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EDITORIAL

QUIT YOUR CACKLING!

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THE towering divorce figures, that are coming to the surface in every State that furnishes statistics on the subject, have set the tongues of politician-essayists, professors and pulpiteers awagging in their usual style. The gentry raise in chorus the cry: "More moral preaching!" The answer to the cry is: "Quit your cackling, if not braying!"

Marriage and Divorce are "economic sacraments." For the same reason that pears cannot grow on thistles, even if the farmer were to preach "morality" till he was black in the face, neither can marriage flourish on the thorny stalk of adverse economic and social conditions—not if all the morality-preaching brotherhood shouted themselves into chronic sore throats. As in the case of pears, the question is, What is the tree from which it is expected? In the case of marriage the question is, What are the social and economic conditions? The facts on the subject are enough to set on end the hair on the noodles of all those who are traveling placidly over the seething volcano of modern society.

In the United States there is an excess of males over females to the huge number 1,638,321. Nor is this symptom bad enough. Closer inquiry renders it worse. The inequality in the number of the sexes is not distributed equally over the land. In nine States, all Atlantic States,—Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia—females exceed males in number, while in three western States—Nevada, Wyoming and Montana—the males are over sixty per cent. of the population. There is worse. In the counties of densest population in the manufacturing eastern States the preponderance of women is such that many a town is known as a she-town. Theoretically, this rending of the sexes apart denotes unfavorable economic conditions. The theory is proved true by the latest figures for Massachusetts, where only 19,475 wage earners are found earning more than \$20 a week, while the wages for 437,469 others ranged

from \$15 down to \$5, and less—and this with a cost of living that has increased fifty-five per cent. since 1896. Needless to say that where such starvation conditions prevail among the masses of wealth-producers, immorality is bound to riot among the wealth-plunderers, while immoral practices cannot but be promoted all along the line. Accordingly, while the Nation's "elite" sanctimoniously indignates over the polygamous theories of Utah Senator Smoot, in manufacturing towns of the East the inversed polygamous practice is cropping up of several women clubbing together to keep one man; in the West polyandry gains ground; and everywhere the sumptuous houses of prostitution attest to the simultaneously polygamous and polyandrous practices that capitalism promotes among its elect.

Is it possible for marriage to flourish under such conditions? The Spanish-American War raised a bit of the curtain over this state of things. From General Merrit down, officers in the Army and Navy began marrying by the scores—the War furnished the material means for the consummation of relations that the absence of these means had barred. The facts on this head are so numerous one knows not where to begin. Just to mention one that has a gruesome bearing on the subject: The Vermont chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution encourages young girls to marry DECREPIT VETERANS,—with a pension!

Where marriages are rendered difficult by economic pressure, divorce must flourish. The essence of divorce is not the sundering of ties knotted by aldermen or parsons. Divorced are not only those whom magistrates "legally" separate; divorced are also those who are kept apart when they should be united; divorced, de facto divorced, are above all the vast number of those, who, though externally "married," are de facto separated, are divorced as though wide stretches of seas and lands lay between them,—that vast number whose "marriage" is typified by the union of young girls with "decrepit veterans who draw pensions."

The true figures of the divorced in the land are so huge that the imbecile whine of the "anti-divorce" moralists sounds like mockery—is insult added to injury.

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