

AS SEEN THROUGH WOMAN'S EYES.

Romantic Tale of Two Wives.

WORLD-WIDE ADVENTURES OF AN ARCHDEACON'S SON.

If the very complicated double love story that was told on the afternoon of Friday, June 10, in the Divorce Court, London, were to be published in the form of a three-volume novel—and the tale would very well fill three volumes—the title of it would be "The Romantic Adventures of an Archdeacon's Son." The Archdeacon's son (says the "Daily Mirror") who figures as respondent in a nullity suit, was Mr Frederick Thomas Mead Gibbs, whose father for many years performed archidiaconal functions at St. Kitts, in the Virgin Islands.

Mr Gibbs, jun., was born in 1856, so his second courtship at Harrogate, in 1901, which, having resulted in a disputed marriage, was the "motif" of the proceedings under notice, took place when he was 45 years of age.

Mr Gibbs has, as a matter of fact, twice gone through the ceremony of marriage. His first experience took place in 1886, in Australia, and the second three years ago, in the English watering place.

Both ladies are alive, and it was the second bride, Muriel Baker, as she is now entitled to be called by order of the Court, who was petitioner in the law-suit romance heard on the date named.

In 1901, said Mr Priestley, K.C., the second "Mrs Gibbs" counsel, that young lady was staying with her mother at Harrogate. Here she was introduced to Mr Gibbs, who was in the interesting position of being a wounded hero from the South African front.

He told her that his father was an Archdeacon, and that he himself was a widower with three children. These statements she afterwards found were true, with the exception of what Mr Gibbs said about being a widower.

MARRIED SECRETLY.

Although her mother—a lady with considerable property in the Eastern counties—was by no means averse to the soldier's suit, the latter pressed Miss Baker to contract a secret marriage, and the wedding took place at a registry office.

It was not until some days after the marriage that the new Mrs Gibbs heard the truth of her husband's matrimonial history. He then told her that his first wife was still alive. She had divorced him in Australia, he said.

A further public ceremony of the Gibbs-Baker marriage, which nobody as yet knew of except themselves, was in the course of arrangement, but it never took place. Mr Gibbs began pressing his young wife to make him trustee of her private fortune.

She said "No," and then he became so angry that she ran away from him and refused to have anything more to do with him.

Having thus detailed this latter-day episode in Mrs Gibbs' love-making career, Mr Priestley went back years and years, and gave a full resume of the Harrogate invalid's parentage, early training, and first love and marriage.

Before going into particulars, he said that his contention was that Mr Gibbs' first marriage had never been properly dissolved, and that, therefore, the "second Mrs Gibbs" was entitled to a decree of nullity.

Mr Gibbs' father, continued the K.C., was born in Ireland. In 1845 he went over to Derby to be ordained, and became curate of St. Mary, Southwark.

After his son was born he became a colonial archdeacon, and finally settled at Teddington.

It was from there that young Gibbs went on the training-ship to become a cadet. He went on his first voyage in 1870, and made it memorable by running away from his ship at Capetown.

WORLD-WIDE WANDERINGS.

Mr Gibbs' adventures for the next 15 years must have been of a nature to supply a writer such as Mr Clark Russell with material for endless books. In turn he visited the Indian coast, England, the U.S.A., Port Elizabeth, Jamaica, went once again to England, and then spent three years in constantly

crossing the Atlantic between South Africa and South America.

After another visit to England and a trip to New York, he found himself in Sydney, making love to the young lady who became his first wife.

Among the names of the places in Australia where temporary homes were established, according to a list read out by Mr Priestley, were Newcastle, Sydney, Brisbane, Bolax, Ararat, Ballarat, Melbourne and Grafton.

At several of these places the home was established more than once.

Finally, in 1892, Mr Gibbs announced to his wife that he was going sea-voyaging again. It was his intention, he said, to sail to England.

At this point in the history of Mr Gibbs' wanderings, Mr Priestley pointed out that out of the six years spent in Australia the Gibbs' menage had been situated in Victoria for over four years. When afterwards, therefore, Mrs Gibbs got the New South Wales Courts to grant her a divorce, those Courts had acted beyond their jurisdiction, for the Gibbs' domicile, if anywhere in Australia, was in the other State.

"Dear Mary," wrote Mr Gibbs, when he sailed away from Australia en voyage for England, "God bless you and our dear children. . . You and my children will be my constant thought. With fondest love and kisses."

GIVEN UP AS LOST.

But Mrs Gibbs never saw him again until long after she had given him up for lost and obtained an Australian decree of divorce.

Instead of going to England Mr Gibbs turned up in Chili. He was discovered keeping a school called the "English College" at a place named Antofagasta. He had got 220 pupils—so he wrote to his wife—and was doing well. He asked her to join him. "You could come over here pretty cheaply," he said, "and I trust to make my wife's and my little ones' lives happier."

But when Mrs Gibbs made arrangements to go to Antofagasta Mr Gibbs had again flitted. He was in England travelling round the country selling a book which he had written about his remarkable adventures.

He returned to Australia in 1898, having had a dispute with his publishers, six years after he had sailed away "with fondest love and kisses."

It was then that he discovered that, according to New South Wales law, he was no longer a husband. The divorce had been granted for some time.

To console himself—he made no effort to get the decree rescinded—he betook

himself to South Africa on more adventures, and here it was that he won the wounds against the Boers that gained Miss Muriel Baker's affections.

Mr Priestley had now, in the course of his narrative, got back to Harrogate, and he added a romantic little incident that occurred there. While Mr Gibbs was courting Miss Baker he sent a photograph of himself to his erstwhile Australian wife.

DECEIVING TWO WOMEN.

"He was writing to his first wife," said Mr Priestley, "telling her she was the only woman he had ever loved, and he was telling Miss Baker the same thing."

Mr Priestley's remarkable story, as far as it referred to Harrogate, was supported by the second Mrs Gibbs, or, rather, Miss Baker, who proved to be a tall brunette, with strong handsome features, and by Australian affidavits.

Mr R. O. B. Lane, who appeared for the respondent, said that he did not intend to call any witnesses, and submitted that the respondent had acquired a domicile in New South Wales, and that, therefore, the Supreme Court of that State had jurisdiction to dissolve his marriage. He had served in a regiment in which none but New South Welshmen were allowed to serve.

The President (as reported in the London "Times"), without calling upon Mr Priestley to reply, said that the case was quite clear. In questions of the domicile of a living person no one could prove intention better than that person himself. In the present case the only evidence in this direction was a written statement from the respondent. The respondent was a wanderer, and it would be difficult to say whether he had ever acquired any domicile apart from his domicile of origin. He had never seemed to settle down anywhere in the way people settle down who meant to stay in a new country; and in his opinion the respondent's domicile was English, and his marriage with Emily Armstrong Cooper, as far as this country was concerned, had never been dissolved by a Court of competent jurisdiction, and, consequently, there must be in this suit a decree nisi of nullity.

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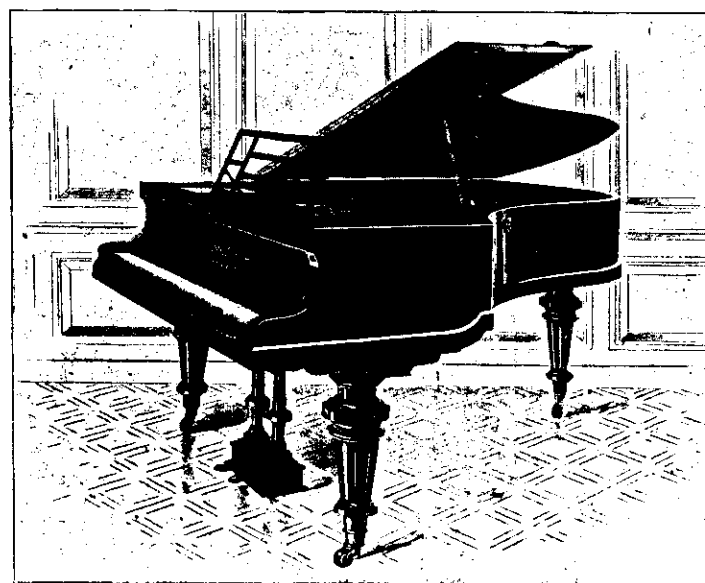
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