

Great Britain, Austria, Hungary, Russia and the United States, are the principal Powers which have not as yet given their adhesion to the Convention, but it contains provisions for adoption by non-signatory Powers represented at the Conference.

Reverting to the special subject-matter of the Blue Book, the three principal points above mentioned may be severally considered:—Firstly, how far, if at all, are British Consular Officers competent to solemnize marriages in a foreign country? It is, of course, a condition precedent that, to give him such competency, a British Diplomatic Agent or Consul shall hold a warrant from his own Government duly constituting him a Marriage Officer.

Belgium and Greece are the only countries in respect of which it may be said with certainty that British consular marriages, there celebrated, would be held also to be there valid; and, in the former, only when both the contracting parties are British subjects.

In certain countries, such as Denmark, France and Italy, the validity of such marriages, whether one or both of the parties is, or are, British, is not free from doubt.

So in others, for example, Argentina, Hungary, Mexico, and Russia, consular marriages are permitted to be celebrated, and are tolerated, but they are not recognised as valid in those several countries: the parties, therefore, must remember that, in the absence of a ceremony valid according to the local laws, they may be treated as unmarried, and thereby be subjected to serious inconvenience. It must be observed further, that in Russia, British Consular Officers are forbidden to solemnize a marriage, either party to which is (a) a Russian subject, or (b) a member of the Orthodox Church.

In Spain, British consular marriages are not permitted, because there is no reciprocity with our own country in that behalf: and (perhaps) in the Netherlands, because Great Britain is not a party to the Hague Convention, upon which the kingdom of the Netherlands relies.

As to the second point, that is, what special formalities are