

even if the fact of their possessing civil validity would increase the number of such marriages, it would seem a questionable mode of discouraging an undesirable marriage to take care that, when contracted, it should have no force in law, but that parents and children should live out the rest of their days under the perpetual stigma and damage of illegitimacy.

It may, therefore, be taken for granted, that the Catholic Church does not desire that civil validity should be withheld from these marriages for the purpose of discouraging them.

(3). The fear lest Catholics might be married without dispensation is probably groundless; but, even if such a result could be foreseen, the desire to prevent it could not justify the withholding of civil privileges of inestimable value, and which ought to belong to every allowable marriage. At the present moment, however, we are not without the means of judging on this point. As the law now stands, the marriages of first and second cousins are allowed by Catholics only on dispensation; yet, when contracted, they have full civil validity, being thus in exactly the same position which would be occupied by marriage with a deceased wife's sister if the contemplated statutory change were effected. But does any evil of the kind anticipated result? Do Catholics marry before a registrar without dispensation? It would be a very strange thing if they were to neglect or refuse to obtain a dispensation, simply because the marriage they were about to contract would be legally a valid one. I am informed as a fact, that they seldom omit to procure dispensation.

Do marriages of first and second cousins, among Catholics, after dispensation, differ ecclesiastically from marriage with a deceased wife's sister? I believe I may answer, in no wise. Can any good reason be assigned why the former classes should have civil validity and not the latter? I venture to answer, none.

Catholics, in hitherto omitting to promote the legalization of such marriages, may have been influenced by some prejudice