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Talks About Law.—No. 8.

BY JUDGE R. W. WINSTON.

DIVORCE LAWS.

With one consent, historians agree that Alfred was the wisest, best and greatest of English kings. His title to this distinction rests in a large measure upon a "most great and necessary work" which he executed in a masterly manner. "He reduced the whole kingdom under one regular and gradual subordination of government." That masterpiece of judicial polity, the subdivision of England into tithings and hundreds, if not into counties, had its birth in his brain.

He recognized the fact, which characterized the patriarchal days, that the family is a unit of which the father is the head; that the sum total of these units is the State; and finally, that the purity and goodness of the State exactly equals the purity and goodness of its component parts.

These principles are simple, but they are basal. Alas! how much wiser we have grown than were our parents!

A bird's-eye view of our American laws on the subject of divorce will disclose the fact that the family freestone, in many States of the Union, possesses not the charm of a beauty and purity that once sanctified it.

Before proceeding, it is proper to state that good old North Carolina, conservative in all things, is also slow and conservative in wrong doing. She practically holds to the New Testament rule and will not grant a divorce, unless the marriage vow is broken. In South Carolina when a man and woman are joined together, they cannot be torn asunder.

We all know that a statute of a State is simply the enactment of the will of a majority of the people of that State into law.

So that a statute is what the people think and wish. What must be the state of society of Dakota, where a husband may get a divorce if his wife slanders him, or is cruel to him? Or in Pennsylvania even, where desertion and cruelty entitle one to a divorce? Or specially in Utah, where the frail marriage tie is unloosed; "whenever it is made to appear that the parties cannot live in peace and union."

We in North Carolina are made to feel the evil of these immoral laws. For "full faith and credit" must be given to the judgments of courts of other States.

Sometimes it will happen that a man, divorced by the laws of Utah or Dakota, will marry again. Perhaps he was a resident of New York before going to Utah, and perhaps he did not serve an actual notice of his suit upon his New York wife. Such a divorce would not be good in New York, and perhaps in some other States.

If he and his new wife set out on a bridal tour, in some States, as Dakota and Utah, they would be married, but in other States, as New York or South Carolina, they would not be married!

Hence an effort has been made to have the Congress pass a uniform law regulating divorce. But this cannot be, because the views of the South generally differ so much from the views of the North and West.

The tendency of divorce legislation is towards evil, rather than better, things—as witness the "advanced" thought bought at great price and elaborately spread on the pages of the *The Arena*, *The Forum*, and other magazines. There we learn that it is cruel and barbarous to compel husband and wife to live together when love is dead.

There a dozen short-haired women, in Bloomer costumes, will cackle to their own satisfaction, and the editor will gravely denigrate their mental output "a symposium!"

Col. Ingersoll, the arch-infidel, "by merit raised to that bad eminence," is a leader of thought along this line, as well. To purify their thoughts and chasten their style, we commend the opinion of Lord Stowell, delivered in a celebrated divorce case: "To vindicate the policy of the law is no necessary part of the office of a judge; but if it were, it would not be difficult to show that the law, in this respect, has acted with its usual wisdom and humanity, with that true wisdom, and that real humanity that regards the general interests of mankind. For

though in particular cases the repugnance of the law to dissolve the obligations of matrimonial cohabitation may operate with great severity upon individuals, yet it must be carefully remembered that the general happiness of the married life is secured by its indissolubility. When people understand that they must live together, except for a very few reasons known to the law, they learn to soften by mutual accommodation that yoke which they know that they cannot shake off; they become good husbands and good wives for the necessity of remaining husbands and wives; for necessity is a powerful master in teaching the duties which it imposes. If it were once understood that upon mutual disgust married persons might be legally separated, many couples who now pass through the world with mutual comfort, with attention to their common offspring and to the moral order of civil society, might have been at this moment living in a state of mutual unkindness, in a state of estrangement from their common offspring, and in a state of the most licentious and unreserved immorality. In this case, as in many others, the happiness of some individuals must be sacrificed to the greater and more general good."

Indeed, we have often wished that all men and women, who are "advanced thinkers," might come together in one place. They think that man is a machine, that can of itself attain perfection, and that if you will put away all temptation he will attain unto it. Of course, they would abolish God the first thing; then women would vote; then when love died between man and wife, a pair of couples would swap around; whiskey and opium would be dumped into the sea (a good thing perhaps); then everybody should be educated; and then—why then, man is perfect!!

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

"A dwarf on a giant's shoulder sees farther of the two," was not said of morals.

Honest, conservative, God-fearing North Carolina, and States sister to her in simplicity, the day may not be remote when you shall be called upon to stay the tide of infidelity, licentiousness and lawlessness that are corrupting the life of some of your rich, self-sufficient and godless sisters.

Truth-Given Freedom.

SERMON BY REV. J. E. WHITE, WILSON, N. C.,
SEPTEMBER 18, 1892.

Text—"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

When pride and conscious guilt shake hands they seal their friendship with a lie. Here on this occasion in the temple, under the burning words of Christ, conscious guilt has smitten the hearts of the Jews, and they have summoned pride to ease them. The result is a flaring, impudent lie, thrown right into the teeth of Christ. Christ has just uttered the words of the text, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." They answered him, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." This was plainly a lie, and they were bound to know that Christ knew it. But they stoop to it just the same in order to interrupt him and turn the current of his preaching into a channel more comfortable to themselves. A mean low, dishonest subterfuge. Will any one suppose that they had forgotten the long years of Egypt and Pharaoh? Or the time of the Judges when they were in frequent bondage to the neighboring nations, or the seventy years in Babylon, or their present bondage to the hateful rule of the Romans? And yet to confuse and distract Christ they have the colossal impudence to say, "We were never in bondage."

I have read here to you these very words which Christ uttered to the Jews, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—words throbbing with the same power that filled them on that day, nearly nineteen hundred years ago. Has any one present who has heard them as I read been dishonest enough with himself to take refuge in the trumped-up reflection, "I am not in bondage to anybody; I am as free as I want to be?" If there is, I charge such an one to consider carefully what he is, what his character is, what his habits are, what the tendencies of his nature are, and if after a conscientious scrutiny of himself he can honestly pronounce himself free in every respect that a man ought to be, I am ready to acquit him of any intentional subterfuge.

This is an important utterance: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." We are not to understand it as a declarative sentence. It is an implied condition. The force of the *if* in the preceding verse is conveyed by attraction to that which follows.

Christ never meant to force the truth or a knowledge of the truth on any man. It is said somewhat in the same sense employed by the physician as he hands a bottle of medicine to a patient with the injunction, "You shall take this now and it will cure you." The condition is implied. The patient does not understand that the doctor is coming to pour it down his throat. Just so with this text. Christ has looked upon you, has seen the shackles of habit, the manacles of sin on you, beholds you a slave to wicked influences and vicious associations, and has said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." No man is to

think that Christ is going to force the truth into his brain and understanding, but that a knowledge of it can come only through a desire to know it, and the application of one's self to its acquirement.

The word "know" is the pivotal word of the text. It is not the word that we use so lightly and frequently in our common parlance. "To know the truth" is to go a great way beyond an introduction to it. We use the word very loosely. We say we know a man, and if asked to tell something about him, his character, &c., we can hardly get through a dozen sentences. It is not knowledge. The truth is that the knowledge which is required in this text is of a much deeper nature than that required by any of the ordinary relations of life. It embraces not merely the offices of the five senses, but the whole heart and nature. It means not only the apprehension of the truth, but an appropriation of it. It means that the whole nature is to be infused with the truth, filled with it till there is no room for other masters. The freedom then comes naturally.

Reference here is plainly not to truth as an all embracing term, nor to a truth as an isolated fact, but to the truth—the truth as it is in Christ. Unmistakably the Saviour meant the true understanding of the purpose of his kingdom, the complete comprehension of his mission, and the full acceptance of his gospel. It was the truth towards which in concentric circles all human life must tend, as swallows circling around a chimney. It was the door of salvation—the city of refuge for the escaped slave.

Although all truth of whatever nature was related to it, in that both came from God, yet this was the selected truth that led not only to God's presence, but to the inner fold of his heart. "Ye shall know the truth."

It is to be observed also that while very properly much stress is to be laid on the word *know*, the repetition of the word *truth* as the subject of the last predicate prevents misconception of the true meaning. It is not the knowledge that makes free, but the truth; not the knowledge of it, but the thing itself. Christ evidently meant that there should be no mistake here. The exact relation which our knowledge and understanding of the truth, and even our appropriation of it, bears to the result, is very plain. It is the relation that the taking of the medicine bears to the physiological conditions that follow. The power of the effect is traceable not to the taking, but to the nature of the drug. Knowledge is power of a certain kind, but not the power of salvation. No mere knowledge of the Bible can make a man free. The devil can quote Scripture, and it is understood that his friend Col. Ingersoll has a very accurate textual knowledge of the Bible, but who will claim that either are free?

"Him the almighty power
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion down
To bottomless perdition; there to dwell
In adamant chains and penal fire."

And his follower who with impious arms dares to mail his blasphemous utterance with the thunder of God's word and truth, walks the streets of New York no freer than his master—the slave of a slave, bound, manacled, shackled, and held with chains more invincible than those which held his fit prototype Prometheus to the cold rocks of Mount Caucasus.

"The vulture at his vitals
And the links of the lame Lemnian festering in his flesh."

Few men in this land of enlightenment but have a more or less accurate knowledge of the Bible. But it cannot be urged too strongly that the truth requires a warmer resting place than cold intellectuality before it makes free. Theologians are not always disciples. Disciples they are of a system, but not of Christ. To Christ as one of the actors in the play they may pay a certain kind of devotion, but it is the play they worship after all. To him as an abstract moral force they do some reverence, but the living Christ, the personal vital center of spiritual life, they do not see.

The marked characteristic of christianity is that it is not a method, but it is Christ—his personality, his character. Mohammedanism is method—the Koran is the center of the system. The character of Mahomet has but little to do with Mohammedanism, and this distinguishing feature of christianity is its strength.

Not to knowledge, then, are you to look, my friend, but to the truth. It is a warmer light than the cold torch of intellectual belief that reveals a saving Christ. It is a burning, yearning eye that finds the rich pearls of liberty in God's word. It is a heart surcharged with want and need that hears the diamonds of his truth. Study the Book of Truth not for its beauty, though beautiful it is, but for its Christ. He is there throbbing in every word, but discern him, and not the glass through which he is to be seen. The Bible is the mirror. See the reflection, not the mirror. In that is light. In that is liberty.

"And the truth shall make you free." The truth does this work as all other mightily. The slavery is great, the dungeon strong, the watch alert, the freedom therefore is high wrought. It is not aesthetic, but at the same time it is of a nature as much higher than mere manual freedom as soul is superior to hand of flesh. It is the exultation of all that is good in a man, the lifting up of his better nature. It is the emancipation of soul. Every man is conscious of the superiority of these higher qualities in him.

To impute to him their absence is to offer the grossest possible insult—such an insult as no man has the right to offer. I have heard a man say very recently that "a negro didn't have any soul." I felt like placing my finger to my lips and saying solemnly,

"Hush, you are invading the realm of God with unballowed feet." No man has the right to say that. In whatever there is human mind there is human soul. No man can define it, and yet you do not doubt its existence. It is something felt, not seen. Have you a soul? Do I insult you by asking? Yet, man, do you dare to treat God's holiest gift to you so impiously as to let this gift of gifts remain in chains and slavery. I have looked at the beautiful mocking bird drooped and silent in its cage, and thought, "Poor bird, within that tiny breast is locked the richest stores of music and song, needing only the billowy fields, the swinging cradle of the tree top, and the expanding liberty of the summer air to call it forth." Thus in your soul, brooding in its prison house of sin, there is melody, divine melody that would stir every pulse of life if the truth but free it. It is not necessary for you to spend any time trying to trace soul's captivity to its commencement. It is enough for you to know that it is being sunk to deeper dungeons every day of your life. Its slavery is progressive downwards. I have not said that this is the natural condition of man's soul. Just the opposite. The true condition of man is liberty. The geologist sometimes find imprisoned in stone a live toad. How the toad got there is a great mystery, but it is no greater mystery than how man becomes incarcerated in sin. The geologist breaks the rock and the toad leaps out and away. It is very plain that that was not its true home. Its home is by the bubbling brookside, in the waving grass or on the green earth. It is so with your soul. Its home is not in this dark prison house of sin. Its place is the liberty spoken of in the text.

THE FREEDOM OF GOD'S MORAL UNIVERSE.

There are yet in every man's nature some voices that speak a celestial language, some verses of a song sung by divine humanity long ago in the palmy days of its freedom, some emotions that tell of a diviner nature. Dr. Parker has in his *Ecco Deus* well expressed this truth: "Man was cut out of the very heart of God. His erectness, faculty of speech, dominion over inferior life, and power of reasoning upon the future, have a strange light of divinity lingering upon them even now. Man is as a fallen god upon the earth." In his wildest talk there are accents and snatches of expression which must have come from heaven. His magistracy is a blurred reprint of an ancient charter; his thinking is the dim light which struggles through an eclipsed genius. He does not know himself as a fallen member of the heavenly hierarchy; he gropes and flounders as though he had lost something; and now and again there come through his daily life gushes of tenderness and glitterings of mind which have a deep meaning—a meaning which makes the heart sore and sad as it vainly tries to piece itself into wholeness and render the ciphers into intelligible language.

Yet, whatever may have been the true state of man, we see him as he is to day immured in the veriest slavery of thought, nature and habit.

It would seem as he feels, as every man does, the pulsing of a nature intended to be free, and the longing of a soul to which at least some conception of its possibilities now and then must come, that when freedom was offered he would gladly accept it. But sin has taught him a strange perversity. As the flesh pots of Egypt blinded many Israelites to the fact that they were slaves, the pleasures of sin have blinded men to the real tyranny of their condition. And this unconscious slavery, this satisfied serfdom of the human heart is the darkest problem with which christianity has to deal. Oh, if men would only see, only feel their chains. See! See! There it is—a wide, deep dent in your character—an open gash almost. The chain of habit, a lie told, a fellow wronged, a vice seeking action—it is tearing your soul. The links are pressing deep—slowly, slowly, but surely, surely they are approaching the vital part, tightening its hold and fold like a python killing its prey. It presses on till every drop of life-blood is squeezed out, and then the devil, his work accomplished, drags what his chains hold down with him to its hell of remorse—alive, but helpless forever. Men, men, be men, not slaves. Realize what is before you. In your reason, you do not doubt it. In your calm thinking moments, you see it. Is evidence of any worth? Is testimony to be heard? Hear the voices of thousands telling that a sin-infested life is an enslaved life, and that in the freedom which the truth brings, every want is satisfied. Hear even the voices of those who have lost hope ringing out from the darkness of despair, crying, "Back! back! Come not here!"

"And the truth shall make you free." How does the truth do this? Well, how does the Keeley Institute at Greensboro make a man free from slavery to the whiskey disease? Well, you answer, "They inject into his system a preparation called bichloride of gold which destroys the taste or love for whiskey." In the same way the injection of the truth destroys the love for sin. The love for it destroyed, its power is gone, and therefore we are no longer slaves to it. It does it not only for single sins, but all the whole realm of sin is fenced off,

and labeled by our quickened consciences—sin. It does even more than that. It follows the natural law that two things cannot occupy the same space at the same time, and as soon as the power of sin is driven out a new standard is set up in its place—the standard of love for Christ and men. It is not a new nature in the most accurate sense of the term. It is the old nature transformed—the forces of the old nature turned in another direction. The love that before was given to the devil is now given to Christ. It is recreation out of old material.

No new slaves were made to fit the new conditions after the emancipation proclamation. Old slaves became new free men. And the man whom the truth makes free ought to throw into the current of the new life's direction all the energy and force and bounding buoyancy of spirit that characterized the old life. True religion is not aestheticism. True christianity is not dyspepsia. If you were an athletic devil man, be an athletic Christ man. And keep up the training. The truth when it commences its work of making free begins at the right place. It begins from the center and works outward. The heart as the seat of motive is the point of attack. Systems of morality adopt a different plan of campaign. They strive for the out posts. Instead of cutting off the base of supplies they capture, or attempt to, the pickets. And in this lies the cause of their failure. A captured picket line, as every old soldier knows, is very far from meaning a captured army. The truth takes possession of that which supplies the motive. It captures the heart, possesses it for Christ, and hands and tongue and feet responding naturally to the hearts suggestion are found employed in christian work. It gives a new law—love. There is no such thing as liberty without law. The freest people are those with whom law is most sacredly observed. Our statute books are the very bulwarks of our civil liberty. Outside of law are torches and mobs and anarchy. Law is no restraint to the honest, virtuous citizen. Only rogues feel its restraint. The law of love enacted in the heart of man gives every freedom that the heart wants. It supplies every condition of liberty that it can demand. When the heart breaks over this law of love it has entered not the realm of liberty, but the realm of license. A man who loves God supremely, and his neighbor as himself, may do exactly what he pleases—all that his love moves him to do. The truth in establishing this law of perfect love drives out fear. The life thus entered walks its highway with dauntless tread. The sun shines before it, lighting up all its hedges and forms that used to fashion themselves into ghosts, and robbers take angels wings as we approach. Two boys see as they walk along the road a large misshapen object in the fence corner. One goes up to the cause of their terror, puts his hand on it, and finds that it is only a black stump. He knows the truth, and the truth has made him free, and he pursues his course without fear. The other boy, affrighted when he sees it, takes off his hat and burns the wind—a slave to terror, a slave to fear.

My friend, the truth will free your life of all these hideous phantoms of dread and terror. It will teach you to know them and understand them. The freedom it brings is the freedom of peace. It will give you rest. Freedom from care is not what you want. Care is the chastener of life. But the truth will pour a flood of light, star light, heaven light, divine light, upon your cares; duties are seen to be love, and the responsibilities that now weigh like millstones will become but the steady ballast of a love lit life. Care is a blessing if we but see it. It is worry that galls us. The truth casts out worry, kicks it down the back steps headlong. Phillips Brooks, with much truth, has said, "Care is the gentle sunshine, waking you to the beautiful, real world, in the morning. Worry is the mosquito that bites you during the night."

The world needs this liberty—such liberty as never arm of conqueror established or pen of liberator proclaimed. Let but the freeness of this truth-wrought liberty touch your life, and the hand of the love it brings stray among the mute strings of its harp, and the awakened slumberer joy within you shall rise unbidden at the music's irresistible strains, shouting, "I'm free, I'm free." "Love rules his kingdom without a sword." It is into this kingdom that the truth calls you. More love—more love. Hate is hell. Love is heaven.

"More love to thee, oh Christ,
More love to thee,
Hear thou the prayer I make
On bended knee,
This is my earnest plea,
More love to thee,
More love to thee."

Earth recedes and heaven approaches. The skies bend down and gather the soul to its vaulted bosom, up to the freest air man ever breathed. It is into such liberty as this that we invite you. It is for the coming of this freedom to all the earth that we pray. Come this liberty. We invoke it with all our ardor. Let a sickened earth feel thy healing touch. Let enslaved lives receive thy freedom, thy kingdom, love kingdom, Christ's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Honor is like the eye, which cannot endure the least impurity without harm. It is a precious stone, the price of which is increased by the least flaw.