

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE
THE PREACHER'S HOBBY

BY
CHANNING SEVERANCE

*An address delivered before the Los Angeles Liberal
Club, 517 South Broadway, Sunday
evening, April 7, 1910.*

12 11 49 PRICE 10 CENTS

WHAT THE LIBERAL CLUB STANDS FOR

While there are numerous places in Los Angeles where the many sects, churches, societies and political parties expound their peculiar ideas, there is but one society in this city, whose platform is as broad as human freedom, and from which the opinions and sentiments of all who will conform to decent usages can be freely expressed.

This society is the Los Angeles Liberal Club. It holds meetings in Mammoth Hall, 517 South Broadway, ever Sunday evening, and extends the right hand of fellowship to all who are in favor of getting out of the deep ruts of bigotry, superstition and error. All who dare to think for themselves are invited to attend its meetings. The club has no creed to which you are asked to subscribe, but is in favor of Free Thought, Free Speech, Free Press, and everything that tends to break the chains of mental bondage, ignorance and superstition.

If you are in sympathy with the aims mentioned herein, attend these meetings and you will often listen to the best literary, ethical, political, religious and scientific talent of which Los Angeles can boast.

HISTORY: The Los Angeles Liberal Club was founded in December, 1900, primarily as a permanent organization for holding Paine and Ingersoll memorials.

In February, 1901, it was formally organized with the Nine Demands of Liberalism as its platform. It then began holding weekly meetings from October to June of each year. In March, 1903, it was re-organized and a Constitution and By-laws adopted. June 17, 1905, it was incorporated under the laws of the State of California. Meetings are held on every Sunday in the year.

OBJECT: The club is formed for the purpose of gaining true knowledge and spreading it. Its specific object is the accomplishment of the Nine Demands of Liberalism.

PRINCIPLES: The club has no other principles than that implied in its Object, and it does not stand for the opinions of any member, or any set of members. The opinions of each by the others are respected and tolerated.

MEANS: The means employed for the furtherance of its object consists of Lectures and Discussion on Scientific, Philosophical, Moral, Religious and Social subjects.

MEMBERSHIP: Any person of good moral character may become a member of this club by signing the Roll of Members and paying a fee of 25 cents a month.

Marriage and Divorce

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

In these days of general progress, rapid changes, and surprising events, we find the clergy as stationary as ever and as much opposed to liberty as they always have been. Liberty to them is the most offensive word in the English language, and to keep the mass of mankind from enjoying it, has always been the prime object of priest-craft. Just now marriage and divorce is a perfect hobby with them, and they are doing their best to make escape from unhappy marriages harder and more difficult. From the pulpit and through the press they are making a great commotion, and their object is to influence legislation so as to control society as they think it should be; for assuming the existence of a phantom termed God, and professing to be his mouth-piece; they demand that statute laws shall conform to their wishes. There was a time when they had their own way in everything, and no one could oppose them with impunity, but the present is different, and I propose to express a few thoughts on this subject that conflict with theirs and the God they speak for.

Now what is marriage and why should it be regulated and controlled by priests and preachers. Marriage is the union of a man and woman for the purpose of enjoying companionship, making a home, and reproducing their species if desired. It is a matter that concerns them more than it does society or the priest, for on their fitness and adaptation for each other depends their peace and happiness in life, and if the wrong man and the unsuitable woman are caught in the matrimonial net, the result is hell of the worst kind, though their marriage was termed a "sacrament" and solemnized with all the pomp and splendor of religious customs and social conventionalities. But you cannot nullify the work of Nature by forms and ceremonies, and when she has placed natural barriers between men and women, a marriage ceremony cannot remove the same. It is not always known at time of marriage that such barriers exist, and for this reason mistakes are frequently made. Everybody knows that courtship is polite deception, and that sex passion in most cases is the impelling force

that brings men and women together. So there is no good reason for side stepping this fact, or turning from it with a false sense of modesty, for it is the master passion in human beings and is excelled by only one other thing; and that is the love of life itself, or self preservation. No man or woman born into this world is natural and normal unless well sexed, and he or she who lacks what is sometimes termed the "divine fire," is deficient in the force and vim that is needed to meet the endless struggle for existence. Without it they fall by the wayside and in many cases prematurely depart this life, which fact has long been the basis for the clergyman's claim that the good die young. As youth is pre-eminently the period of passion, it drives the young into marriage, when experience in life is very limited and much ignorance prevails regarding themselves and the world; so it is not strange that mistakes are many, and such unions are productive of misery and unhappiness. But the clergy don't care for that, and they are persistent in demanding that where marriage has taken place it shall be for life, regardless of natural antagonisms that develop later on, and not only make husband and wife cordially hate each other but insure constant quarrels and perpetual inharmony. Though love dies and natural aversion takes its place, the man who buttons his collar behind and speaks for God, says: "no divorce." In all the other affairs of life it is considered very foolish when a mistake has been made not to rectify it as quickly as possible, but when it comes to marriage, the most important event in a man and woman's life, the ultimatum goes forth from the pulpit: "the mistake must stand and shall not be nullified." And right here I want to call attention to one fact: Clergymen will unite people in marriage when they know they are totally unfit for each other, just to get their fee, and they do not care if they fight like cats and dogs ever after.

So we see the hypocrisy of these unctuous individuals when they tie up such incongruous characters and solemnly intone these words: "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." They know in innumerable cases, that the marriage they are officiating at with religious rites and ceremonials, is an improper one; that it must and will be productive of wretchedness and woe to those taking the vows, yet they go ahead and tie the invisible knot and virtually say, "now fight it out." Their idea of life is to regulate everything by statute laws and then to compel conformation; believing that liberty must never prevail without strings on it that those in authority can pull at will. This has always been the conception of priestcraft, and natural desires and inclinations have been condemned and denounced as sinful. To live natural lives and respond to the impulses of Nature, has

always been wrong in their eyes, and they have held, that that old Jew book to which they have appended the title: the Word of God, must be the guide and controlling influence in men's lives. They have never been students of Nature but have always given this old book preference when deciding how to live and what to do. What the mythical Jesus thought, who never married or had a home of his own in the story, is their idea of marriage and divorce, and nothing else can be tolerated for a moment. If there are divorces, (which the Catholic Church denies unless well paid in cash), they must be for only one cause, which Jesus approved, and that is adultery. No matter what agony of mind and body results from the matrimonial bonds that keep and hold antagonistic natures together, they would have such unions continued until death for "the good of society and the preservation of the home," unless one or the other was guilty of adultery; and then, could they have their way, no divorced person would be allowed to remarry. That is the preacher's idea of society as it should be, because a fanatical Jew pretending to voice the will and wishes of God 1900 long years ago, held such views. They never stop to think nor seemingly to care, what effect unhappy and improper marriages have on society in the offspring that result from the same, and which become component parts of the whole; and all their time and efforts are devoted to the enforcement of an inflexible rule regardless of what follows. Believing that total depravity is the natural inheritance of all mankind, because the Bible asserts that damnable lie, they have no desire to investigate the important part that unhappy and mismated parents play, in the production of brutal traits and criminal tendencies in their children. They shut their eyes to the plainest facts in Nature and persist in holding on to ideas that are deeply bedded in rank superstition. "We expect," said P. B. Randolph, a man who made these questions a life study, "that devils in hell will reproduce their species," for he found that like begets like under a natural law that cannot be escaped or avoided. So when a wife has a natural aversion for a brutal and repellant husband, and is forced to have children by him, common sense tells any one it is a crime against Nature. But what do the preachers care about Nature when they are trying to please a God they put back of her, who once denounced and condemned his own work. A preacher hasn't sense enough to know that Nature is supreme in her own domains, which include every spot and place in the universe; that her laws which are inexorable and immutable, are never affected or interfered with by his phantom God, who plays no part outside of the Bible in which alone he lives, moves and has his being, as a mental creation.

And yet such specimens of mankind assume to be its leaders and demand with all the arrogance of their profession that the people submit to their will. Talk about the blind leading the blind, there is no better illustration of such a thing than a preacher trying to direct and control the affairs of a natural world that he does not and cannot comprehend, because his time and attention are centered on spiritual things and spiritual causes. He is forever and always trying to get back of Nature, and is determined to ignore her and her laws, under the belief that a supernatural Power, which his prayers and pleadings can influence, is what does things. But the generating of human beings in the marriage state or out of it, is a natural process in which no God plays any part, and if the race is to be improved mentally, morally and physically to that extent which is possible, iron clad laws that insure sex slavery and pervert Nature's laws must go. More liberty, not less is demanded by every rational thinker in the world today, but the clergy are not in that category, so we still see them sitting on the lid, so to speak, trying their best to keep liberty in check. When it can be shown by indisputable facts, that mismatched fathers and mothers in marriage are a curse and an injury to society, it is the height of foolishness and folly to decry divorces and insist on the perpetuity of such conditions. And apart from the propagation of undesirable progeny, there is another cogent reason to be considered in the objection to misfit marriages—the victims of all such, in legal bondage, have a natural right to liberty and happiness which is denied them. Why keep them in mutual misery and make life a curse year in year out? Can any good reason be given for so doing? No; and if men and women must live all their days in a matrimonial hell to please the preachers and their God, they had better be dead than living. Think of living such a life as was revealed by the old lady's confession after her husband's death. Said she, "I sat at the head of his coffin and wept for hours, but—they were tears of joy." What is there in such a marriage to please a Christian's God even, and why should any one declare divorce an evil when it has power to terminate such an unnatural union of two human beings?

What is an evil anyway? Is it that which makes or mars human happiness? Reason has but one answer for this query, and it refuses to brand divorce as do the preachers; on the contrary, it declares an unhappy marriage to be an evil and the divorce which annuls it, a blessing. People who seek divorces are never those who are happily mated, so when a divorce is asked for we know without being told that life has become unendurable in the marriage state. It also shows that love is dead, and when it is, and only a legal bond remains to

keep a man and woman together, what rational idea can be adduced for prolonging their companionship as husband and wife? When divorces simply separate the incongenial and the incompatible, and are excluded from all happy homes by the power of love, to connect them with the word evil is foolish and absurd, and only a preacher or one who looks through a preacher's eyes, can see any trace of evil. If only unhappy homes are destroyed by divorces, then to deny them, means a desire to see such homes exist and the conditions that there prevail. No other view can be taken of the matter; so the preachers in fighting divorces are helping to prolong bitter strife, heartaches, regrets, gloom and despair. They are also helping in an indirect way to people the world with children born of lust instead of love, and I will mention one case referred to by a woman writer dealing with kindred subjects. A certain boy could never speak to his father unless he turned his back to him, which he invariably did because impelled to by some force in his nature. The reason for this peculiarity lay in the fact that for months during the period of gestation his father and mother never spoke to each other. It may not have been a crime against God to so live under the "divine institution of marriage," also labelled a "sacrament," but it was to Nature, and she resented it, as she ever does and always will. If we go to the states prison in Massachusetts we will find therein a man sentenced to life imprisonment when a boy for committing murder, and his mother admits that she made him one because of the murderous thoughts and feelings his father inspired in her during pregnancy. The preachers of course see in him evidence of total depravity, and prove by the Bible he came by it because of Adam's fall in which we sinned all, so deficient are they in reason and common sense, because of their theological training which makes God and the Devil, between them, accountable for all that occurs in this world. But let us not think these cases mentioned are isolated ones, and the conditions that surround the mother do not always influence the character of her offspring, for they do, and no religious belief or ceremony at time of marriage can prevent it. To live in a domestic atmosphere of hatred and aversion; to be in perpetual discord and inharmony, exerts an evil influence on unborn children that cannot be overestimated, and when a desire is felt to get out of such conditions through the divorce court, any one who opposes it is doing an injury to society instead of a benefit; for society is composed of units, and is just what they make it in collectiveness.

The more happy and contented individuals are, the more certain peace and harmony as a whole; so if that is what we all wish to

views of marriage. St. Paul as we all know stands next to Jesus as Christian authority, and he still does the thinking for untold numbers of religious sapheads and nincompoops. When we hear so much about Christian marriage, let us see what Christian authority says on the subject. Said this old wind bag: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. I would that all men were even as I myself. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn." Here is the Christian idea of marriage. Don't marry unless the fires of passion drive you to, and then for the sole purpose of physical relief. Here we see marriage condemned in plain words, and then degraded by being placed on the animal plane alone.

This old reprobate evidently knew nothing of the higher and refining forces of sex love; of the tenderness and affection that springs up and develops between those rightly sex mated; and for children born and raised in happy homes, where parental love could find expression and be enjoyed, he seems not to have had a thought. Is this idea of marriage correct, or elevating as a moral force? Certainly not; and the fact that such degrading ideas are found in the New Testament, and have had their influence for ages on human belief and conduct, explains why the world is steeped in gross sensualism today; and so many trying to live in accord with St. Paul's views, find marriage a failure; a delusion, and a snare. And so it will be ever, to all who have no higher conception of love and its latent forces; who look upon woman as the degraded and sinful creature the Bible makes her to be, and on whom child birth was inflicted as a punishment, instead of being, as reason reveals, a perfectly natural thing.

Whenever I hear Christians boasting of what Christianity has done for woman I always want to throw the lie in their faces, for her sex never had a worse or more despicable enemy. On her was made to rest the sins of the world, and Nature's way of reproducing the human species made her a creature so low and vile, that nothing but the grace of their old he God could purify her. Said the New England Primer in the good old days when women were tied to the tail of a cart and publicly whipped in Massachusetts, "in sin did my mother conceive me"; and motherhood has never been anything else in the eyes of Bible believing, orthodox Christians. And mark you this; every time the man in the pulpit refers to the immaculate conception, he casts a stigma on motherhood and indirectly confirms his belief that no child was ever born purely and properly but Jesus.

It is a dirty insult to every woman that lives, and they should

all resent it, but they do not because of their mental slavery, so I am going to do it for them. Any clergyman who says that Nature's method of peopling this earth is maculate or impure, insults the mother who gave him birth; libels her sex shamefully; casts discredit on the works of the Creator he believes in, and reveals the fact that he is a bigger fool, with the prefix damn, than was Thompson's colt. This is my opinion of the clergy or any man who places a higher estimate on a lot of old Jew manuscripts than he does on Nature's works and her laws, for such a man has become so saturated with senseless superstitions, that his power to think and reason clearly is gone, and with it what little sense he may have once had.

Now let us look at marriage and divorce from the standpoint of reason and common sense; let us drop the dead Jews and their phantom God and be governed by facts in reaching conclusions. Love is, or should be, the basis of every marriage; even the preachers admit that though when love is killed by neglect and cruelty, or dies a natural death, as it often does, they would still perpetuate the marriage; which is rank inconsistency. Therefore let us see what love is. It is nothing more or less than an involuntary attraction that exists between a man and a woman, and it can no more be regulated by law, ceremonials, or the lovers themselves by pledges and promises, by desire or by will, power, than climatic conditions recorded by the weather man, can be made to order or controlled by him. Love and hatred are both beyond human control and we love or hate, because we must and cannot avoid it, while in the presence of other people. For a man or woman at time of marriage ceremony, to promise to love their consort until death do them part, is one of the greatest absurdities that prevails. Neither has any control over that attraction that drew them together; and in thousands of cases it has died a natural death as mysteriously as it came. There is nothing immortal in all Nature except the laws that control her movements, they and they alone, are fixed, stable and unchangeable. But this does not disprove that many wives and husbands love each other as long as they live, and marriage to them is a source of happiness; it simply shows that absolute certainty exists in no person's life. You do not know when you marry that that powerful and pleasing attraction felt for your mate will be long or short, and only time can tell. If it should die from any of the causes mentioned, and you come to feel a growing hatred and aversion for each other, you no longer belong together and should separate. Neither Church, State, society, or any one else, can know your real feelings; so for any outside power to control your freedom to marry or to separate, is wrong, vicious and indefensible; and the

effort to do so since the dawn of human history has been productive of more evil than good, of more misery than joy; and it always will be so. Liberty is the natural birthright of every human being that walks this earth, and that right should permit men and women to mate at will and to separate the same way. If such liberty existed today homes would not be abolished and society would be just as cohesive as it now is, the preacher's ill-founded fears to the contrary. Men and women will mate as long as the race survives; and voluntary unions excel enforced ones from every rational and natural viewpoint. If a man and woman love each other you cannot drive them apart; if they do not they should not be forced to endure each other's companionship in home life. The dearest spot on this earth to normal men and women is the home; and to live in one of their own, with a loved and loving sex mate, is the dream and the hope of all who have not attained the same. So all this senseless talk of divorces breaking up homes and disintegrating society, is so foolish and silly only preachers and their dupes use it or believe it. Society is full of good men and good women living together without the formality of a state or religious ceremony, and in European countries and other Catholic localities where few divorces are granted, the number is large and increasing. Supposing everybody was living likewise, who would be injured or what harm would result? No one can tell; and the only result that would show up would be the loss of marriage fees to the State and the preachers. Think of the money wasted for tying and untying the invisible knot, and then we see why those privileges are desired. It is a universal graft and a mighty good one for tax eaters and preachers, who have always known it. Now let us take another view of this humbug marriage from the hold-'em-by-law viewpoint. A recent newspaper article tells how the license clerk at our courthouse often shudders, when he thinks of the probable future tortures that will attend the union of the man and woman he has just granted a license to marry. Why should he shudder? Because marriage gives a man rights over the person of his wife that no human being should ever have over another, and under the protection of marriage laws he can commit outrages that would send him to the pen for a long term of years if inflicted on a woman the law had not made his legal victim. Marriage to the man has always been a species of ownership since he got his first wife by forcible capture, and he has had more power over her life and health, than he could ever have obtained over a woman in any other manner. Marriage has put sensitive and refined women under the control of brutal men ever since the "sacred institution" was established, and marital excesses

and Rooseveltian child bearing have put more women in premature graves or the invalid's chair, than tight-lacing, over-eating, ignorance of natural laws and all the calamities fate sends to human beings. When the law gives a man the right to say she is "my wife," with it goes the virtual right to say, also, she is my sex slave; and unless he happens to get a virago who outclasses him in individuality, he is not slow as a rule to demand his rights and to get them. On the other hand, nothing is more pitiable than a hen pecked husband who is a standing apology for being on earth; and we are all familiar with such weak-kneed brothers who have been completely subdued by that unruly member, a woman's tongue. As Balzac informs us, love and marriage as known to the world, "is the romance of hell," hence, the license clerk's shudder. And yet some preacher is always ready to tie the knot, and until death recently removed him, and old preacher near the court house lived off from marriage fees. And up in the north part of the state a preacher admits employing a young woman as a capper to steer the would-be victims of wedlock over to his residence that he may tie them up and get paid for so doing. He says it is merely using modern business methods in his profession, and seems to think it all right, as did a preacher in Vermont who lately married a white woman to a negro, and then accused God of joining them together. So anything goes, and everything is sacred if a preacher performs the ceremony. This license clerk has had many years experience, and it is his opinion that while marriage at all times is a lottery, there are many cases where disaster can be seen in advance.

In his opinion 40 per cent of marriages are failures and mistakes, but in the judgment of well informed people who know the world as it is, he is low on his estimate. But granting for argument he is right and the other 60 per cent are reasonably happy in their bonds, what a seething, restless, wretched mass of humanity society still contains. And above and over it all, we find the preachers fighting divorces and calling them evils; which word rightly and properly belongs to every such marriage. He tells of forced marriages where parents compel unwilling daughters to marry men they do not want, do not love and cannot respect; and the parson is just as ready to tie the knot in such a case as any other. The preachers have just united in refusing to marry divorced people in this city, but they are still willing to tie up the most incongruous couple that requests their services; which fact shows how they really look upon marriage.

Up in the State of Washington, press reports say a man sold his white daughter to a Jap in marriage and a preacher tied them up; making it a sacrament, presumably, by the holy ceremony. As

the Jap only paid \$15 for the girl, it certainly needed a holy ceremony to endow such a marriage with sacredness and consecration to God. But that is the preacher's business, and no doubt they are all onto their jobs, and every kind of miscegenation could be made a holy affair if the government would permit. But looking at religious marriages from any viewpoint, what a fake and a folly they are. While the State regards marriage as a contract between a man and woman to live as husband and wife, and though it permits them to make the contract and denies them the right to break it, which is slavery, it does not profess to think God has anything to do in the matter, or the parties themselves undergo any spiritual, moral or mysterious change. It is a straight business affair, wherein both are supposed to voluntarily enter into slavery for life, or, until the divorce court frees them. The State would be much more in favor of easy divorces were it not for the preachers and their influence, for common sense creeps into our laws quite readily when they are kept at a distance. Our fool divorce law labeled "interlocutory" was the product of scheming preachers, who wanted to add to the misery of an unhappy marriage by making it impossible to get out of one inside of a year. Good horse sense would say, if a man and a woman are made so miserable by a misfit marriage they feel like committing murder or suicide—and many do—that the sooner such a marriage is annulled the better, but the preacher says: "punish them for their mistake."

We also have another law that shows the hand of the preacher at Sacramento, and that is the one that puts a man in San Quentin or Folsom for two years if he deserts a wife he cannot live with in peace and comfort; for that is the kind men do desert. And this fool law No. 2 is now lessening the number of marriages in California about 10 per cent, for only the foolish and the inexperienced will now slip their heads into the matrimonial noose. The wife can desert the husband any time and under any circumstances, even leaving a lot of motherless kids for him to look after, and the law is blind to the fact she has done anything wrong, so the penitentiary does not yawn for her. Therefore this desertion law might properly be called class legislation, which is forbidden by all constitutions; but religious influences wanted it and they got it. Now the law virtually says to the husband, stay with your wife though her antagonistic personality drives you insane, to murder or to suicide; for what the preachers term a "divine institution" must be upheld at all costs. And the preachers are not yet satisfied, for they are plotting for more laws and worse ones. They are determined if they have their way that marriage shall make a man's hell in this world, and unbelief in what

they tell him, his hell in the next one. They are opposed to happiness if it comes by living natural lives, and artificial restraints are their specialty, with which they want to make everybody think alike and do as they tell them. That is the sum and substance of priestcraft; but why priestcraft should be so mixed up and interwoven with our secular government is a question that needs an answer from our law makers. The government that Washington, Paine and Jefferson founded should never permit a priest or preacher to perform a marriage ceremony, for it is the State alone that makes marriage hold its victims, as religious fol de rol is merely a side play and of no account. But I would like to see both State and Church out of the business of marrying people, for the love relations of men and women are something that statute laws should have no connection with. I believe free love because there is no other kind in existence; it being utterly impossible to bind, hold or keep love in restraint. You may do that to bodies, and that is certainly all that is ever done by marriage; but love on which marriage is supposed to be based, is amenable to no rules of society and no restraints of law makers. It comes and it goes under laws of its own, and nothing will kill it much quicker than trying to force it. Being as before said an involuntary attraction, it is drawn not driven, to any person; and it can be held in no other way. I am not now referring to that lust which passes for a species of love; that is continually seeking change of mate and variety, but the real thing; which is of the head, the heart and the soul. True love, the kind that should mate men and women, while having its basis in sex that the species may be perpetuated, is something more than physical desire; than sensual gratification; which is the kind savages have in their undeveloped state, and which was the basis of a bright woman's remark the other day, "that most people are merely married animals." The Puritan idea of sex love is low and degrading, for they got it out of that old Jew Bible which teaches it, and the world has been cursed for centuries and is today, by the influence the "Word of God" has had in presenting and keeping alive such debasing doctrines as are found therein. The foundation of life is declared corrupt and sinful, which is a libel on Nature that priestcraft has always been guilty of, and every orthodox Christian Church has taught and promulgated this detestable lie since the birth of Christianity. We have had the story of the immaculate conception pounded into us since the fable of Christ originated, and in spite of the fact that no such thing ever occurred because contrary to Nature's laws, the clergy have ever contended and do yet, that any other method of being born into this world is impure and sinful. Is it any wonder society is cor-

rupted with degrading ideas of sex and sex love; that the tenderest and most sacred relations between men and women are held in low estimate, and obscenity it a favorite word?

To my mind it is not, and as long as the Bible idea that Nature's method of peopling this world is low, vile and sinful, such will always be the case; for though the Virgin Mary had seven children or more, every orthodox clergyman living, professes to believe that Jesus alone was born without sin and iniquity, because he did not have a human father. And this rotten nonsense is still taught by the black coats with solemn phiz, and believed by multitudes of sap heads, who are too credulous to doubt and too cowardly to think where not prevented by being incapable. But time is too limited to go further into this matter, which has been brought up to show what perfect fools the preachers are, or what consummate knaves; for only one or the other would be guilty of teaching such trash. And these enemies, these opponents of Nature and the laws of life, are the dominant force in society yet, for the regulation of our marriage and divorce laws. Are they the proper persons to control and decide such matters? Most assuredly not, and enlightened public opinion should relegate them to the rear with their worn out superstition and the idiotic ideas that go with it. If marriage is to remain a feature of civilization and statute laws are to continue as a binding force in wedlock, two things should be done for the good of humanity. The law should make it harder to get married and easier to get divorced, for by so doing a vast amount of misery could be prevented and destroyed. We have had easy marriages and hard divorces long enough, which is the preacher's idea, and it is time for a change. It is impossible to find a sensible reason for keeping a man and woman legally tied in marriage where they don't want to be, for besides being an injury and a hardship to them, no one else is benefitted in any way. There is nothing in this world for which a divorce should be granted more quickly than incompatibility, for out of that springs in many ways the manifestations of the worst things in human nature. When husband and wife have nothing in common, and their natures cannot blend and harmonize; when natural antagonism and aversion is felt every moment they are together, it is refined cruelty to hold them in that condition by law or public opinion. They should be freed from all obligations to each other, and be granted perfect liberty to seek happiness wherever they can find it. And yet under the senseless laws of this State, if both parties want a divorce it is denied them. One must ask for it and the other fight it, or pretend to, or it is not granted.

Cruelty is a cause for divorce in this State; but what causes

either party to be cruel if not incompatibility and lack of love. Three years ago our courts denied a divorce to a woman who testified on the stand that she loathed her husband. Loathing, says Noah Webster, means extreme disgust, abhorrence, detestation and hatred; yet all preachers and some judges think society would disintegrate and go to pieces if the law did not keep such mismates tied up. In this case a divorce has at last been granted, but not to the woman, for she deserted the man she loathed and he got it on those grounds, after she had made three ineffectual attempts to cut loose. Who was benefitted by prolonging this discordant union three years after the parties themselves found they could not live together? Only a preacher can tell, for to one at least it was three years of protracted agony. Now let us look at this argument about divorces breaking up the home. Everybody knows that hundreds of married people who could not live together are now living apart, and the home is already broken up. What more could a divorce do? Will the preacher please tell us. Were these married people voluntarily living apart granted a divorce, in many cases both would marry again and make new homes, so the argument lacks force, sense or reason. The preachers hold that for men and women to live together without being married is immoral, and yet when they are denied divorces they are driven into so-called immorality, for the sexes cannot be kept apart by any law of God or man, Church or State; and as long as the human race exists men and women will mate; marriage or no marriage. Over in England, where divorces are so expensive as to be a luxury and for that reason out of the reach of most people, efforts are now being made to simplify and make easier the getting of divorces, in order to elevate public morals. But there, as here, the preachers are fighting against it, determined to keep people in marital slavery or to force them into that immorality which they condemn so loudly from the pulpit. If this fact is not sufficient to show their assinine stupidity, it must reveal the effects religious superstition has on men in perverting their intellects; one or the other. If marriage is a contract as the State contends, then the parties with power to make such a contract should not be deprived of the power to break it. When they are, it is unlike any other contract, and cannot be distinguished from actual slavery. As a free-thinker and a freeloader, I believe men and women should mate and separate at will, without interference by either Church or State, for in no other way can they live natural lives and develop the best that is in them. There is no bond so strong as that of love and affection, and when the right man and the right woman meet, statute laws are no more needed to keep them together, than they are to make one eat

when hungry. Artificial restrictions in love affairs are great mistakes and always have been, for only experience can demonstrate who can and who cannot live together in peace and harmony, so when it is found impossible to do so, such restraints are wrong, unjust, and indefensible. It is my honest belief that marriage as an institution for regulating sex love and the mating of the sexes, has been productive of more human misery than any other law governing society; and for this reason I denounce the preachers who are standing in the way of rational progress and greater freedom, as the worst enemies to human happiness the world has ever known; so when the marriage and divorce question is rightly settled, it will not be by them, but by rational men and women using common sense based on human experience, which should be our guide at all times in every affair of life.



The Los Angeles Liberal Club

Incorporated June 17th, 1905.

PURPOSE: To disseminate truth, enlighten ignorance and dissipate superstition.

SCOPE: Science, Philosophy, Ethics, Religion, Sociology.

MEANS: Forty-five minute lectures, followed by questions and five-minute speeches. Floor free to all.

MOTTOES: Agitation promotes education. No subject can be too sacred to be investigated.

PLATFORM: The Nine Demands of Liberalism.

1. We demand that churches and other ecclesiastical property shall be no longer exempt from taxation.
2. We demand that the employment of chaplains in Congress, in the legislatures, in the navy and militia, and in prisons, asylums, and all other institutions supported by the public money, shall be discontinued.
3. We demand that all public appropriations for educational and charitable institutions of a sectarian character shall cease.
4. We demand that all religious services now sustained by the government shall be abolished; and especially that the use of the Bible in the public schools, whether ostensibly as a text-book, or avowedly as a book of religious worship, shall be prohibited.
5. We demand that the appointment, by the President of the United States, or by the Governors of the various States, of all the religious festivals and fasts shall wholly cease.
6. We demand that the judicial oath in the courts, in all other departments of the government shall be abolished, and that simple affirmation under the pains and penalties of perjury shall be established in its stead.
7. We demand that all laws directly or indirectly enforcing the observance of Sunday as the Sabbath shall be repealed.
8. We demand that all laws looking to the enforcement of "Christian" morality shall be abrogated and that all laws shall be conformed to the requirements of natural morality, equal rights and impartial liberty.
9. We demand that not only in the Constitution of the United States and of the several states, but also in the practical administration of the same, no privilege or advantage shall be conceded to Christianity or any other special religion; that our entire political system shall be founded and administered on a purely secular basis; and whatever changes shall prove necessary to this end shall be consistently, unflinchingly and promptly made.