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ON

MARRIAGE.

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ON MARRIAGE.

IT is not our present purpose to show,—what indeed is acknowledged by all civilized nations,—that the *permanent* covenant between the sexes, called marriage, is essential to secure all that is most conducive to human happiness, and human improvement. But it is our purpose to show, that the marriage covenant is not merely a civil contract, or covenant entered into with a view to civil advantages, but that it is a divine institution, and has respect *pre-eminently* to man's spiritual interests, being, indeed, at the same time, the great means of realizing those interests, and the symbol of that holy state in which alone they can be realized.

It is impossible, with any degree of consistency, to maintain that marriage is only a civil contract, unless it be at the same time affirmed, that man is only a civil, and not a religious and immortal being. The fact that God instituted marriage gives it a divine or religious sanction; the fact that the contracting parties are religious beings proves of necessity, that, in contracting to promote each other's interests of *every* kind, they especially contract to promote each other's highest, or *religious* interests, and this of itself constitutes marriage a religious contract. To suppose a contract to be entered into by two immortal beings to promote each other's interests, but which shall exclude all regard to their highest or immortal interests, is really too great an absurdity to receive any countenance from a rational being. When, then, any religious professor is found advocating the opinion, that marriage is merely a civil contract, there is furnished a strong

ground for suspicion, that civil or temporal advantages are his only, or dearest objects, and that religious advantages, that is, spiritual and moral improvement, are considered but a very secondary affair!

If the contracting parties be sincerely religious, the contract of marriage is not the less a religious contract, because the parties happen to reside in a country where the contract is witnessed, or legally sanctioned, by a civil officer only; it is one of the fallacies of the senses to suppose, that the conducting of the ceremonial by a priest (however useful, expedient, and even necessary this may be,) alone and of itself, causes marriage to become a religious contract. Whatever the formality attending it may be, marriage in itself is virtually and of necessity a religious contract, unless when entered into by avowedly irreligious parties, and then not even the performance of a religious ceremony by a minister of religion could turn it into a religious contract.

A just observation of the peculiar characteristics of the sexes will suffice to show, that they were formed for each other, and were intended to be most closely and interiorly united, so as to constitute them "*no longer two, but one flesh.*" In the man, we behold strength, resolution, and intellectual power; in the woman, we perceive relatively weakness, timidity, and that dominion of feeling which belongs to, and indicates intense and ardent affection. In the one there is naturally more roughness of manners, and a certain dignity joined with hardness or angularity in his form; in the other, there is a soft beauty and roundness of form, combined with greater gentleness and sweetness of manners. The one is formed to direct, to provide, and to govern; the other to attract, to please, and to submit. The one appears relatively all intellect, the other, all affection. Now, these distinct and contrasting attributes in the sexes prove, *a priori*, that, independently of their natural tendency to each other,