

In old days Mrs. Grundy said that people who were not quite sure that they would find matrimonial bonds easy enough to bear often left a way of escape by employing a sham parson; but no such trial marriages are allowed in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, or Rhode Island, for in all these States the law says expressly that when a marriage has been solemnized by a person professing to be legally authorized, although not so authorized, its validity shall be unaffected by such want of authority, if it be valid in other respects and entered into by the parties, or one of them, in the belief that they were getting lawfully wedded. This is also the law in a great many of the Western States.

In Massachusetts until a few years ago one could be married by any Justice of the Peace; now the privilege is limited and no Justice can unite others in wedlock unless he also holds the office of City or Town Clerk, City Registrar, Clerk of a Court, or that of assistant in either case, or unless he has been specially designated by the governor. This State also insists that no one can perform such a ceremony unless he can read and write the English tongue. The monopoly thus granted to the language of a foreign nation may not be oppressive while the present *entente cordiale* continues, but suppose troublous days like those of 1776 come again; may not some red hot members of Congress again submit "the resolution that the use of the English language be abolished"; and may not our brethren across the line adopt the amendment of Roger Sherman "that we (the American Citizens) compel the English to learn Greek, and keep their language for ourselves."

It has been decided in this State that an entry by a man in his diary, "Hand in hand through life we go and share each other's joy and woe," followed by cohabitation of the writer with the woman spoken of, will not afford conclusive presumption of marriage. (*Norcross v. Norcross*, 155 Mass. 425.)

In Virginia so long ago as 1780 an act was passed nominally for the purpose of "encouraging matrimony," and yet even at the present day a justice of the peace, as such, has no authority to marry; so too in West Virginia only the religious celebration by a clergyman, according to the usage of a society having no officiating minister, is valid; a lay ceremony is not recognized there by statute. In Maryland parsons still have a monopoly of the matrimonial business, as under the illiberal act of 1777. In Georgia colored ministers of the Gospel, or ministers of the Gospel of African descent, are only allowed to marry freedmen or freedwomen, or persons of African descent.