

of divorces, especially when the fact is taken into consideration that in former days it was an easy matter for any dissatisfied woman to obtain a divorce.

President Young, broad-minded, far-seeing, inspired man that he was, early perceived that if men had the privilege of taking more than one wife the opportunity for divorce should be made very liberal for women. If this should be refused to that sex, marriage might become to them in some instances an intolerable and cruel bondage. It was understood, therefore, from the beginning of the settlement of Salt Lake Valley that women had the utmost liberty to change their condition if they were dissatisfied and unhappy in the family relationship. It might be thought that the granting of such freedom to dissolve the marriage tie would be attended with disastrous consequences in the breaking up of family circles and the introducing of general disorder. But to the credit of the women of the Latter-day Saints be it said, no bad effects followed. If the granting of this freedom had any effect it was to make women more contented with their lot. They knew they had perfect liberty and could exercise an unfettered choice, and every galling feeling of dependence was removed. They felt that their relationship to their husbands was that of confidence and love. The liberty of divorce thus granted placed them on a nearer equality to man; it was also an appeal to their honor, an evidence that they could be trusted; and most nobly did they show by their conduct that this confidence was not misplaced. With them liberty never degenerated into license. Though every wife in the land knew that if she made up her mind to be separated from her husband, after the teachers of the Church had exhausted their efforts to reconcile her to her condition and to make peace between her and her partner, a divorce could be easily obtained, yet very few women ever took advantage of the opportunity thus offered.

In a society where religious influences did not prevail, and where there was not a high conception entertained of the sacredness of the marriage covenant, such an experiment would have been attended, it is quite probable, with very bad consequences. Impure people would have taken advantage of such an easy mode of breaking up their marriages and would have formed new connections; great abuses would doubtless have prevailed, and the worst features of "free love" would have been witnessed.

In a recent article on divorces in France, which appears in the *North American Review* from the pen of M. Alfred Naquet, a member of the French chamber of deputies, it is stated that, while he would favor the removal of every obstacle that is in the way of divorce if he were in his power to do so—taking into consideration the degree of enlightenment of civilized countries in general, and of his own country in particular, he thinks the divorce law passed in France in 1884 is all that could be expected. He, therefore, favors restrictions being placed upon divorces, it being dangerous, according to his view, to make them too easy. One can imagine what fearful results

would be likely to follow, in a country like France, the throwing down of all barriers in the way of divorce; in fact, in very few communities could such an experiment be ventured upon without it being followed by the disrupting of the most binding and sacred ties and the breaking up of numerous family circles.

There are some curious facts brought to light by statisticians concerning divorce. M. Jacques Bertillon, the head of the Paris bureau of statistics, has established in a decisive manner, it is said, that the number of families which are disunited by divorce is quite independent of the legislation of the country, there being an extraordinary variation in the number of separations where the laws regarding divorces are the same. For example, though the law is the same throughout Switzerland, there is a great difference in the number of divorces in the different cantons of that republic. In certain cantons—for instance, Geneva, Bale and Zurich—statistics prove that an enormous number of divorces occur, while other cantons, such as Uri, do not offer a single case.

This difference is very remarkable and it would be interesting to trace the causes therefor. It must be due largely to local influences; probably lax morality and a low appreciation of the sacredness of the marriage covenant contribute to these results; or, perhaps, as different religions prevail in the different cantons, that may have some influence upon divorces; for it is well known that the Catholic church strenuously opposes divorces. But religion cannot be the cause of the variations which occur in Scandinavia. Yet according to this gentleman's statistics serious variations do occur in that region. The laws governing divorces are about the same in Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and the people are as near alike as possible in race, customs and religion; but he asserts that one of these nations abounds in separated family circles, while in the other two there are almost none. The Lutheran religion being the dominant religion in each of these three nations, their customs being alike and their race being almost, if not quite, identical, we are left to conjecture as to the cause of this difference in the number of separated family circles.

As I have stated, divorces were very few among the Latter-day Saints; this, in fact, is the case today. There is a way by which the number of divorces among members of the Church can at least be approximately ascertained. While the Church cannot grant legal divorces, members in good standing do not consider the union of husband and wife as completely dissolved until action is taken in the case by the earthly head of the Church, he holding the authority "to bind on earth and it is bound in heaven and to loose on earth and it is loosed in heaven;" therefore, what is known as an ecclesiastical divorce is sought for. Without such a divorce no divorced woman could be sealed, or married, in a Temple to another man. By this means, then, a very good idea can be obtained of the number of separations that have taken place among the Latter-day Saints

during the past forty-five years. And it is very gratifying to know that they have been far from numerous. This is as it should be. The fewer divorces the better.

The truth is, that if every barrier in the way of divorce were removed, and men and women were left as free as possible, there ought not to be one more divorce among the Latter-day Saints, with the training they have had, than there would be with all the restrictions around them which the laws now provide. Separation should only occur when there are reasons which make it imperative for the welfare and happiness of the wife and children. Undoubtedly there are instances when such a step is absolutely necessary. But to see persons take such a step for light and trivial causes is inexpressibly painful to all right-minded people; for then the consequences to all concerned are likely to be most serious; and in such cases every possible influence should be used to check the disposition to fly to divorce.

The young people of our faith should be impressed with the importance of not making hasty and inconsiderate marriages. It is a step which should not be taken without serious and prayerful consideration, for it is a step that, for good or evil, is attended with the most wide-reaching effects. Others may make light of marriage and welcome divorce as an easy way of breaking its bonds; but Latter-day Saints should set the world an example of fidelity in their marriage relations and in maintaining a high standard of virtue and purity.

#### Y. M. M. I. A. NORMAL.

Perhaps a few words at this time from the Y. M. M. I. A. normal class which is being held here would not be amiss. This class, which has a course of five weeks, has been organized for the special purpose of training young men in the Mutual Improvement work. It is under the able supervision of Dr. M. H. Hardy, and it is doing a great work. The present class commenced on Monday, November 14th; it numbers forty-five, and is composed mostly of young men who have been called to labor as missionaries this winter in the different Stakes of Zion in the interest of the Y. M. M. I. A. There are also a few young ladies. It will close its labors on Wednesday, December 21st, having been in session a little over five weeks. The unanimous testimony of the class is that the time has passed too quickly and that the benefits received are invaluable.

The course taken is very thorough, comprising all the subjects in the manual, besides lectures and practical exercises on constitutional law and parliamentary usages by Bishop Booth and Prof. Jas. B. Keeler; vocal music by Prof. Gites, and a course in psychology by the principal, Prof. B. Cluff, Jr.; also lectures upon special subjects by Geo. H. Brimhall and Dr. M. H. Hardy. The M. I. students have all the privileges of the academy the same as the regular students, to the lectures on the Book of Mormon by Geo. Reynolds, to the Pedagogium and the Polysophical society once a week, also to the Sunday School normal class held every Sunday for the purpose of instructing the young