

be guided by the description of the parties given in the Registrar's certificate to authorize the marriage, and the form R.G. 45, 'Particulars of Bride and Bridegroom.'

"I have no objection to your showing my letter of 16th instant to the Committee of the Presbyterian Assembly being convened by you.

"Yours faithfully,

"F. W. MANSFIELD, Registrar-General.

"The Rev. Robert Wood, The Manse, Waikari, Christchurch."

*Hon. Mr. Lee:* Following on that, I wish to ask, Where parties have been married by the Registrar has it been a practice in your denomination to remarry them on a second certificate from the Registrar? I am not aware of it. I have never done it, and would refuse to do it. I would absolutely refuse to do it. The deadliness of the situation presents itself to me in this way: Here is a couple married by the Registrar—

We do not want to know your reasons: we only want to know what has been done?—I would like to say—

You represent a community?—I represent the Presbyterian community.

And as their representative can you say, is it the practice of the Presbyterian community, after there has been a marriage before the Registrar, to remarry on a second certificate?—No; and here is—

That is all I want to know?—I may be permitted to point out here is our report—

It is sufficient if you say No: you cannot add to it?—I cannot speak for every minister.

I asked for the opinion of the Church?—The Assembly frowns on it. There is another letter, if you would like to hear it.

Is it from the Registrar?—No; it is from a member of the House. In 1912 I wrote to Mr. J. G. W. Aitken. I wanted to know if it was the practice of the Registrars, apart from the Registrar-General, and I wrote to Mr. Aitken suggesting that he should move in Parliament against it, and this is his letter:—

"DEAR MR. WOOD,--

"Wellington, 25th September, 1912.

"I have your favour of the 17th instant. Absence from town is the reason of the delay in replying. I have seen the Wellington Registrar on the question that you have raised. He assures me that the practice that you have drawn attention to is a very common one, and is not confined as between the marriage of a Roman Catholic and Protestant. Not infrequently two people of different Protestant denominations go through the ceremony twice; but the most frequent thing that does happen is that a marriage which takes place before the Registrar legally and properly, then they go before a clergyman and get married over again. I asked him where the clause was in the Act permitting of this double ceremony, and he said that it is because of the absence of any clause forbidding it that it is permitted. When they go before the clergyman to be married, or the Registrar, if they declare themselves to be already married and the conditions under which the marriage took place, and if it pleases them to desire a second ceremony, there is nothing illegal in it, and hence it is allowed. I discussed the question of legislation against it. He assured me that the thing was so common an occurrence that he was quite sure the House would not legislate against it.

"Trusting that you are well, and with best wishes, "I am, yours sincerely,

"JOHN G. W. AITKEN."

*Mr. Harris:* What is the date of the letter?—25th September, 1912. Our Assembly frowned on the thing. They were astonished when I reported it, and they authorized me to get a legal opinion and to prosecute the thing further. I was struck with illness at the time, and resigned the work I had in hand.

*Hon. Mr. Anderson:* If it is the wish of the Committee, I will telephone to the Registrar and get information on the matter at once.

*Members:* Aye, aye.

*The Chairman:* That is all the correspondence bearing on that point, Mr. Wood?—Yes, bearing on that point. I would like you to notice that the Assembly was astonished at this report, and authorized me to prosecute the thing further. I was knocked down with illness, and had to resign the convenership of the Committee. When Mr. Aitken wrote as he did—that the practice was so common that legislation would be almost impossible—it knocked the wind out of my sails.

*Mr. Harris:* Was Mr. Aitken Moderator at the time?—No. He represented the City of Wellington in Parliament.

Was he Moderator of the Presbyterian Church?—Not at that time. He was Moderator two years ago.

*The Chairman:* He is a prominent member of the Church?—Yes. Then I should like to have an opportunity of speaking on the question of the allegation that is reported in the Legislative Council's minutes of evidence—allegations repeated on the platform, and that will be made in the House of Representatives when this thing comes up again, about the *Ne temere* decree of the Presbyterian Church.

*Hon. Mr. Anderson:* You deny there is such a thing?—I deny it absolutely.

*The Chairman:* What we are chiefly anxious about is to avoid becoming involved in a long controversy on these issues, which might delay the Bill and might mean that no legislation would get through this session. If these statements have been made on the public platform, I think the public platform would be the best place to reply to them?—They were made by members of Parliament.

*Hon. Mr. Lee:* Members of Parliament say all sorts of things?—As one who has studied the subject pretty closely, might I say it seems to me the thing is in a nutshell. You have overwhelming evidence that from one Church come declarations that marriages of a certain kind are no marriages at all. There is no other Church in the land that makes a declaration that any State marriage is no marriage at all. That is the point.