is selfish, even to cruelty, it came to pass that the woman, the slave of her husband or her tutor, took a cruel pleasure in exercising her tyranny over the slaves who were subject to her.

Even at this period of effeminacy, of sensuality, and of luxury, in which we live, it is difficult to figure to ourselves how far excesses of this kind were carried in the world of pagan women. We shall not attempt to remove the veil of history that hides

so much corruption. The heart heaves with disgust in presence of those revolting monstrosities. But how can we believe the voluptuousness of the pagan woman, her cruelty to her slaves, even on the testimony of the most reliable historians?

In the time of the Roman republic a law had been passed forbidding women garments of divers colors, chariots, and games; but this law *Oppia* was obliged to yield to the ever increasing demands of the matrons, and it was abolished twenty years after its promulgation. Then, as if to indemnify themselves, the women gave themselves up to

the most frantic excesses of luxury. A free woman devoted her whole time to dress, banquets, and diversions; and she had then a whole crowd of slaves to wait upon her. There were, especially, *cosmetists*, whose business it was to prepare and apply pastes, ointments, and perfumes of every kind to hide natural defects and give some artificial beauty. Besides these there were *ornamenters* whose functions were the arranging of their mistresses in their rich garments. Finally, the patrician lady had at her command a whole troop of slaves, whose duty it was to drive her chariot, to carry her, to follow and

to precede her, and to run any and every where at the slightest sign of her will or her caprice.

It was said proverbially that the Roman ladies were a year at their toilet. Hence they coquettishly admitted their friends during the labor of certain details of their toilet. Then woe to the giddy or awkward slaves who did not immediately comply with the wishes of their mistress! A prompt and terrible punishment instantly reminded them of all that was required of them. The patrician had no hesitation in flinging at their head whatever came to her hand. She even went so far as to throw her-

self upon them and strike them, pulling their hair, and tearing their face with her nails. Some were seen to carry their fury still farther, for they armed themselves with long needles, wherewith they cruelly pricked their victims till the blood came. There were women who required that their slaves should wait on them naked to the waist, so as to chastise them the more easily. Many even carried cruelty so far as to have public executioners brought to their house to lash with whips and leathern thongs the body of these poor servants, whom they caused to be bound to a post or hung up by the hair; and

that under their own eyes, and whilst they were having themselves scented with the most delicious perfumes. It was only when the executioner's strength began to fail that the matron thought of putting an end to the torments of her victims. She then drove them from her presence.

This is what was done in Rome under the emperors, publicly and without any one raising his voice to denounce such infamous conduct. It is the historians and satirists of the period who have transmitted them to us; but from the manner in which they relate them it is easy to infer that they considered them only as mere exaggerations. Con-

science had nothing to do in the matter, nor justice neither. It was a caprice that had passed into the usages of a people who had many others more monstrous.

With all these refinements of luxury and of cruelty, woman found herself degraded so low that she strove to raise herself, exteriorly, by jewels of the greatest price. Patri-
cian ladies were covered with gold; strings of emeralds and all sorts of precious stones and jewels hung from their neck, and were wound around their waist; their hands were loaded with rings enriched with precious stones; and on their arms, as well as their wrists, they

wore golden bracelets fashioned like serpents, weighing as much as from six to ten Roman pounds.

It was, nevertheless, in vain that woman sought to raise herself from her degradation. She was so despised by public opinion that debauchery itself had become disgusted with the refinement of her voluptuousness. Yes, she who was created to be the companion of man was no longer thought worthy of being even the sport of his passions. And so it came to pass that man himself came to prostitute himself in her place to unnatural abominations, which were at length considered as nowise disgraceful, so common had they become.



CONDITION OF THE CHILD
IN THE
PAGAN FAMILY.



Y the condition of the woman in the pagan family it is easy to imagine what must have been the fate of the child. It was another slave, over whom the head of the family exercised the right of full ownership.

In Rome, in the best days of her civilization, every child immediately after its birth was laid on the ground at its father's feet. If the

latter took it up, it was understood that he recognized it and consented to preserve its life. But if, on the contrary, he left it at his feet, it was that he abandoned it. They then took it and left it exposed in some public place, without troubling themselves any more about it. Thus deserted, the unfortunate creature had little chance of any other fate than to die of cold or hunger, or be devoured by dogs. Its lot was sometimes worse still, for enterprising beggars had a right to take possession of it, and mutilate it, in order to obtain alms from public commiseration.

In the best conditions of family

life the child so remained the property of his father that the latter was nowise accountable to the law for the use he made of him. In fact, the paternal right which Romulus had rendered common to the patricians and plebeians, permitted fathers to put their children in prison, to have them beaten with rods, to load them with irons, to send them to the country to till the soil, to sell them as slaves, and also to have them put to death, even though they had occupied the very highest positions, and had rendered the most signal services to the republic.

We may add that this absolute

power of the father over his child was not exclusively proper to the Romans. It was admitted in the legislation of all nations; and it was barely a few philosophers who gave utterance to some equivocal protests, which no one heeded in the affairs of life. "As to the Roman legislators in particular," says Sextus Empiricus, "they had rendered the condition of children absolutely like to that of the slaves; and fathers were masters of their goods, until they had emancipated them, in the same way that they emancipated their slaves."

In the time of the emperors, it is true, the rigor of the ancient legis-

lation was softened by some laws restrictive of parental authority; but these new laws were rather an appeal to paternal pity than a real repression, since they were ratified by no fixed penalty. To magistrates only did it belong to pronounce on grave crimes; but as there was here question of an abuse of power tolerated by past ages, and which was still found in accordance with the ideas of the time, people easily shut their eyes, and so it was that paternal authority might become with impunity the most cruel of tyrannies.

Even under the sway of the most beneficent laws in favor of children

the father had still the right to sell his new-born child in a case of necessity, of which he was the principal judge; and, if he found no purchaser, there was nothing to prevent him from getting rid of it by exposing it in some lonely place.

What adds still more to the despotism of this abuse of paternal authority is the extension the law gave, as to the persons who were subject to it. In fact, this authority extended not only to all the children born of an actual marriage, together with adopted children and wards, but it applied also to the children or grandchildren who were born of the marriage of sons or

grandsons. It reached even to daughters-in-law, married or emancipated, who thus became, as it were, the daughters of their husbands, and thereby remained, so to say, the grand-daughters of their fathers-in-law. The law could not recognize the authority of a son in a family over his wife and children, because, it said, he should be master of himself to exercise power over another; and that he was not.

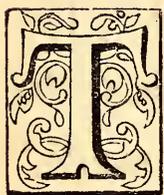
In short, the pagan marriage was, therefore, only a union by which the woman passed into the tutelage of a husband when she did not remain under that of her father. With the full liberty of divorce, this

union had no other security for stability than the caprice of the married couple. Thence came a fearful corruption of morals, and trouble and confusion in families. In these conditions, established or tolerated by the laws, the woman and the child were veritable slaves, subject, body and goods, to the despotism of the husband or father. In a word, women and children were, as slaves, the free property of a master; and the latter, husband or father as he might be, could use and abuse them as he would the furniture of his house. Such was the family in antiquity, when Jesus Christ appeared on earth.



THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE.



THE dissolution of the family as well as the servitude of the woman and the child under the despotism of the man, came, above all, from the vices and abuses introduced into the pagan marriage. There it was, then, that the work of restoration was to commence. That is what Jesus Christ did. To that end he placed marriage under the security of three great principles, which He Himself

consecrated by His authority, namely, sanctity, unity, and indissolubility.

Sanctity first. Pagan antiquity had itself felt the need of placing under the protection of religion the union of man and woman, and had made it a religious ceremony. Jesus Christ did something more: He made it a sacrament. "Husbands," wrote one of His apostles to the Ephesians, "love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church. He who loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth it and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the Church: because we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His

bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church.”*

As far as possible, then, the union of the married pair should be perfect, like that of Christ with the Church; and marriage is a true sacrament instituted by the Saviour. Thenceforward, the spouses are sanctified, and, as it were, consecrated, by this sacramental union; and it is not only the man who is elevated by the grace of the sacrament: the woman shares it in an

* Ephes. v. 25.

equal measure. Doubtless the man remains always the head of the woman, as Christ is the head of the Church ;* but that woman possesses nevertheless, in marriage, rights equal to those of her husband ; and, if it be true that her body no more belongs to her, the apostle quickly adds that the husband is in this respect in the same condition.† Hence the wife is no longer the slave of man ; she is his sister and companion ; and it is to the dignity and sanctity of the sacrament of marriage that she owes this first reinstatement. She is henceforth to her husband what

* Ephes. v. 23.

† 1 Cor. vii. 4.

the Church is to Jesus Christ Himself. What a type of love and respect!

The unity of marriage was a second principle which flowed quite naturally from the sanctity of the sacrament and the relations between Christ and His Church, proposed as model. In the beginning, marriage was the union of one single man with one single woman. The first example of bigamy that we know historically was given by Lamech. After the deluge God certainly allowed a plurality of wives, but it is no less positive that Jesus Christ brought marriage back to its primitive institution in this respect. The

reasons which had previously justified simultaneous polygamy no longer existed. It was thenceforth only to be found in barbarism and in corruption. And yet there were at the coming of the Messiah into the world a multitude of peoples in every stage of civilization who practised it, on the authority of tradition, custom, and law. Now, it was these depraved nations that Jesus Christ condemned in the person of the Pharisees, when they, asking Him whether it was lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause, He answered them: "Have ye not read that He who made man from the beginning made them male

and female? And He said: For this cause, shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh; therefore now they are not two, but one flesh."* They shall be *two* in one single flesh; *two*, and not more. Jesus Christ, therefore, willed that the man could have but one single wife, according to the observation of the Council of Trent.

Notwithstanding the natural corruption of the human heart, this condemnation of simultaneous polygamy was too well justified—moreover, by other considerations taken in the order of nature—not to be at

* St. Matt. xix. 4, and following verses.

least understood, if not respected in practice. But it was not so with the *indissolubility* of marriage. This third principle was so repulsive to independence, and the caprices of passion, that no sage in any country dared to propose it. Jesus Christ did more than propose—He imposed it, and, what is still more surprising, He made it accepted by the whole Christian world. The very same day on which the Pharisees came to ask Him if a man could put away his wife for some grave reason, after having answered them that the two were to make but one flesh, He added: “What therefore God hath joined together,

let no man put asunder." "Why then," asked the Pharisees again, "did Moses command to give a bill of divorce, and to put away?" He answered them: "Because Moses by reason of the hardness of your heart permitted you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." * Thus Jesus Christ pronounces that marriage was indissoluble in the beginning; and, after having declared that he abrogates the permission the Jews had of repudiating their wives in certain cases, he recalls marriage to its first institution, and proclaims it indissoluble.

* St. Matt. xix. 3, and following verses.

This doctrine was clear and positive; and nevertheless, as though Jesus Christ had foreseen all the difficulties which the passions were to raise up against it, He recurred to it on another occasion. "Every one," said He, "that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery."*

After that St. Paul was right in concluding, writing to the Corinthians, "Let the wife not depart from her husband: and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband."† To such

* St. Luke xvi. 18.

† I Cor. vii. 10, 11.

formal declarations* no answer could be made, and the indissolubility of marriage had to be admitted as of divine right, as well as its unity and sanctity by virtue of the sacrament.

* This passage from St. Matthew is, nevertheless, brought up against it: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery" (St. Matt. xix. 9). If, then, a husband puts away his wife on account of fornication and marries another, he is not guilty of adultery. So reason the defenders of divorce. Now, to answer this difficulty, it suffices to point out that the passage in question contains two parts. The first consists of what is permitted to the husband when his wife has committed adultery, and the second what is forbidden him, even in case of a legitimate separation. Now, the

The theory was easy, we shall be told; but does not history give it a practical denial in fact? What has become of the doctrine of Christ on marriage before the cupidity of the senses and amid the storms raised by the passions? Ah! doubtless it

exception, "except it be for fornication," applies only to the first part, to which it naturally refers; as though Christ had said: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, except in case of fornication, committeth adultery: and he who, having put away his wife for any cause whatever, even that of adultery, marrieth another, becometh also guilty of adultery." Whence may be drawn this conclusion, namely, that the husband is allowed to put away his wife on account of adultery, but that he is forbidden to marry another

has provoked more than objections. It has excited hatred, wrath, and fury. Human passions not only rebelled against the yoke imposed upon them; they shook it off, roaring, and would fain have broken it for ever. But, even when they believed themselves at last freed from it, a Vicar of Christ, a successor of the Apostles, condemned them with

after having put her away. This is perfectly in accordance with the text of St. Paul quoted above: "The wife is bound by the law of marriage while her husband lives; if she marry another man during her husband's life, she shall be held as an adultress." See Mgr. Gousset's *Theolog. Dogm.*, vol. ii. p. 671, No. 1,065.

all the force of his authority, and sometimes in the blood of his martyrdom. And so it was that a dike was raised up before the rushing flood of audacious corruption.

Yes, the sanctity of marriage prevailed over sensuality, interest, and egotism, which before reigned alone; and it has given to married persons in their union, and especially to the wife, a dignity before unknown. The doctrine of the sacrament of marriage was accepted as an honor done to humanity, and the natural inclinations, all vicious as they were, could not help recognizing the restoration of which they had been the object.

The unity of marriage prevailed likewise over the polygamy of the Eastern nations, who submitted to it according as they became Christian. It also took root and became stronger and stronger amongst the Western nations, and especially in the Roman Empire. In fine, it gained such an ascendancy throughout the whole Christian world that it not only destroyed simultaneous polygamy, but tended even to diminish successive polygamy by particular decrees, doubtless exaggerated, but which manifested by their very exaggeration the authority it otherwise possessed.

The indissolubility of marriage

was the barrier that most restrained the inconstancy and caprice of the passions. From the days of Jesus Christ till now they have often attacked it fiercely, and many a desperate effort they have made to overthrow it. Why, then, should it not be lawful to repudiate him or her who is no longer worthy of love or esteem? Why should we be condemned to live in the closest intimacy with him or her who no longer inspires us with anything but horror and dislike? And, when separation would be accepted by both parties, why could they not contract a new marriage? Why, in fine, should Jesus Christ and His

Church be more severe in this respect than all the wise legislations of antiquity? . . . These questions, and a multitude of others like them, fell like so many accusations and protestations on the law of indissolubility, and they insolently demanded its abrogation. The powerful of the earth, and especially princes, waxed wroth at the pretensions of Christianity in this regard. In the first Christian ages it was alleged that it was expedient to compound with paganism so as not to discourage it. In the Middle Ages it was a new society that was raising itself on the ruins of the pagan world, to whose instincts some sa-

tisfaction ought to be given. Finally, in modern times, seeing the emancipation of reason and the new liberties obtained with so much difficulty, why should not the Church relax her severity on this question of an ancient and superannuated indissolubility?

There must have been an enormous force in the combination of all these means of attack against the indissolubility of marriage, for at certain times, and in certain countries, particular churches appear to have tolerated legal divorce. In face of a legislation which authorized it, and of a custom which had for ages become general, one can

understand that those churches did nothing abruptly, and only made use of their authority with the utmost caution and prudence. It was a condescension to the weakness of their children and the exigencies of the times. But it must not be inferred from this that the Christian doctrine had changed on this point, or that it afterwards unreasonably prohibited what it had originally permitted. No, the Church has never compounded in this respect. The prudent but firm guardian of her unchanging principles, she has steadily defended them against all attacks.

Summing up history on this

question, we arrive incontestably at these three conclusions: First: Christian legislation on divorce was perfected always and by degrees from the invasions to Charlemagne. Second: In the Middle Ages the Church constantly maintained the law of indissolubility and regulated the right of separation. Third: Finally, in modern times, it is still the Church that has energetically defended the indissolubility of marriage against the new attacks of heresy, philosophy, and revolution; and to her efforts is due the definitive triumph of that principle which existed in the begin-

ning, and which Jesus Christ re-established by His authority.

Had Christianity done nothing more for the family than to give for bases to marriage the three great principles of sanctity, unity, and indissolubility, which we have been reviewing, even that was a restoration which morally transformed all society. . By these principles, in fact, woman ceased to be the sport of man's caprice ; she resumed her place in the family with the dignity which became her ; and the children born of her marriage were no longer exposed, by divorce, to see themselves snatched away from the care and the education of the au-

thors of their being. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ did not confine to this reform of marriage the solicitude that was to finish the reinstatement of the woman and the child. We are about to see what more He did to invest them with a new dignity, and to cover them with a respect that would protect them against the violence of the passions.





THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN.

AS to Woman, first, the Saviour took her from the degree of abasement and degradation to which we have seen her fallen, and He raised her by declaring that all are equal before God, and brethren in Jesus Christ, His Son, without distinction of sex or condition. This was evidently going to the root of the evil, and destroying, at its base, the slavery of woman. But, independently of that general doctrine, the Redeemer

of the world chose, amongst all, a woman who was to be His Mother, whom He was to raise above men and above the angels themselves, and who, by that exaltation, was to raise up from their abasement all creatures of her sex. “O men!” He cried from the height of His cross, pointing to Mary—“O men! who have only considered woman as the slave of your passions and of your egotism, behold her who is there on the summit of Golgotha: she is the Mother of you all. *Ecce Mater tua!* Behold your Mother!” And mankind received, indeed, with love and respect, the inheritance left it by the Son of God; and it

found that in giving to the Mother of Jesus the veneration and affection it owed her as being also its own Mother, it included thus in the same respect and the same love the entire sex to which she belonged. How could man have still despised woman, when it was a woman whom God had chosen to make Himself man like him, and that it was also a woman whom He gave him for a protector in heaven as on earth?

After this new reinstatement of woman by the glorification and veneration of Mary, Jesus Christ would again fortify it by His personal example. During the years of His public life He allowed wo-

men to follow Him in His journeying through Judea, and consented to receive their cares and their services. Doubtless these women were living personifications of His doctrine and His morality; and His condescension to them was, as it were, a reward for the truths they embraced and the virtues they practised. But that did not suffice for the end He had in view. It was not merely the innocent woman that He wished to raise up by His justice: His mercy extended even to the sinful and repentant woman; and, that no one might be mistaken as to the degree in which He reinstated her, He gave marks of very

special predilection to the sinful Magdalen, and it was to that illustrious penitent that He first appeared after His resurrection. Ah! I am not surprised. That courtesan of the day before was to be at the foot of her good Master's cross—the day after her conversion, when so many disciples had fled trembling; and even now, behold, many sins were forgiven her because she loved much.*

These examples of Jesus were not lost on the apostles and disciples who witnessed them. Like their divine Master, they accepted in their journeys the service of the

* St Luke vii. 47.

women who followed them. They went so far as to entrust them with certain functions in the Church—they made them deaconesses, and as such, when they began to grow old, they had especially the honor of seconding the priests in helping the poor, and sick women.

Let us hasten to add that Christian woman well knew how to avail herself of the dignity and the independence she had regained. Virtues till then regarded as impossible became common to her, and in that despised sex were daily manifested acts of heroism that left far behind all the so much vaunted deeds of Greeks and Romans.

Then were Christian wives seen gaining to the religion of Christ the hearts of their husbands and of all their households. Then did widows consecrate to the practice of good works the remainder of their life. Then did young maidens give up family joys to live in the honor of virginity and in the service of all the miserable. Then, in fine, were seen women who, although reduced to exterior slavery, commanded the respect and admiration of their masters by the dignity of their character and the truly supernatural virtues they practised.

After that the Christian emperors had to grant to woman the

legal emancipation which paganism had always denied her. It was only an act of justice and of reparation. Hence this emancipation began with Constantine, who recognized the civil rights of women as equal to those of men; and Justinian, after him, completed his work by a legislation which effaced even the last vestiges of their former servitude.

“This amelioration in the lot of woman,” says M. Laboulaye, “is evidently due to Christian influences. It was not by an insensible modification that the Roman laws came to that. Their principles involved no such consequences. It

was by an inversion of legislation that Christian ideas were inaugurated, and secured to the mother a just preponderance. This legal revolution, which dates from Constantine, was the consecration of the great social revolution which had commenced three centuries before. This is what those persons will not understand who accuse Constantine and Justinian of having overthrown the Roman jurisprudence. Ah! yes; they doubtless overturned all that pagan antiquity, but it was to replace the harshness of the ancient principles by the mildness of Christian principles. This accounts for the existence of

Roman laws even in our own days. These laws which have remained are not the laws of the republic. They are the laws of the Christian emperors—Christian morality realized in institutions. All that was of pagan Rome has gradually perished or withered away. The only living branches have come to us from Christianity, and those shall last as long as that divine religion.”*

* “Recherches sur la Condition des Femmes—Droit Romain,” scel. ii. ch. vii.





THE
CHILD IN THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

THE wife was not the only one to be reinstated in the family. Beside her and with her there was the child, that other slave of antiquity, of whom the father might dispose at will, and over whom he had the right of life and death. People have often spoken of the reinstatement of the child under the influence of the Christian doctrines, but they have

not, perhaps, traced as they ought that reinstatement to its very source. It is in the words and in the acts of Jesus Christ that it must be sought first of all; and there it is that it is seen to commence with a principle of dignity and a character of respect which only required time to develop itself in order to arrive at the most complete regeneration.

And, first, we see Jesus Christ taking pleasure in being amongst children. He lets them come close around Him; He caresses, He embraces them. His disciples are troubled for their Master, and seek to rid Him of them; but Jesus keeps them near Him with these

sweet words: "Suffer the little children to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of God."* Another time he calls a little child, and, placing Him in the midst of His disciples: "Amen I say unto you," said He, "unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven. And he that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better

* St. Mark x. 14.

for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea. . . . See that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father, who is in heaven.”* It was assuredly the first time that the child was heard spoken of in these terms. Never had the like been said by the philosophers most friendly to humanity. It was therefore, as it were, a new revelation of the dignity of the child that was made to the world by the Saviour Jesus.

* St. Matt. xviii. 2, and following.

But what strengthened this doctrine in practice was the sacrament of Baptism. It is well known that in the first ages of the Church this sacrament was not commonly conferred on infants, as it is in our days, and that oftentimes it was not given them till they had attained to the age of reason; but it was administered to them, nevertheless, at any time that their life was in danger; and the practice of conferring it thus, before the age of reason, gradually became general. Now, when the sacrament of Baptism had made of a new-born infant a child of God and of His Church, a creature

ransomed by the blood of Jesus Christ, an heir of the heavenly kingdom, he became a Christian. He was even more than an ordinary Christian in the innocence of Baptism. He was, as it were, an angel of God. Not only was that frail creature no longer despised, not only was there no longer the horrible thought of getting rid of it by exposition or death, but it was surrounded by a sort of worship; and, when it lay sleeping in its cradle, its father or mother might have been surprised bending over it and kissing its breast with veneration, as a tabernacle

consecrated by the grace of the sacrament of Baptism.

And then, from the day on which the prediction of the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled ; from the day on which God gave Himself to man in the person of a Son of Man, and was born in the weakness of infancy ; from the day, in fine, when God might be seen as a little babe in the arms of His Mother, something of the dignity that beamed from His divine brow illumined the features of every Christian child. People had no difficulty in respecting the babe marked with the seal of Jesus Christ, when they had adored

His Saviour in the graces of infancy; and beside every child they seemed to see the celestial guardian charged to protect him, as the angels were represented at Bethlehem round the crib of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this current of ideas it became necessary that legislation should modify its provisions in regard to childhood; that customs should change, and the child take the place that belonged to it at the paternal hearth. And so it did. Thus, in Gaul, even when it was still under the Roman domination, the son was emancipated by marriage, and became the in-

dependent head of a family. He not only exercised the authority of a husband, but the law also recognised in him the paternal authority; and it was only in his default—after his death, for instance—that the grandfather came in to replace him in regard to his children.

This is not all. Under the same influence a grave modification was made in the Roman legislation in relation to children whose parents belonged to different conditions. In the rigor of the ancient law, the child was always placed in the worst condition: the contrary was thenceforth the case. The

union of serfs and the daughters of colonists placed the children in the colonate; and the union of colonists with the daughters of free parents procured liberty for the children born of this marriage. Now, this modification in legislation very naturally resulted in extinguishing serfdom and transforming the colonate; and this may be said to be the starting-point of a progressive movement towards civil and political liberty.

As to the barbarous custom before mentioned, which allowed parents to expose their children, Christianity did not confine itself to attacking it indirectly by the

respect, the dignity, and the religious character wherewith it invested Christian childhood in general. It condemned it directly and very particularly by its apostolic constitutions, by its councils, by the voice of its bishops, and by the writings of its most eloquent apologists. On the other side, legislation itself, become Christian, took measures against the unnatural parents who still exposed their children, despite the penalties of the Church. And, first, it declared that, when a deserted child had been taken by a third person, no one could ever after claim it, not even its father, and that the

latter should be for ever deprived of paternal authority. Constantine dared not go further than this against the custom of exposing children, so general and so deeply rooted was it. But, a little later, Valentinian, with Valens and Gratian, his successors, completed his provisions by publishing an edict which compelled every father of a family to support his children, under pain of death to whoever should expose them. This edict treated as a murderer the father who exposed his child.

Still, under the influence of the same Christian ideas, Constantine and his successors restrained by

law the excessive power of fathers over their children; yet without infringing on their natural rights. Thus the head of the family was always honored and respected by his children. He retained to a certain extent the right of disinheriting them; but he was stripped of all the absolute and despotic rights which the ancient legislation had given to him. Consequently, by the new laws, not only were children entitled to hold certain property, but they were also allowed to administer it as they pleased, and even to dispose of it.

Finally, a last amelioration of the new laws under the action of

Christianity was that made in regard to natural children. The Christian emperors applied themselves to regulate their position in the family and in society, and, to that end, their legitimacy was admitted after the subsequent marriage of their parents. The Gauls were not slow in receiving this legislation, and hence came a formality the use of which is retained even at the present time: *the children were placed under a canopy in Holy Church. They thus became legitimate, and entitled to inherit as lawful heirs.* This was, as it were, an authentic and solemn reparation which made natural chil-

dren legitimate by placing them juridically under the authority and the protection of their father till their emancipation by marriage.

Thus had Jesus Christ penetrated by His doctrine to the heart of religious society and of the civil power, and, under His influence, the family was soon found to be regenerated. He who was its head retained all his natural rights, but he had to give up the excessive power which he had usurped under the complicity of pagan laws. The woman remained subject to the man within certain limits, which are only those of nature; but her weakness was no longer abused. As a

daughter, she was respected by her parents; in marriage she became the companion and the equal of her husband; and, when she generously preferred to domestic joys the virginity which she consecrated to the relief of every misery, she was surrounded by a sort of veneration. In a word, woman, in all conditions, was reinstated, and she everywhere received, as it were, a gush of the respect and dignity which honored her sex in the person of the Virgin Mother of God. On the other side Christian childhood derived the same advantages and the same privileges from the influence and the protection of the Child-God.

And thus it was that Christianity changed the individual conditions of father, mother, and child, harmonized them one with the other in their mutual relations, and placed the family on a new basis.





THE FAMILY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY.



AFTER eighteen centuries of progressive labor under the action of Christianity, the family ought now to present a magnificent spectacle, if nothing had come to impede its march towards perfection. Unhappily, such is not the case. In this field of the family, with all the good seed sown by Jesus Christ and his delegates in the apostleship, the tare has been sown too. Men, jealous of

the good effected by the Gospel, have endeavored to stifle it in the grasp of evil doctrines ; and hence come the many miseries and the many pollutions which even now blight the family in the Christian world.

And yet, notwithstanding all the efforts of the spirit of evil against the Christian family, the head of that family, the father, has remained what Christianity made him in the exercise of his authority. The abuses of paternal and conjugal power, as they existed in the pagan world, have become so impossible in the customs of the Christian world that people do not even

dream of recurring to them by avowed principles. But it must also be said that, in ceasing to walk practically in the ways of Christianity, the husband—the father—has deprived himself of the wise and moderate authority which the Gospel had preserved for him under the guarantee of its sacred principles. In place of that despotic and absolute power which he formerly had in the family, the Gospel had given him an authority as strong as it was holy, as gentle as it was grave, as gracious as it was worthy of respect. But from the day on which the head of the family laid down of his own accord

that sceptre which Jesus Christ had placed in his hand—from the day when he would only rule by nature and by reason—then he fell like a dethroned king. The outrageous abuses of the pagan family were no longer allowed him, and he lost at the same time the only authority now possible to him—Christian authority.

And, in fact, do we not see this in too many families forgetful of Christianity? Having lost his Christian rights over his family, he who ought to be its head endeavors to gain a new authority. He appeals to the theories of reason, the instincts of nature. He struggles,

finally, by all human means against the revolt of independence which ignores his authority. But his efforts are in vain. What, then, is the result? It is that the head of the family becomes as pagan as he can in the exercise of his authority. Discouraged when he cannot direct those who owe him obedience according to his own theory, he recurs as far as he can to the exaggerations, the monstrous abuses of ancient times. Only, as the practice of that despotic authority can no longer be openly exhibited in modern times, and as it is likewise impossible to keep it long in the privacy of home, a day is sure to

come when the slaves of the family succeed in breaking the chain of their bondage; and then it is that to the wise arrangement of Christian life, and, afterwards, to the despotism of authority, inevitably succeeds a complete anarchy.

In this new state the family is directed by its pilot as a bark without a helm. God is no longer there. Everything drifts about without order and without subordination. That family is no longer a body of which the husband is the head, the wife the heart, and the children the limbs. Each one wants to be the head; the heart is, as it were, paralyzed; and the

limbs refuse to obey. The husband has no longer over his wife, the father over his children, any other rights than those which the law externally secures to him. Internally there is no more law, no more principle, no more authority, whose exercise is respected. The family then resembles one of those little states whose subjects are in revolt, acting only by their own authority, and yet keeping at their head as a matter of form the phantom of a sovereign. How many families there are who live in just such a way! How many that seem, outwardly, to enjoy uninterrupted harmony, and who inwardly

writhe in the desperate convulsions of endless disorder; and yet they maintain themselves under an influence which, unknown to them, penetrates and preserves them. Christianity has taken root amongst them by its traditions, its customs, its legislation. They are still Christians, without believing and without wishing it; and that is what preserves them from complete dissolution.

Neither has the woman of our days, notwithstanding the decline of faith, ceased to participate largely and in a very special manner in the benefits of Christianity. It would at first seem that

the lightness of her education, the sensuality of her habits, the caprice of her fashions, must have lost for her sex all the benefit of that general respect that comes to her from the Gospel. Well, no. Woman, considered as such, still sees man's strength bow down before her weakness, and receives from him the most persevering homage. As a young girl she is the delight of the household, the pride of her father and mother; and woe to the rash man who would dare to insult the modesty of her virginity! As a young married woman she is the queen of the house; and, even though she had to undergo in pri-

vate humiliations that would embitter her life, she would still receive outwardly those marks of consideration which cannot be denied her. Later on, when old age has whitened her hair, it is no longer with the same sentiment she is regarded. But none may forget that she bears on her brow the triple crown of age, trial, and experience. And, on these titles, it is something more than respect that is laid at her feet. It is almost veneration.

And yet it must be acknowledged that in her personality woman is no longer at the degree of honor where the religion of Jesus

Christ had placed her; and it is by her own fault that she has fallen from it. The masterpiece of Christianity in woman is her temperament: the union of moral strength with physical weakness; and, in antagonism, it is the predominance of soul over body. Then is truly realized the type of woman as portrayed by the Wise Man, under divine inspiration: "She hath girded her loins with strength, and hath strengthened her arm. She hath put out her hand to strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle. She hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the

poor. Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she shall laugh in the latter day. She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue. She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle. Her children rose up, and called her blessed: her husband, and he praised her; and his heart trusteth in her. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.* That is especially the woman of the truly Christian ages—the woman of the Gospel, the woman who has

* Proverbs, xxxi. 17, and following verses.

become strong at the foot of Christ's cross and by the sacrament of the Eucharist.

That woman we still meet in our days, but much too rarely. Moral force—the character that distinguishes the true Christian—has grown gradually weaker and weaker. It has almost entirely disappeared, and given place to effeminacy and sensuality. Yes, effeminacy—effeminacy in character, effeminacy in the affections, effeminacy in acts, effeminacy in manners and customs of life. Here is certainly what characterizes the woman of our days.

Some will try to justify this femi-

nine indolence and inactivity by feebleness of constitution and bodily debility; but we should be much more inclined to believe that it is the effeminacy of the soul that enervates the body. However it may be, it cannot be denied that the character is weakened in proportion to the decline of physical strength. Lulled in the sensuality of an education without energy, accustomed to lavish expenditure, to the delicacies of the table, as well as to the luxuries of an exaggerated toilet, the woman of the world begins by feeling her physical strength benumbed, paralyzed within her, and shrinking

from any sort of sacrifice. But that is not all. The soul is weighed down, and sinks with the senses in that heaviness of matter; the mind rejects great thoughts, the heart generous affections; the character is debased; and there only remains an abridgement of that creature who came forth so grand and so noble from the Christian birth. Behold what vanity, what futility, what immorality, perhaps, in the reading that feeds the mind and heart of that woman! Behold her daily cares, her occupations; or, rather, behold her idleness and the uselessness of her

life, if she be a woman of the world, free and independent.

After long evenings spent in amusements or frivolous talk, that woman requires long rest. Hence every one has been at work for several hours when she at length decides on getting up. It is evident that she has no time to pray as she ought. It is too late. After some lip-formula, repeated carelessly and by routine, she makes a very hasty toilet, and has hard work to be ready for the morning meal. After that come the promenade, the visits, long hours of music; and so dinner comes, and evening, to begin again as on the

day previous. So passes day after day, week after week, year after year; and so glides away the whole life of this woman of the world.

As to the woman of the people, she works. Yes, she works for her body and with her fingers; but what does she do for her mind, for her heart, in those long days of toil? Nothing, or almost nothing. After physical labor she has need of recruiting her strength, and she takes her meal; she needs rest, and she takes her sleep; she requires material satisfaction, and she gathers on her way through life some transient enjoyments. After

that she has no other wants. And so pass away her youth and her life, amid never-failing deception, bitterness, and suffering!

That woman of the people, that woman of the world, I regard them in the light of the Gospel. . . . Ah! how far they are from the Christian woman. And yet, such as they are, or, rather, such as they have made themselves by their own fault, they are still respected and beloved. Yes; but they are undoubtedly no longer esteemed in proportion to the love bestowed on them; and, when love is extinguished by habit and the frosts of age, there is no longer a

crown on the head of these women. They are dethroned queens. It was the Gospel of Jesus Christ that placed the sceptre in their hands. In departing from the Gospel they have lost that sceptre.

Like the woman and all that is weak, the child still lives under the protection of the great principles of the Gospel; but he, too, partakes of their benefits only in so far as Christianity has influenced the family. To-day, as in the first Christian ages, when the family remains faithful to Jesus Christ, the child is considered as the visible angel of the hearth, and he is respected as much as he is cherished.

But when the light of the Gospel is obscured in the home—when Christianity is only there in theory—then it is the pagan and natural life that takes again the upper hand; and hence two exaggerations in a contrary sense, but both breaking in on the Christian harmony of the family. Either the child falls, internally, under the despotism of an unprincipled authority, all the more brutal that externally it is legally restricted; or, on the contrary, that graceful little creature is made a species of idol, flattering only to the vanity and caprice of its parents. In the former case, the child, by its weak-

ness, becomes the victim of force; and in the latter, is it not still the victim of that family idolatry?

You make of your adored child a ridiculous idol. You dress it coquettishly, and, producing it thus in your walks, in your visits, at evening parties, and at the theatre, you set it up, as it were, on a pedestal for all the world to admire. This is not all. In order to develop more quickly its instincts of vanity and all its other little passions—in order to embalm it with an incense more delicate still—you make a world proportionate to the age and the inclinations of that child; a world with its balls, its

theatres, its banquets, its matinées ; a world that turns its head, and gives it a disgust for everything serious. And then, when you have done all that for your child—when you have, perhaps, made it ridiculously pretentious—you take delight in its premature enjoyments, and are proud of your success in the person of that poor little creature ! Well, do you know what you have done ? Instead of stifling in that young nature the vicious inclinations that were budding therein, you have precipitated their growth ; you have excited the most insatiable passions ; and now you will find that nothing can

longer satisfy them. As an inevitable consequence of this education, it will come to pass that nothing can please your children; that they will ask of you impossible things; that they will accuse you of tyranny and injustice when you can no longer gratify their whims and fancies. Then they will set themselves down as victims of the life you have made for them. They will grow discouraged, and will end by seeking elsewhere—perchance in the independence of vice—shameful emotions, which you neither would nor could have procured for them. Confess it. Is not that what we see every day

around us? And whence come those falls that make the disgrace and the desolation of so many families? From the fact that Jesus Christ is no longer the head; that His doctrines are no longer respected, that His practices are no longer observed, that, in fine, pride and sensuality have become the divinities to whom all is sacrificed in those homes.

Reflecting on the actual conditions of the family in general, meditating on the superiority it still retains over the pagan family, and on its decline, also, when compared with the family of more Christian ages, we have often thought that all that

good and all that evil are equally explained by marriage, as it is practised in our days. The evil of the family—that is to say, the abuse, or abandonment of authority on the part of the head; the sensuality, the luxury, and the frivolity of the woman; the exactions, the cupidity, the self-will, and insubordination of the child—does not all that come, in a great measure, from the way in which marriage is contracted materially and spiritually? Materially, what is sought before and above all, in marriage, is money and pleasure religion, virtue, compatibility of temper, are matters of secondary, or, rather, of no importance. Spirit-

tually, marriage, as a sacrament, is no longer, to a great many, anything more than a mere formality. People forget that one condition, requisite for participating in sacramental grace and receiving the fruits of the nuptial benediction, is purity of soul; and, too often, they come to the foot of the altar with a ticket of confession, which is only a mockery of the Sacrament of Penance. Evidently, it is not to bless that God must then interpose in the marriage solemnity. Abandoned to their own strength, or, rather, to their own weakness, behold, then, the newly-married pair cast into the vicissitudes of the family, with the

only resources of their inexperience. Is it surprising that, after that, woe and ruin should come upon them?

And, nevertheless, we have said that it is to the Sacrament of Marriage we must attribute the superiority of the present family over the family of pagan ages. Yes; for, notwithstanding all, the Christian spirit that flows therefrom has not ceased to exercise its beneficent influence over the entire family. Not only has the civil legislation which controls it undergone no depreciation, and has remained always Christian in its protective arrangements in regard to the woman and

the child; but there still circulates in the veins of the great social body a Christian blood come down from Jesus Christ, and which maintains its life in conditions never known to the ancient world.





THE FAMILY WITHOUT CHRIS- TIANITY.

IF impiety succeeded in persuading the world that Christ is not God and that the Gospel is but a myth, it is easy to foresee what would become of the family, and it needs no great clearness of vision to prophesy its dissolution. Assuredly, people would not go back to the conditions in which the family found itself previous to the coming of Christ. The great Christian current has hol-

lowed in society a channel too broad and too deep to be long filled up. Christianity, moreover, has excited in man a feeling of personal liberty and dignity which has passed sympathetically into the usages of life, and which must be indestructible. But still, what ravage and ruin would still be in the family, were the principal basis on which it rests to fail!

And first, if Jesus Christ were not God, it is very evident that marriage would no longer exist as a sacrament. There would be nothing more than a mere civil contract, analogous to any other contract, whereby a couple would mutually

bind themselves in the bonds of the family, under certain conditions; precisely as though they bound themselves in any other association.

It will, perhaps, be said that this is only practised in certain individual cases, and that things do not seem to go much the worse for it. We do not, of course, pretend that every civil marriage is, without exception, a marriage humanly bad, and that the family can never exist therein in natural and permanent conditions. But were these exceptions made general; were there no longer anything more than natural and legal in marriage; were

religion banished from it and God no longer there, undoubtedly it would soon be seen that unity and indissolubility would give way and disappear; polygamy would soon cross over from Constantinople to Paris and London, and divorce would not long content itself with the laws of England and the United States, accommodating though they be.

So as not to be behind paganism, some sort of ceremony would, doubtless, be devised that would pretend to replace the Sacrament of Marriage. But, we ask, after the complete disappearance of Christianity, what other ceremony

could be found that would not be ridiculous, or simply absurd? We do not suppose that people would retrograde so far as the ceremonies of paganism. Well, would there be nothing more in marriage, then, between God and man; would there be no religious intervention? No; and the Union of the married pair would no longer be, in general, anything more than the interested casual, transient coupling together of a man and a woman, who would idolize each other one day, to despise and, perhaps, curse each other the next.

Now, in these conditions, see what would become, in the family,

of those who are weakest: women and children. First, the woman. Deprived internally of the dignity, the strength, and the sanctity which are the fruits of the Sacrament of Marriage, she would have no other guarantee, outwardly, than decorum, law, and policy. Mary being nothing more than the mother of a man, devotion to her would soon disappear; she would fall from that throne which credulity and superstition had raised for her; and, with her, would disappear all the protecting influence she had hitherto exercised over her sex by her exaltation. After that, what use would it be to woman that Jesus

Christ honored her, all His life, in the person of Mary, and that He thought to bequeath her as a mother to all mankind at the moment of His death on the Cross? That would have been something very strange for contemporaries; but, after eighteen centuries, what connection or what communication could really exist between that woman and humanity?

It is true that ages and generations have taken the divine maternity of the Virgin Mary in earnest; it is also true that these ages and generations have proclaimed Mary the Mother of Mankind, and that every Christian woman has found her re-

instatement and her glorification in that belief; but, from the moment it was proved to the world that it had been mistaken in these convictions for eighteen hundred years, woman would, indeed, have to bear the consequences, and would then again become what she was before.

It is not possible to measure the depth of the abyss into which this fall would precipitate woman; all that can be said of it is, what it must needs be by reason of the elevation that preceded it; and, then, who could calculate its deplorable results? In the discouragement and deception of a lost dignity,

with only its charms of a day, and with its life-long weakness, we ask what would woman become in a world without principles and without faith, into which she would be thrown as a prey to the cupidity of every passion. Then, doubtless, that dethroned queen would make a last effort, a sublime effort, to retain at least some rags of the purple she once wore; but she could not long resist the current of despotism and luxury; and soon she would fall back into the double slavery of her own weakness and the brutality of others.

What renders very evident the situation that woman would occupy

by the denial of the divinity of Christ in the world, is that in which she finds herself in countries which have denied it, or merely amongst nations whose faith has grown weak. When we see what is made of woman by polygamy amongst the once Christian populations of Africa and Asia; when we see, also, what she becomes by divorce in the heretical countries of Europe and America, we may form an idea of the general degradation into which she would infallibly fall, on the day when Jesus Christ no longer protected her, in any way, by His divinity.

And, for the child, when he would be no longer clothed, by bap-

tism, with the angelic robe of innocence and sanctity, when he no longer bore on his brow the seal of the children of God; when, afterwards, he would have no more, to strengthen his young soul, the divine bread of the Eucharist, and the holy oil of Confirmation; when he would no longer have the Child Jesus for the companion of his age, and the words and the example of the Son of God were no longer the shield and safeguard of his weakness; when, in fine, there would only remain, to protect him against the abuse of strength, the rigor of the law, and the charms of his age; ah! I know he might yet take refuge in the

arms of his father or on his mother's heart! yes, but not always. How many children are there who have neither father nor mother, and who would vegetate as lost beings in the exile of the world! And then, were Christ no longer in the heart of the father or the mother by the practices and examples of His Gospel, are you very sure that children would always find shelter and protection in their tenderness? They had, indeed, their father and their mother, those children of the Roman Empire, who lived, nevertheless, under a perpetual tutelage, in a state of absolute slavery, and whose death might be decreed, in

anger and impatience, by the sole decision of the father. They have, likewise, their father and their mother, those children of civilized China, who are exposed every day to the ferocity of beasts, and the current of rivers. And, amongst us, have they not, also, their father and mother, those children of intemperance and debauchery, who are scarcely fed or clothed, and who are employed in factories and workshops like mere machines? Once more, no, no, the happiness and the fate of the child cannot rest on the exclusively natural affection of the father and mother; and when God, when Jesus Christ, would be no

longer found there, we may infer, from the experience of the past, as from that of the present, that childhood would be unhappily exposed, in the family, to all sorts of unnatural barbarity.

Yes, but when the child grew up when the young man or the young girl arrived at the independence of age and strength, then would be the time of reaction, the time for reprisals; reaction and reprisals all the more formidable the more violently their flight had been repressed, seeing that there was no longer any principle capable of restraining them. We have already demonstrated the insubordination and re-

bellion of youth when it no longer lives by the Gospel, in the midst of a society still Christian, as a whole; but were Christianity no longer anything to that youth, who can imagine the overflow of its passions and the unchaining of its evil inclinations? It would certainly outdo the excesses of pagan youth; for, with the same natural tendencies to evil, it could not now be restrained, as that had been, by the absolute despotism of paternal authority.

The results we have indicated are so incontestible, from the teachings of the past and the observation of present times, that one asks how it is possible for certain minds to de-

lude themselves on this point. After that, must it be believed that there are men so perverse as not to shrink from the ruin they would bring on the family by denying the divinity of Jesus Christ in the world? . . . Perhaps so; but even if there be, we may rest in the conviction that they will not succeed; for the truth of God is not at the mercy of men, and it "remaineth for ever."*

* Psalm cxvi. 2.









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