

## THE BOOK OF MARK.

### *Mark iii.*

31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him,

32 And the multitude sat about him, and said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren seek for thee.

33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

34 And he looked round about and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

MANY of the same texts found in the Book of Matthew are repeated by the other Evangelists. It appears from the text that the earnestness of Jesus in teaching the people, made some of his friends, who did not believe in his mission, anxious. Even his mother feared to have him teach doctrines in opposition to the public sentiment of his day. His words of seeming disrespect to her, simply meant to imply that he had an important work to do, that his duties to humanity were more to him than the ties of natural affection.

Many of the ancient writers criticise Mary severely, for trying to exercise control over Jesus, assuming rightful authority over him. Theophylact taxes her with vainglory; Tertullian accuses her of ambition; St. Chrysostom of impiety and of disbelief; Whitby says it is plain that this is a protest against the idolatrous worship of Mary. She was generally admitted to be a woman of good character and worthy of all praise; but whatever she was, it ill becomes those who believe that she was the mother of God to criticise her as they would an ordinary mortal.

### *Mark x.*

2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

8 And they twain shall be one flesh:

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

The question of marriage was a constant theme for discussion in

the days of Moses and of Jesus, as in our own times. The Pharisees are still asking questions, not that they care for an answer on the highest plane of morality, but to entrap some one as opposed to the authorities of their times. Life with Jesus was too short and his mission too stern to parley with pettifoggers; so he gives to them a clear cut, unmistakable definition as to what marriage is: "Whoever puts away his wife save for the cause of unchastity, which violates the marriage covenant, commits adultery." Hence, under the Christian dispensation we must judge husband and wife by the same code of morals.

If this rule of the perfect equality of the sexes were observed in all social relations the marriage problem might be easily solved. But with one code of morals for man and another for woman, we are involved in all manner of complications. In England, for example, a woman may marry her husband's brother; but a man may not marry his wife's sister. They have had "a deceased wife's sister's bill" before Parliament for generations. Ever and anon they take it up, look at it with their opera glasses, air their grandfather's old platitudes over it, give a sickly smile at some well-worn witticism, or drop a tear at a pathetic whine from some bishop, then lay the bill reverently back in its sacred pigeon-hole for a period of rest.

The discussion in the United States is now in the form of a homogeneous divorce law in all the States of the Union, but this is not in woman's interest. What Canada was to the Southern slaves under the old régime, a State with liberal divorce laws is to fugitive wives. If a dozen learned judges should get together, as is proposed, to revise the divorce laws, they would make them more stringent in liberal States instead of more lax in conservative States. When such a commission is decided upon, one-half of the members should be women, as they have an equal interest in the marriage and divorce laws; and common justice demands that they should have an equal voice in their reconstruction. I do not think a homogeneous law desirable; though I should like to see New York and South Carolina liberalized, I should not like to see South Dakota and Indiana more conservative.

*Mark xii.*

41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much.

42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

43 And he called unto him his disciples,

and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury:

44 For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living.

The widow's gift no doubt might have represented more generosity than all beside, for the large donations of the rich were only a part of their superfluities, and bore a small proportion to the abundance which they still had, but she gave in reality of her necessities. The small contribution was of no special use in the treasury of the Church, but as an act of self-sacrifice it was of more real value in estimating character. Jesus with his intuition saw the motives of the giver, as well as the act.

This woman, belonging to an impoverished class, was trained to self-abnegation; but when women learn the higher duty of self-development, they will not so readily expend all their forces in serving others. Paul says that a husband who does not provide for his own household is worse than an infidel. So a woman, who spends all her time in churches, with priests, in charities, neglects to cultivate her own natural gifts, to make the most of herself as an individual in the scale of being, a responsible soul whose place no other can fill, is worse than an infidel. "Self-development is a higher duty than self-sacrifice," should be woman's motto henceforward.

E. C. S.