



*MARRIAGE *

By P. J. L.



NEW YORK: LOIZEAUX BROTHERS,





Marriage

HAT I desire to say briefly on this subject is to them who are subject to God and to His word. All others view and use marriage as they do all other blessings—to gratify their own pleasure; even as the beasts which eat, drink, and enjoy life without a thought of accountability to Him who has made the provision.

To you especially, my dear young brothers and sisters who naturally and rightly contemplate marriage, do I address my words. It is the most important of all earthly events in a man or a woman's life, for it is something they cannot undo, which binds them until death, which throws them together in such intimate relations that they must either sweeten or embitter each other's existence, and which entails results no less far-reaching than the endless ages of eternity. How soberly and dignifiedly,

therefore, we should approach it! A pretty face is a pretty thing, but how vain to be governed in such a sober matter by a pretty thing! Earthly goods and social position have their value here, but how base

and degrading to let them control such a serious act!

"Marriage is honorable in all." (Heb. xiii. 4.) It is God who created it (Gen. i. 27), and who instituted it (Gen. ii. 24); and lest, because of the higher and better things which our Lord brought in, it should be presumed that He would look down upon marriage, He attends a marriage in Cana of Galilee (John ii.), and thus sets His seal upon it.

We need therefore not be ashamed of it, though we forget not that there are higher things, endowed with superior honor, for "there be eunuchs which have kingdom of heaven's sake." (Matt. xix. 12.) They refused marriage, like Paul and others, to devote themselves more undistractedly to the service of God. (1 Cor. vii. 32 -35.)

Being then of divine establishment, let us bring God into it. Let us not treat it as a matter in which we simply consult our pleasure, our fancy, or our profit. Dare you, dear young friend, launch out on such a voyage without making God your counselor? Dare you link yourself in such a tie with one who is not a child of God? "What concord hath Christ with Belial? or with an unbeliever?" (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.) What an awful "yoke" that binds together an heir of God and a despiser of Christ. It would seem that if the heart were at all

right it would make such a union utterly repulsive. Again, even among ourselves who are fellow-heirs of the glory of God, how dare you make your own prayerless choice?—for even among the children of God there are many who would not be suited to each other in such a tie. Who knows each one to the depths but God? Who understands fully the temperament that will match mine?

—that will be able to bear patiently with my own faults, or be a corrective to my tendencies, and thus help me on in my desire to live for Christ here? How many make a fair show at the start, but turn out miserably? Who knows all this, and who can shield me from the host of evil but God my Father? It is not enough, therefore, to have the approval of fathers and mothers and friends, valuable and even needful as that is for our happiness; their love is true, but their wisdom is not far-reaching enough. The God who has created the ordinance must needs have the first and chief place in it if it is to be blest in all its length and breadth.

Oh, what mercy that even if in our lightness and the folly of ignorance and youth we have not given Him that place, His love to His dear children is such that, though we must reap what we have sown, He will yet turn all to our final blessing and profit. When our lion will is rent, honey is found in the carcase.

But let me warn you in one thing: you will not find in marriage a perfect thing. Not that God did not make it perfect, but man has fallen since, and his fall has spoiled everything. The apple may still be sweet, but a worm is in it. The rose has yet its fragrance, but thorns grow with it. Willing or unwilling, everywhere we must read the ruin which sin has brought in.

So let no one dream of those

wonderful people which a diseased fancy can picture. The most godly men and women have their weaknesses and their failings; and though such be easy to bear where there is genuine love, they have to be borne. People who have fed on novels and fanciful ideas, and who have been disappointed in their own course, especially silly women, may make you think that because

you have something of that sort to bear as well as to be borne with, you are one of their heroes or heroines who were unhappily married, and therefore great martyrs. Such are not your friends. Turn again to God, your best, your constant friend. Let Him speak to you: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. . . . Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." (Eph. v. 22-29.) Mark, He does not say, Wives, demand of your husbands that they love you; nor, Husbands, demand submission from your wives. No, for this at once would be the opposite of the grace under which we are, which never claims, but gives, and finally gets its claims by ever giving. Let, then, "every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Eph. v. 33); and they cannot fail to enjoy all the sweets which marriage can give in the ruined creation through which we are passing. God will be with such, and where God is there is the best of everything. There will be no "skeleton" in that house. Trials and difficulties there may, there will be, for they are an absolute necessity for our

development in Christ; but where God is, there is the spirit of love, of unity, of mercy, of forgiveness, of compassion and tenderness. Sweet life of companionship yet vouchsafed to us in passing through a world so full of misery. Truly "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (r Tim. iv. 8.) P. J. L.



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