

its officials. By what authority does the Papacy promulgate these laws and enforce them? Here is the reply of the Canadian bishops, given in a pastoral letter of so late date as May, 1896—

"If the bishops, whose authority issues from God Himself, are the natural judges of all questions which touch upon the Christian faith and morals; if they are the acknowledged heads of a perfect condition of society, sovereign in itself and standing above that of the State; it follows that it is in their province, when circumstances render it desirable, not merely to express generally their views and wishes in regard to religious matters, but also to indicate to the faithful the best means of attaining the spiritual ends in view."

#### **EXAMPLES OF ITS WORKING.**

It was some time before non-Catholics realised that there existed among them such an organisation as ecclesiastical courts for the administration of canon law. Attention was first drawn to these Courts by their annulling marriages, and demanding the King's Courts to give their decisions civil effect. Here are a few typical cases. A couple were married by a priest. As to the formalities of the ceremony there was no question raised. After the couple had lived together for a considerable length of time the man wished to get rid of his wife, and asked the Canonical Court to declare their marriage null and void because they were second cousins, a fact he had concealed from the priest who had married them. The Ecclesiastical Court found the canon law had been broken, and, therefore, no marriage had been celebrated. The man's lawyer, producing a decree to that effect, appeared in open Court, and asked one of the King's Judges to give the decision of the Canonical Court civil effect, which he did, and the

fellow married another woman. A couple, both Catholics, were married at the altar of a Catholic Church. Tiring of each other, they agreed to separate, and applied to the Canonical Court of the Montreal Diocese. Evidence was led, and the ceremony was declared defective on the ground that the parish priest of neither had officiated at the ceremony, and had received no dispensation from their bishop to act. The Civil Court confirmed the decision, and they were as if they had never pledged their troth to one another. A professed free-thinker married a Protestant, and after four children had been born he got rid of his wife by declaring to a Canonical Court he was a Catholic, and, therefore, the marriage ceremony was of no effect. This is one of several cases where a marriage by a Protestant minister, one of the contracting parties being a Catholic, has been ratified by the King's Courts of the Province of Quebec as no marriage. There is now a case in appeal, where two Catholics visited the house of a Methodist minister, produced the licence required by law and were married. After living together and two children had been born, the man asked the ecclesiastical Court to declare he had not been married, and it did so. The decision was given civil effect by a King's Judge sitting in Montreal. As stated, an appeal has been taken by the woman's friends—the first time the validity of canon law has been questioned as to marriage. Had the M'Cann case happened in Quebec the King's Courts would have ratified the action of the bishop, and neither he nor the children need have disappeared. As the law now stands in Ireland he is amenable to the Courts for his conduct. With Home Rule in force he could snap his fingers at his wife and her friends, as fellows like him do this day in Quebec. The Church of Rome condemns divorce, yet separates couples for causes that a Chicago Judge would not consider, and does so in the name of Christ! The Archbishop of Montreal,