

## Divorce in Odorhei County, during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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### Abstract

*The scope of our study covers the 19th century and a currently non-existent administrative unit within the borders of Romania, where Odorhei Seat, and after 1876, Odorhei County was found. In 1869, Odorhei County's population was 105467. The predominantly (98.57%) Hungarian population followed three different religions: Roman Catholic, Calvinist and Unitarian. In the investigated region, until the introduction of civil marriages (1895), the church possessed the right of declaring the break-up of families. As a source of our assessment we use ecclesiastical archival sources, principally divorce files (almost full collections in the Reformed and Unitarian church archives, conserved sporadically in the case of Roman Catholics). Our goal is to examine these sources from different perspectives, both quantitatively and qualitatively, collecting demographic, ethnographic and anthropological data. We are focusing on problems like: the number of divorces, internal and external factors influencing divorce, causes of divorce and their evolution, the evolution of sexual crimes, the meaning and the role of divorce in the traditional society etc.*

In our days, divorce is a permanent concomitant of marriage. The number of divorces was lower during the previous centuries but it has been present in the lives of people. In spite of this, the issue of disintegration of the families has been in the focal point of research to a much lesser extent than history of the family in general.

Our present research intends to contribute to knowing more about the history and characteristic features of 19<sup>th</sup> century divorces. In terms of time, the scope of our study covers the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while in geographical terms it covers a currently non-existent administrative unit within the borders of Romania, where Odorhei Seat, and after 1876, Odorhei County was found. This county was located in the Eastern part of the Transylvanian basin. During the history, this region used to belong to different historical formations: after 1711 until the foundation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1867 was subordinated to Habsburg rule. In 1867, it was united with Hungary.

According to the census data of 1869, the population of Odorhei County was 105 467 (Sebők, 2005, pp. 227-229). The predominantly (98.57%) Hungarian population followed three major religions: Roman Catholic (33%), Calvinist (35%) and Unitarian (22.57%). Accordingly, the county consisted of four different ecclesiastical administrative units: the Roman Catholic Deanery, the Calvinist Diocese, and two Unitarian Ecclesiastical Districts. In the majority, the population lived at settlements with less than 2 000 inhabitants. The centre of the county was the city of Odorhei, which had 4 376 inhabitants in 1869. Due to the characteristic features of the geographical environment, the population mostly sustained itself from agricultural activities performed on small and medium size farms, animal husbandry and wood cutting, while industry was characterised by handicraft activities. Every farm tried to be self-sufficient, and this fact had a strong influence on the intra-family relations and roles.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the basic institution of the society was the family, which was established by marriage concluded in accordance with the legal regulations. In this bond which was based on moral foundations, the society saw earthly security, while the Church considered it as the major tool to increase the number of its faithful congregation. Consequently, the family, due its many-sided role in the society – procreation of and bringing up children, maintenance of order and morality, legalisation of sexual life, assurance of material conditions for life, and the arrangement of inheritance with regard to the acquired financial goods – has at all times been in the focal point of attention both by the ecclesiastical and secular powers. The purpose was to prevent sins committed against the institution of the family and the penalisation of those who abused the social rules. All in all, the final objective was to prevent the disintegration of the family. In spite of this, the fact that young people did not really know each other at the time of marriage, together with the quantity and quality of compromises they had to make during the marriage, and the effects of the post-marital events on the family in certain cases resulted in resistance, lack of love and care, deviant behaviour and finally, divorce.

Until 1895 (the introduction of civil marriage), contracting and dissolving marriages fell into the competence of the Church in Transylvania (Pomogyi, 2000, 1894/XXXI). In the case of the Calvinists, divorce was declared, until 1868, by the Holy See operating within the frameworks of the partial synod, while between 1868 and 1895, the diocesan marital

court. The forums for appeal were the general synod, or the supreme marital court located in the city of Cluj. In the case of the Unitarian population, the sub-ecclesiastic benches took the decision at the level of the ecclesiastic districts, while the forum for appeal was the prelate bench in Cluj. Those Roman Catholic citizens who wanted to annul their marriage were sent by the local clergyman directly to the Catholic Holy See in the centre of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Alba Iulia.

The above listed institutions functioned as ecclesiastic courts. The mentioned Calvinist and Unitarian forums, for example, were convened at least three times a year under the chairmanship of the dean and the litigious parties were represented by lawyers (priests, teachers). During the activities of these forums, a lot of written documents were gathered and these represent the basis of our research. The official records of the Calvinist partial synod and the Unitarian sub-ecclesiastic benches contain the names and addresses of the litigious parties, the reasons for the conflict, the decisions taken during the official meetings, the judgement reached at the level of the diocese or the district, and the approval of thereof by the supreme court of justice. The documents recorded on the litigious cases by the Calvinist diocesan marital court operating between 1868 and 1895 are much richer. These documents include the registration certificates of the married couple, namely the birth and marriage certificates, the records of the lawsuit, health certificates, the good conduct certificates, the certificates issued on the dowry and the property, etc. The registration certificates facilitate for us to clearly identify the parties, know their exact credentials, and these give us a great opportunity to examine divorces from several different perspectives. In the case of Roman Catholic people, the decision about the divorce was made at the level of the archdiocese, and not at the level of the Roman Catholic Deanery of Odorhei. Consequently in Odorhei in the local Roman Catholic Archives divorce papers can be found sporadically, and in the Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Alba Iulia the divorce proceedings from all over the archdiocese are mixed, that made for us impossible to research those documents.

The operation and the rules of practices of the above-mentioned institutions were regulated by ecclesiastic and secular laws (Gregorius Csáthy's, 1813; Bod, 1836; Gámán János's, 1889), and the same applies to the reasons giving the basis for the breaking up of marriages. The competent ecclesiastic forums decided upon the invalidity or breaking up (divorce) of the marriage, but 'separation from bed and table' was also an option. It is a well-known fact, that the Roman Catholic doctrine did not permit divorce, only the annulment of the marriage. This could happen when an obstacle undiscovered at the time of the marriage, like, for example, kinship, valid engagement, valid marriage, illegal age limit, lack of consent, impotency existed. The Protestant forums verified invalidity, if, at the time of contracting the marriage, one of the partners was already married, or was under the prohibition to contract a marriage, if the marriage was forced, if the woman lost her virginity before the marriage, if any of the parties suffered from a hidden illness, etc. The Protestant forums dissolved the marital relationship in the case of marital infidelity, abandonment, making an attempt on the spouse's life, denial of sexual relationship, etc. 'Separation from bed and table' is also known from the Protestant documents on litigious cases. This verdict was provisional, and during the early years of the century, it could last even for 2 years, while in the second half, its term varied between six weeks and six months. In reality, this separation was an attempt for pacification in those cases, when divorce was applied for with reference to deadly hatred.

The prescriptions of the ecclesiastic rules and the operational characteristics of the ecclesiastic institutions exerted an influence on the behaviour of the parties who wanted a divorce, the accusations presented and the decisions taken. At the same time, the parties who wanted to be separated never applied for divorce based on one single reason, but we can always identify related and multiple reasons. However, the judgement was always made and declared based on the sin which was considered the most severe in the eyes of the Church, and this forms the basis of our statistical data. As a consequence, the data presented in the table shall be interpreted with great care, since a number of different reasons were lying behind the major reason included in the judgement. Witness testimonies give us a good opportunity to observe the correlations behind the individual situations, and we try to make a reference to thereof in our study.

Due to the previously presented reasons, we could compile statistical data from the Calvinist and Unitarian sources. Calvinist divorce documents remained from the period between 1801-1806 and 1813-1895, and the judgement declaring and certifying divorce were found altogether in 2 424 litigious cases. In the Unitarian Ecclesiastic District of Cristur, divorce was declared in 720 cases between 1852 and 1895, while in the Unitarian Ecclesiastic District of Odorhei this number was 474 between 1801-1858 and 1886-1895.

The rough divorce ratio (per 1 000 inhabitants) reached, and in some years exceeded 1 thousandth in the case of both the Unitarians (as ex. 1.15 in 1880 in the Unitarian District of Cristur) and Calvinists (as ex. 1.00 in 1880 in the Calvinist Diocese of Odorhei), while between 1876 and 1890, for example, the above indicator was only 0.08 percent in the territory of Hungary including Transylvania (Szél, 1934, pp. 759-761). The latter total ratio was evidently influenced by the lower divorce rates typical of the Roman Catholic population, but we failed to measure it in the case of the Roman

Catholic Deanery of Odorhei.

Consequently, the divorce ratio was high among the Protestant population, but the reasons for this phenomenon are, as yet, unclear. A number of different factors influenced the divorce rate. First of all, it is a fact that the Protestant society did not consider divorce a deviant behaviour, though it was far from being a daily routine or a normal event. It was interpreted as a tool to terminate the conflict between the married partners in divorce or the individuals who wanted to be separated and the community. The consequence of the divorce, according to the opinion of the time, was the clarification of the relations, the penalisation of the sinful party and asking for apology and giving pardon publicly (because the mentioned institutions penalised the sinful party; common penalisations were the penitence keeping and excommunication). Consequently, divorce, the legal, regulated and public termination of the marriage was far more acceptable for the society than confused, illegitimate relations causing conflicts and raising scandal.

The evolution of the number of divorces was influenced by the different periods of operation of the ecclesiastic forums. For example, in the case of the Calvinists, the number of divorces showed an increase during the last years of operation of the partial synod, because the institution failed to have sufficient capacities for control, thus divorces were declared quickly, which encouraged those who already lived in separation to launch their lawsuit. Political and military events also exerted influence on the number of divorces, including, for example, the revolution in 1848, since they caused changes in the mentality and, as a consequence, resulted in the increased disintegration of the families. General economic situation also affected the number of divorces. We have already mentioned in the beginning of our study, that we are talking about a society dealing with prime production. As a consequence of the land which was more and more cut into small pieces parallel with the population growth, the stoppage of technical development, the lack of large-scale industry and the Austrian-Hungarian-Romanian tariff war between 1886 and 1889, the number of those who went into domestic service and seasonal work to Romania showed a significant increase during the last years of the century. In certain cases this phenomenon resulted in the split of the families, and those who left their village and families behind definitely got out of the control of the local community, the family, their illegitimate relations became uncontrollable, the number of fornications, concubinages and consequently that of the divorces increased.

Besides the general factors, there also existed local, characteristic ones, which were, in certain cases of economic, in other cases of moral nature. This observation is supported by the examination of divorcing partners by their place of residence. Accordingly, there were villages where the ratio of divorced couples was higher than in others compared to the number of inhabitants.

We have studied the term of the marriages ending with divorce and the age of the divorcing partners on the basis of the registration certificates kept by the Calvinist diocesan marital court among the files. Based on these examinations we found that between 1868 and 1895, from 45.02 to 48.64 percent of the marriages broke up within 2 years after the marriage. However, while the number of these short-lived marriages was on the decline, the number of the divorces occurring after a longer marriage was increasing. If we compare these data with the age of the divorcing parties we find that 52 percent of the men divorced until age 29, and 53 percent of the women divorced by age 24. These findings are in harmony with the fact that according to our examination made in the registration certificates, the majority of the male population got married between the ages of 22 and 28, while most females married between the ages of 18-24. Some of the researchers are on the opinion that a large proportion of the divorces happened within 2 years after the marriage, because the young people this way had the chance to re-marry. In our case, this theory should be completed. Comparing the term of the marriages ending with divorce with the reasons for the divorce we managed to observe that the majority of these divorces was requested with reference to being forced to get married by the parents. Evidently, this was also influenced by the fact that, for example, the Protestant church law accepted forced marriage as a ground of divorce only within two years after the marriage. But we should not forget, that it could not be in the interest of those married couples who wanted a divorce to fallaciously ask for a divorce on the grounds of forced marriage, since it was always the forced party who was declared responsible and as such had to bear the quite high costs of the divorce. Consequently, the number of divorces taking place within two years after the marriage can not be explained only with the better opportunities to re-marry. This assumption is further supported by the fact that the age to re-marry could easily reach 71 in the case of women and 74 in the case of men. This is why, in spite of the high number of divorced persons, there were only 26 Unitarian divorced men and 37 Unitarian divorced women, and 30 Calvinist divorced men and 46 Calvinist divorced women in the county according to the data of the 1881 census (OMKSH's, 1882, pp. 108-115).

Going back to the term of marriages breaking up with divorce we found that the number of those married couples who divorced after ten years of marriage was on the increase during the second half of the century. In these cases, the most typical causes for the divorce were the following: concubinage, lecherous behaviour, alcoholism and the resulting incapability to manage the farm. In the case of women, we can find, though more sporadically, the bodily defects caused

by childbirth. The increase in the number of families breaking up after several years of marriage can be explained with the number of different reasons. On the one hand, changes in the mentality lie behind these divorces, but the spread of going to domestic service and seasonal work, which separated the families and provided income for a lot of women to finally become capable to step out of the bad marriage, was also an important cause. Concubinage and lecherous behaviour were spreading for the same reasons. It should be noted that marriages breaking up due to concubinage existed only in legal terms, since the party in concubinage already lived with his or her new partner, and the number of illegitimate children born (sometimes even nine children) refers to several years of cohabitation.

Among the statistical data on divorces we should mention that during the century, 58.54 percent of the divorces were initiated by women among the Calvinist population, and 58.29 percent among the Unitarian population. The above percentage ratios were influenced by the fact that mostly women were the victims of forced marriages. The ratio of litigious cases started by women clearly indicates the initiative talent of women in a social environment where the predominance and priority of men were unquestionable both intellectually and economically.

While examining the divorce proceedings, the most interesting thing, without doubt, is studying the causes of the divorces, though, as we have already mentioned, the quantified data shall be interpreted in the mirror of the characteristics of the ecclesiastic laws and the way of operation of the ecclesiastic judicial institutions. At his point we would like to mention that sentence for divorce was pronounced by the Calvinist ecclesiastic court immediately in the cases of sexual sins. Until 1881, the Unitarian courts, though applied the Calvinist marital law, took their decisions on different ground. In several cases, they only verified the suspicion of lecherous behaviour even if sexual debauchery was proved by the existence of illegitimate children, or concubinage lasting since several years. In general, it is a typical characteristic feature of the decisions of the Unitarian ecclesiastic courts that in the first step, they temporarily separated the married couples 'from bed and table', and if the partners did not reconcile with each other, they have pronounced the divorce with reference to deadly hatred. For this reason, while sexual debauchery is the main reason of the divorces in the cases of the Calvinists, in many cases the major grounds for the divorce is deadly hatred in the case of the Unitarian population. At the same time, the Unitarian marital courts frequently classified concubinage only as lecherous behaviour, in spite of the fact that concubinage was equally widespread among the followers of all the three religions, as it is clearly proved by the data in the registers of births and the registers kept on church visits.

**Table 1**

| Cause of divorce                                   | "The deviant" | Number of divorces                              |   |  |
|--|---------------|---|---|--|
|  |               | Calvinist Diocese of Odorhei (1801-06, 1813-95) | Unitarian District of Cristur (1852-95) | Unitarian District of Odorhei (1801-58, 1886-95) |
| Forced marriage                                    | Women         | 563   | 23                                      | 70   |
|  | Men           | 128   | 8                                       | 17   |
| Marriage contracted with financial interests       | Women         |   |   | 1  |
|  | Men           |   | 12                                      | 4  |
| Adultery   | Women         | 470   | 17                                      | 55   |
|  | Men           | 243   | 7                                       | 39   |
| Concubinage  | Women         | 80  | 1                                       | 3  |
|  | Men           | 103   | 2                                       | 3  |
|  | Both          |   |   | 2  |
| Denying sexual contact                             | Women         | 65  | 11                                      | 15   |
|  | Men           | 38  | 7                                       | 11   |
| Losing virginity before marriage                   | Women         |   | 5                                       | 5  |
| Wilful desertion                                   | Women         | 27  | 21                                      | 8  |
|  | Men           | 22  | 11                                      | 7  |
| Attempt on the spouse's life                       | Women         | 3   |   | 1  |
|  | Men           | 41  |   | 6  |
| Sterility  | Women         | 20  | 1                                       | 3  |
| Impotence  | Men           | 20  | 2                                       | 1  |
| Unlawful marriage                                  |               | 9   |   | 4  |
| <b>Deviant behaviors that caused deadly hatred</b> |               |   |   |  |
| Adultery   | Women         |   | 47                                      | 6  |

|  |       |      |     |     |
|--|-------|------|-----|-----|
|  | Men   |      | 18  | 2   |
| Concubinage                            | Women |      | 6   | 1   |
|  | Men   |      | 6   | 2   |
| Insatiability in the legal sexual life | Women | 2    |     | 1   |
|  | Men   | 13   | 17  | 5   |
| Neglect of the family                  | Women | 132  | 33  | 12  |
|  | Men   | 136  | 118 | 21  |
| Neglect of the farm                    | Women | 51   | 92  | 29  |
|  | Men   | 10   | 40  | 10  |
| Quarrelsome character                  | Women | 29   | 20  | 10  |
|  | Men   | 4    | 14  | 5   |
| Aggressive, pugnacious character       | Women | 5    | 2   | 1   |
|  | Men   | 137  | 71  | 34  |
| Alcoholism                             | Women | 12   | 11  | 14  |
|  | Men   | 11   | 46  | 23  |
| Swearing                               | Women | 2    |     |     |
|  | Men   | 2    | 3   | 1   |
| Theft                                  | Women | 1    | 4   | 3   |
|  | Men   | 1    | 5   | 3   |
| Illness, physical handicap             | Women | 26   | 8   | 6   |
|  | Men   | 18   | 10  | 3   |
| Deadly hatred without special causes   | Women |      | 6   | 13  |
|  | Men   |      | 15  | 14  |
| Total                                  |       | 2424 | 720 | 474 |

From the perspective of the Church, the most important reasons for the annulment of the marriages was the fact of being forced to get married by the parents or the relatives because the basic precondition for a valid marriage was the free will of the parties involved. In the researched region, all through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the power of the parents was prevalent within the families, and this phenomenon was further promoted by the fact that according to church law, parental consent was necessary for the marriage of females and those males who were economically dependent. Being forced to marry was typical of both the boys and the girls, but while in the case of sons, it was usually manifested in the form of persuasion, in the case of the daughters actual force was applied. Accordingly, diverse methods were used, ranging from beating to promising, denial of the dowry to disinheritance. Behind compulsion or force to get married, we can always identify financial interests. In reality, these were inter-family economic interests, since the parents wanted a man in good economic standing and with a prosperous farm for the girls, and for the boys, especially if he had many brothers and sisters, a girl who was expected to receive good dowry or a single child, who would thus inherit the whole property of the father. This is how the parents intended to avoid that the landed property of the family is divided into small pieces of land through inheritance. Those who were forced to get married were often orphans or semi-orphans. In the majority of the cases, these marriages were contracted so that the couple did not really know each other, thus the promise that they will get used to each other did not come true. In other cases it turned out that the chosen male partner was a swindler, or the girl had already lost her virginity, and the man who had to move to the farm of the girl inheriting her father's property was treated as a servant. As a consequence, the girl who was forced to marry sometimes refused to move into her husband's home, or spend the nights there, was unloving, or, at around the end of the century, escaped to domestic service, while the husbands made a good effort to chase out the wife who turned out to be a bad choice with rudeness, while the relationships, maintained with the old lovers resulted in libidinous behaviour.

In the eyes of the church, the guilty party is the one who made a false swear, cheated the partner, and made an insincere oath before the congregation and God. For this reason, this party was obliged, by the Protestant forums, to publicly ask apology, cover the costs of the lawsuit, and the parents who forced the marriage had to pay a fine.

According to the Protestant ecclesiastic law, the most fundamental cause of divorce was fornication. Besides the actual marital infidelity, lecherous behaviour also meant certain forms of denying sexual relationship, insatiability in legal sexual relations, effectuating sterility, and concubinage.

We can observe two different forms of denying sexual contacts. If there has never ever been a sexual relationship between the married couple, the marriage was qualified invalid. In such cases, real physical deficiencies seldom lied behind the lack of sexual relations, and the cause was rather the force to get married, since the parents were unable to force the married couple to spend the night together. If denial of sexual relations occurred during later years of the

marriage, divorce was pronounced. In such cases, cooled relationship, or illnesses caused by childbirth or accidents were behind the phenomenon. In the latter cases, the party who was sick, unable to procreate, or give birth was prohibited from a new marriage until recovery.

Fornication (in this case adultery) meant carnal relations outside of the marriage, and it could have several motivations, including keeping the contact with the old lover, the presence of soldiers, or moving to an alien environment for domestic service or seasonal work. Sexual excesses were considered to be serious sins both by the Church and the society. We can observe from the statistical data, that the number of divorces pronounced due to the lecherous behaviour of the women was higher. The explanation for this is that the adultery of the women was considered to be more severe, because if their act was managed to be kept in secret, that could bring an illegitimate heir into her husband's family. Consequently, such acts of the women were more stringently monitored by the community and it could be done with ease, due to pregnancies. Also the Church penalised more severely lecherous women. The protestant churches sentenced them to publicly ask for apology, they were excommunicated, and their re-marriage was the condition of church approval. The above punishments were completed with whipping, pillory and stocks by the secular forums. The Catholic communities applied, with predilection, the crowning of these women with straw wreath, and their forced appearance with thereof on the square before the church.

Cohabitation meant the illegitimate living together of the partners without marriage. It presumed both corporeal and emotional relations together with the maintenance of a common farm. In the divorce cases, we find that partners who did not dissolve their previous marriage lived in concubinage with each other, but the registers of births indicate that it was a fairly common form of relationship also between free partners. They decided in favour of cohabitation when the married couple failed to initiate that their marriage be dissolved, mostly due to financial difficulties, because the costs of one lawsuit varied between 35 forint and 90 forint, while a day-labourer earned one forint in four days. The cases of cohabitation became common during the last three decades of the century, and the spread of domestic service had a significant effect on cohabitation since the illegitimate relationship did not catch the eye in a strange village. Such kinds of relationships, namely cohabitation, were to some extent accepted or tolerated by the society since they differed from legitimate marriages only in the lack of clerical blessing, while the typical, traditional folk rituals were kept and these had a legitimising effect on the relationship in the eyes of the community.

Among the reasons for divorce, we should mention wilful desertion and making an attempt on the spouse's life. Wilful desertion meant that one of the married couple left the place of residence, broke contacts with the relatives consequently, his or her domicile was unknown. In such cases, the left-alone party was obliged, during the beginning of the century, to wait and publicly search for the gone-away partner. Should all these attempts fail, the couple was separated. Escape to domestic service from a bad marriage and/or joining the army by the men had similar results. Attempt on the spouse's life was the result of marital fights becoming more serious. In general, men were blamed for this vice, and the situation was the same when pregnant women were beaten up, or an object, like, for example, a firearm, a pitchfork, or an axe was used for beating.

Implacable or deadly hatred which could be caused by different deviant behaviours also represented a ground for a divorce. In such cases, the ecclesiastic forums first pronounced temporary separation, which meant 'separation from bed and table', and then, if the parties failed to be reconciled, they were granted definitive separation.

Quarrelsome, aggressive character and beatings could lead to deadly hatred. Swift-tongued behaviour of the woman represented the violation of accepting the decisions of the husband, and thus the questioning of the men's dominance and leading role. By means of the marriage, the husband was entitled to exercise superiority over his family. As a consequence, aggressive, pugnacious and quarrelsome men were viewed from a different angle. The litigious documents also indicate that beating as a tool to guide and educate was part of everyday life in the relations between the husband and the wife and the parents and their children. In general, aggressive behaviour and beating were accompanied by drunkenness, lecherous behaviour and neglect of the family both in the cases of men and women.

In some cases, changes in the morals of the spouse, like using swearwords or stealing was the result of hatred. To some extent, the use of swearwords was equal to incredulous life, and was often related to missing the church services, not keeping the religious feasts, or working on Sundays. Profane persons appear in the divorce documents especially during the first years of the century. They were penalised in large numbers also during the church visits, but then, at around the end of the century, this phenomenon disappeared from the sources. Evidently, blasphemy continued to be present in everyday life, and only the ecclesiastic forums lost their capacities to continue the fight against those who used swearwords.

The documents on litigations and divorce indicate the existence of two different types of theft. On the one hand, it meant the appropriation of the goods and possessions of others, and on the other, selling the property and goods of the



family by the wife without the consent of the husband, or taking away the dowry of the wife without her consent. Often enough, the latter was related to alcoholism, which caused that one of the spouses, in order to buy alcoholic drinks, stole or sold in secret the family property. The first form of theft indicated that the person in question became villainous, which deed became even more severe if he or she was imprisoned.

When it comes to illnesses and physical problems, the most common were dermatological problems, short-sightedness, epilepsy, physical handicaps, impotency and sterility. If the illnesses and physical deficiencies, or the impotency and sterility existed prior to the marriage but was kept in secret by the party who wanted to marry, it caused immediate divorce because this act was considered cheating the partner. If these problems developed after the marriage, they could result in hatred, like, for example, the dermatological problems, physical disabilities, or could make procreation or childbirth impossible, like impotency or sterility. Consequently, depending on their nature, these problems either hindered procreation and/or childbirth or caused hatred, or made the performance of the economic activities impossible, or the venereal diseases were the proof of unchaste life. If the illness of physical deficiencies made the procreation impossible, the Church prohibited these persons from re-marriage until they were recovered from their illness.

A frequent reason for deadly hatred was the neglect of the family and the farm. Neglecting the family meant the lack of love, grumpiness, the attempt to find faults in the other, the criticism of the spouse before others, withdrawal from the marital partner, and the refusal to care, feed and clothe the family members, or bad treatment of the step-child, etc. In general, forced marriage, lecherous behaviour and the resulting lack of love, sometimes physical deficiencies, illnesses, and the dissatisfaction of the parents were lying in the background of this phenomenon.

Neglect of the farm meant that the husband turned out to be a bad farmer or the wife a bad housekeeper. The Church did not really attach great importance to this phenomenon, unless it endangered the survival of the family. However, the society despised the lavish, lazy persons who did not make their farm and property grow. A number of different reasons can be found behind such behaviour, like alcoholism, forced marriage, the unwillingness of the new partner to accept the new home and thus the refusal to meet his or her obligations, lecherous behaviour, ignorance, and lack of practice. The society labelled as bad housekeeper the woman who did not cook, did not like housework, did not wash the clothes, did not clean the house, did not help her husband in the agricultural activities, could not make bread, did not weave or spun, but rather spent her time chatting with the neighbours, etc. Those men were considered to be bad farmers who did not cultivate the family's land, did not know how to perform agricultural activities, how to breed the animals, and sell the agricultural products.

The typical figures of bad farmers and bad housekeepers were the drunkard persons who, in stead of caring about the farm, spent their time in the pub spending the family money there. Drunkenness was usually coupled with immorality, lecherous behaviour, performing useless activities, like playing the cards and smoking.

The data presented above only represent a small portion of the information provided by the documents kept on divorce cases. Our sources provide us the opportunity to monitor the expectations of the society towards the individuals, together with the consequences of resistance to meet the expectations. We can observe a patriarchal society in which the priority of the males is tangible. The scope of life of the women was fairly limited in geographical terms, since their life started under the control of their father which was substituted by the control and guidance of the husband. Not much attention was paid on their education, thus the number of illiterate women was high. They were considered to be incapable to run a business independently both from physical and intellectual perspectives and their property, unless they were the only child in the family, was usually limited to the dowry, which could be refused by the father if they did not behave properly before the marriage, for example, lost their virginity, or chose a partner which the family did not like.

The life of both the men and the women was determined by the preparation for family life and then settling down to family life. Education of the sons was the task of the fathers while that of the daughters of the mothers. (This is proved by the decisions regarding the children: in the case of divorce, the Unitarians left the boy who was more than 4 years old in the father's care, while the girls were always left to stay with their mothers, unless they committed a severe moral sin.) The objective was to learn the roles within the family. The separation of the roles within the family was affected by the fact, that due to limited economic conditions, the families were settled for self-sufficiency. Each and every family member had a precise scope of duties, which had to be fulfilled, otherwise the well-being of the family was in danger, and difficulties were caused to the partner in marriage.

In ordinary cases, the family which was established by marriage was supposed to mean the matrimony of the couple, their mutual help, and the procreation of common children and the assurance of financial conditions. The lack of sufficient knowledge about each other prior to marriage (in the case of forced marriages), together with the quantity and quality of the compromises the partners had to make at the marriage and during the marital life and the influence of the post-marriage events on the family in certain cases resulted in opposition, lack of love, deviant behaviour, denial to meet

the obligations, refusal of the expectations and finally disintegration of the family. The Church set up a priority of the deviant behaviours outlined on the basis of the divorces but parallel with this hierarchy there was another list defined by the society. The latter one was influenced by the real events and difficulties of everyday life. This is very well reflected by the diverse opinion by the Church and the society about forced marriages and, even more, about persons neglecting their farm.

Changes can only be witnessed at around the end of the century, when the status of women changed, because, due to the economic difficulties they were forced to perform domestic services, thus became money-earners, and this way, going for domestic service became an alternative to accepting the fate defined by the parents. At the same time, these women went through an intellectual development as well, since they learnt languages and a different way of house-keeping. All these broke the previously strictly outlined family roles and the status within the family and also cast a different light on the behaviours of refusal which were previously considered deviant.

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