

A BURGLAR'S DIVORCE SUIT.

Though a Law-Breaker by Trade, Langdon W. Moore Appeals to the Law to Sever His Matrimonial Bonds.

An Interesting Question as to Just in What Degree of Style the Wife of a Professional Burglar at the Tip Top of His Profession May Reasonably Demand to Be Maintained.

A MAN whose hand throughout a long and varied career has been uplifted against society, which has likewise been arrayed against him, a man with a name famous in the annals of crime, who has always hated laws and courts and judges as the instruments which have sent him to prison, such is Langdon W. Moore, whose divorce suit against his wife was under advisement yesterday by Judge Truax of the Superior Court.

More than ordinary interest attaches to this case, as it not only shows the domestic life of a bank burglar who was a king-pin in his profession—of which life the public generally hears but little—but it also presents the anomaly of a man who has always been an enemy of courts of justice, which from time to time have interfered with the free pursuit of his profession, now turning to those

same courts for relief in his own hour of trouble.

Langdon W. Moore is a man who has made burglary a fine art and safe-cracking a science. None of your Bowery sneak-thief ilk is Moore. The frequenters of the low, east-side dives where ordinary criminals congregate have never had the honor of his acquaintance. If he met any of them on the street and knew who they were, which would not be likely, the chances are that he would pass them by in quite as lofty disdain as any substantial and respectable citizen of Manhattan Island would under the same circumstances. They are not in his class.

If there is any man alive who can steal in a gentlemanly, suave and polished manner, Langdon W. Moore is that man. It has been said of him that he could ride the contents of a safe in the presence of its owner,

and do it with such delicate tact and with such a courtly bearing that the victim would in some unexplained way vaguely feel under obligations to him.

If you met Mr. Moore and did not know him, you would almost be willing, if you had sporting blood, to place a small bet affirming that he was a bank president, or at least a retired merchant. He is tall and portly in figure, polished and polite in manner, with a cold and calculating eye and a neatly trimmed iron gray beard. He has seldom been dressed in anything else than prison stripes or broadcloth for the last twenty years. If the former did not become him it was not his fault for the material was never of his own choosing, although he has been clad in it for years at a time, nor were the garments made by his own tailor.

It was only in September last that Moore was released from the Massachusetts State prison, to which institution he was sentenced for robbing the Charlestown post office about ten years ago. They did not catch him for some time after the robbery, but when they did he was promptly convicted and sent up for ten years. He was as good a prisoner as he was a burglar, and received all the legal commutations of his term. Of course he drifted to New York as soon as he was released, but Mrs. Moore was not waiting with open arms to receive him. They have been separated for the greater part of their married life, owing to circumstances over which neither had any control. It was twenty-four years ago that the ceremony was performed which made them man and wife. Sixteen years of the time since then Moore has spent in prison.

His wife charged non-support. The bank burglar was again arrested on Nov. 18 last. This time his wife was the complainant, and she charged him with failing to provide properly for her support. The case came up before Justice Welde, in the Harlem Police Court. Mrs. Moore claimed that her husband had received \$1,100 from the prison authorities at the time of his discharge for overwork which he had done for them. She also alleged that he was the owner of a farm of sixteen acres in Framingham, Mass., worth at least \$8,000. Notwithstanding all this, she tearfully told the Police Justice that she was destitute, and that Moore refused to support her.

The latter denied both statements as to his resources and declared that he had no money whatever. He said he had not had an opportunity to get to work again since leaving prison, and that he was unable to provide for his wife. Justice Welde believed him and dismissed the complaint.

Moore did not forgive his wife for causing his arrest, and his retaliation was quick and sure. In less than twenty-four hours he began a suit for divorce, naming Herbert M. Thompson as the co-respondent. As this suit has progressed a curious tale has been unfolded of the domestic life of both husband and wife.

They were married in August, 1866. Mrs. Moore claims that she was then worth \$10,000 and that she knew nothing of the character of the man she was marrying. At that time she was the widow of "Doc" Cunningham, the famous Western prize-fighter, who had a notorious reputation as a general desperado on the Pacific slope. He was sent out of San Francisco by the Vigilance Committee and came to New York, where his life continued to have a great deal of spice and variety about it. He sustained his reputation by dying with his boots on, being killed in a Howard street dance-hall by the notorious "Paudeen."

AN ENCOUNTER WITH A KNIFE. The man Thompson is a well-known gambler and saloon-keeper of this city. He was one of Jimmy Hope's witnesses in the famous Manhattan Bank robbery trial. Moore knew him before he began his last

term for the misunderstanding about the Massachusetts Post-Office. Upon his release from one of his former terms of imprisonment a ward detective met him on Twenty-third street and told him sympathetic stories about the way in which Thompson had won his wife's affections while he was behind the bars. A few days later he met Thompson on Bleeker street. "I have heard some stories about you," he said.

"I don't care if you have," replied Thompson.

"It won't be well for you if they are true," continued Moore, fiercely.

"Oh, I guess it won't make much difference," was Thompson's calm reply.

The two men glared at each other for a moment, and Moore made accusations which Thompson did not deny. Hot words passed, and finally Moore whipped out a big knife and slashed the gambler in the face, inflicting serious wounds of which Thompson bears the marks to this day. Curiously enough, no arrests followed. Thompson had no complaint to make to the police. It is a curious feature of the lives of criminals that in affairs of this kind they seldom appeal to the authorities. They are satisfied to bide their time and work out their own revenge in their own way.

Moore obtained the services of Howe & Hummel to press his divorce suit. This firm has appeared as his counsel in cases where the District-Attorney has been the prosecuting officer. Little Abe Hummel, who has probably more secrets of criminal life locked in his memory than any other man in New York, barrister Inspector Byrnes, took personal charge of the case. Mrs. Moore announced her intention of contesting the action to the best of her ability, and engaged the services of Lawyer Ambrose H. Purdy. Then she took the initiative and applied to the court for \$25 a week advance

and \$500 counsel fees, pending the trial of the action.

It was this motion which came up before Judge Truax the other day, and a great deal of curious information was brought out.

Mrs. Moore says that soon after her marriage she gave her husband \$10,000, which he never returned. They spent money recklessly, and lived in a wild and extravagant style.

If Mrs. Moore did not know that her husband was a bank burglar at the time she married him, as she says, the awakening must have come quickly, for within a few months he was arrested and taken to Buffalo to answer a charge of robbing a bank. He was acquitted, however, for lack of proof. Shortly afterwards a Merchants' Union Express car was robbed of \$700,000 in money and goods near this city, and now Mrs. Moore says that her husband was concerned in the robbery. This the latter denies. He certainly was suspected at the time, for he fled to Canada, where he remained for several years. The wife declares that Moore was connected with many other large robberies, among them that of the Bank of Rockland, in Thomaston, Me., for which he served a term of ten years.

"It is true that I have unfortunately spent a large portion of my married life in prison," says Moore in the affidavit he interposes objecting to his wife's plea for alimony. "but it is utterly untrue that when the defendant married me she was unaware of my character and habits. The story of my connection with the robbery of \$700,000, or any other sum, from the Merchants' Union Express car is utterly false, as I was not in any manner concerned in the said robbery. It is true that many times I have gained possession of comparatively large sums of money as the result of offenses committed by me, but I say it is the truth that all of this money was expended recklessly by myself and the de-

fendant, and the far greater portion of such sums was wasted by her in riotous and extravagant living." Continuing, he denies that his wife ever gave him \$10,000, and declares that \$15.79 was all he received from the Warden of the Massachusetts State Prison at the time of his discharge a few months ago. He says that he does not own a farm in Massachusetts, and explains that his sister once owned what is evidently the property referred to. This she lost by reason of her inability to pay the interest upon a heavy mortgage.

SAYS HE IS PENITENT.

Apparently the life of a bank burglar for the first few months after coming out of the prison is not a happy one. Moore alleges in piteous terms that he is utterly destitute and dependent for support upon the charity of a few friends who knew him in his youth. Even the costs of the divorce suit, he avers, have been defrayed by friends.

One of the grounds upon which the bank burglar bases his case is that Thompson and Mrs. Moore have been the joint proprietors of various disreputable resorts while he was leading a virtuous life in prison. To two of these, he alleges, they had given the name of "Maison Dorée."

A pretty daughter of the bank burglar figures in the case. Strangely enough she sides with her father and against her mother. The daughter's name is now Nellie Adler. She is only 20 years old and a prepossessing blonde. She was married three days before Christmas last, and is now sick—lying almost at the point of death—at her home, No. 1303 Lexington avenue. In her affidavit she says that she was married according to the rites of the Episcopal Church. For about five years, she declares, Thompson lived with Mrs. Moore as her husband. Her mother compelled her, she continues, to address Thompson as "papa."

When the case was argued before Judge Truax, Mr. Purdy delivered a stirring ad-

dress. He said that Moore was at the head of his profession as a burglar, and had the personal appearance and physique to make a living anywhere. He was living in style at an uptown hotel, while his wife was compelled to reside in a tenement house.

"I cannot see," said Mr. Purdy, with a wave of his hand, "how this man can live at an expensive hotel if he is as poor as he says he is. I can't afford to live at a hotel." "Perhaps you might," interrupted Abe Hummel, "if you were at the head of your profession."

CHARGES AGAINST THE DAUGHTER.

Regarding the pretty daughter's affidavit, Mr. Purdy said that it was only right that she should stick by her father, as she herself was a notorious thief and shoplifter. The Judge wanted to know if no opportunities had been open for Moore to do legitimate work and thereby earn money since his discharge from prison.

"He is a professional burglar and won't work," replied Mr. Purdy. "Prize fighters may reform, but burglars never do."

Mrs. Moore is about forty-five years old and shows traces of former beauty. She was present in court, but was very poorly dressed, while her husband, on the contrary, wore broadcloth and looked like a responsible citizen.

Moore's picture and record occupy a prominent place in Inspector Byrnes' book. He is described as sixty years old and of good appearance, with the exception of his eyes, which have an expression peculiarly their own. His parents, says the Inspector, were respectable people. Mrs. Moore was a daughter of old Bill Sturges, a notorious English sneak-thief and pickpocket. Her sister was the wife of Bill Voeberg, who also figures in the Inspector's book, where he is described as one of the oldest and most expert bank snobs and "stalls" in America. He, too, has spent the best portion of his life in State prisons.