



Heystone Photo
In the B. R. (Before Reno) Era Socially Impregnable Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont Wasn't Allowed to Teach Sunday School Class Following Her Abrogation From William K. Vanderbilt.

**By INEZ ROBB
 CHAPTER IV**

WHETHER divorce made Reno famous or vice versa is one of those senseless chicken-egg arguments and gets nowhere. But there can be little doubt that Reno, by making divorce easy and popularizing it, put the Indian sign on conventional monogamy not only in this country but abroad.

Reno's product is famous the world 'round. Persons come from every corner of the globe to take The Cure, as it is optimistically called. What other community except Coventry has entered the language and immortality by the verbalization of its name? "Renovated" is now an accepted part of basic English.

Even when Nevada's residence requirement for divorce was six months, not six weeks, her laws were so much more liberal and easy-going than those of any other civilized state or country that she attracted the attention of innumerable persons who preferred to remarry than to yearn.

In 1900, when Nevada handled its first famous international divorce case, divorce was an all but unmentionable institution. A divorced woman occupied an untenable place in society. Innocent or guilty, her lot was decidedly not a happy one. The late Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, after she divorced her first husband, the late William Kissam Vanderbilt, was not permitted to continue teaching her Sunday school class.

And when her sister-in-law, the late Mrs. Perry Belmont, was divorced from her first husband, the late Henry T. Sloane, and married Belmont at the turn of the century, so bitter was their social ostracism that they fled to Paris. They lived there for decades. Only the gathering clouds of World War II drove this aged couple home.

Yet today, in some circles, women imagine they



In 1900 the Second Earl Russell and Mrs. Mollie Summerville Secured Simultaneous Nevada Divorces in the Comparatively Breath-Taking Space of Six Months.

can't hold caste unless they've been through the divorce mill at least once. Tommy Manville and his seven divorces are regarded as a bit outre, if not downright gauche. But Mrs. Margaret Emerson, the charming headache-remedy heiress, suffers not the slightest social migraine because of three divorces and four marriages.

Time moves right along, all right. But Reno, it would seem, has done a lot of prodding from the rear.

Three early divorce cases, while the residence requirement was still six months, served to focus the attention not only of the nation but of Europe, too, on Reno and Nevada. It is poetic justice that international society and Hollywood, which has always given Reno its richest and most spectacular trade, should have figured in these really notable cases.

The first two are almost forgotten now, yet so spectacular were they that the first induced the only trial of a peer in the House of Lords in 150 years. Not only that, but invoked the presence of one King of England, Edward VII, to preside at the opening of the trial, and a second, George V, subsequently, to pardon the Nevada divorce miscreant.

Only the third case is enshrined in the memory of America, and in the minds of middle-aged movie fans who will never forget the delicious shock of Mary Pickford's presence in Nevada to divorce Owen Moore. It was whispered that she intended to marry Douglas Fairbanks!

The big, handsome, white stucco house bought in Reno by America's Sweetheart for her comfort while tediously biding her time is one of Reno's proud landmarks. It is now the sometimes home of Patrick McCarren, Nevada's senior Senator. As a



Euragon Photo
Judge Barney Moran Who Has Granted Thousands of Reno Diplomas.

grateful gesture for his legal services in obtaining her divorce, Miss Pickford gave the house to McCarren, then a brilliant young divorce lawyer with a waistline.

Even by 1920, when Miss Pickford divorced Moore, Reno was fairly well known for its speciality. The Pickford case merely served to refocus international attention on it and eventually to encourage the Nevada solons to shave the residence requirements in 1927 from six to a daring three months.

The Pickford case was a powerful stimulant for Nevada's divorce traffic and started Hollywood jamming the highways and byways into Reno. But it was two previous cases that really started the ball rolling: The Lord Russell case, in 1900, that subsequently shot aristocratic English temperatures to 105 and kept them there for months, and, a few years later, the classic Corey case, involving American money, sex, social positions and an ACTRESS.

Without fanfare, the second Earl Russell and a Mrs. Mollie Cooke Summerville, in the spring

of 1900, obtained divorces from their respective spouses in Dayton, Nev. They immediately went to Reno and there were married by District Judge Ben F. Curler, now a vigorous old man of 78. The judge still lives in Reno and flew his own plane until recently.

The Russell and Summerville divorces and their marriage were literally a turning point for Nevada. The explosions incident to the return of Lord Russell and his bride to England directed for the first time the attention of the world on Nevada's easy divorce laws. And Nevada's hard-headed citizens saw they possessed an unexploited bonanza.

THE first Countess Russell was enraged over her husband's Nevada divorce and remarriage when she heard of both. She immediately started divorce proceedings against her erstwhile husband in London. There were immediate hints that the Earl would be prosecuted for bigamy.

The British sent an assistant director of public prosecution to Reno to investigate. He not only returned to England with a trunkful of affidavits, but with Judge Curler. The Nevada jurist had been subpoenaed by British courts to testify that he had tied the marital knot for the Earl and Mollie as tightly as is the custom in Nevada.

O, mores! O tempores! As Judge Curler recounts today the story of the subsequent prosecution of Earl Russell incident to his pioneering Nevada divorce and remarriage it unreels like a tale of medieval witch-burning.

After Judge Curler had testified in preliminary hearings in London's Tamed Bow Street police station in the summer of 1901, the case was ordered removed for trial in the House of Lords, the first trial of one of their own in the House in 150 years. His peers would pass judgment on His Lordship, by now charged with the crime of bigamy.

The trial was opened by Edward VII. And Nevada's frontier judge was one of the trial's most interested spectators.

Such was the Age of Innocence in which all this took place that Earl Russell on July 18, 1901, pleaded guilty to bigamy and threw himself on the mercy of his peers. They, in turn, after 20 min-



Int'l
Reno Rallbirds Watch an Impromptu Rodeo, One of the Amusements That Attract the "Waiting-for-the-Decree" Contingent.



Joe Little
Married Immediately, the Earl and the Ex-Mrs. Summerville Returned to London Where a Shocked and Indignant House of Lords Jailed the Peer for Bigamy. In a Blaze of International Publicity the Reno Bonanza Was On.

utes deliberation, threw the book at Russell and sentenced the titled defendant to three months duration vile as a miscreant.

While His Lordship languished in the cooler, the first Countess Russell obtained a British divorce. Once released from jail, Russell lost little time in remarrying Mollie.

While all this was going on, the English-speaking world was regaled daily with front page stories concerning the Earl and his Nevada divorce. The state saw the opportunities. But she was only dimly aware that she had struck gold again. Verily and in truth, another and continuous Gold Rush was getting under way.

As for the Earl, eventually, in 1911, George V granted him a free pardon for his misbehaviors on Nevada soil.

It would be nice to record that the Earl and his dearly-won bride lived happily ever after. But the truth is that Mollie divorced him in 1915—but not in Reno!—and both subsequently remarried.

However, a part of the story ends, as it began, in America. On the death of Earl Russell, several years ago, his title descended to his philosopher brother, Bertrand Arthur William Russell, who has set up his residence in the United States.

As for the Corey case, it is undoubtedly responsible for Reno's most persistent legend: that all wives are forced to Reno by heartless husbands who plan to marry a younger cupcake.

In 1905, Laura B. Corey, of Pittsburgh, established residence in Reno to divorce her husband, William Ellis Corey, a power in the steel industry and former president of the U. S. Steel Corp. He wanted to marry an actress, Mabelle Gilman, and



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Ex-Judge Ben F. Curler, Now a Divorce Defendant Himself.

Out of This World— in Reno

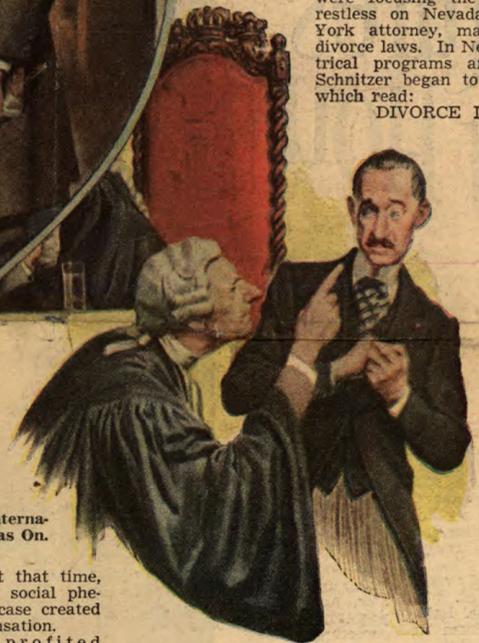
Fantastic Story of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Alimony in the Dizzy Divorce Capital Where Law and License Never Clash

fully in the proud company of Henry Comstock, John Mackay, Adolph Sutro and James Graham Fair as the true founders of Nevada. Schnitzer merely struck pay dirt in Reno, while others found it in the Comstock and allied lodes in Virginia City's bonanza mining fields.

About the time that Russell and Corey cases were focusing the attention of the maritally restless on Nevada, Schnitzer, a young New York attorney, made a study of the state's divorce laws. In New York newspapers, in theatrical programs and any likely publications, Schnitzer began to insert little advertisements which read:

DIVORCE LAWS OF NEVADA

Have you domestic troubles? Are you seeking divorce? Do you want quick and reliable action? Send for my booklet. Contains complete information FREE Shortest Residence. Address Counselor, P. O. Box 263, Reno, Nevada. Correspondence strictly confidential.



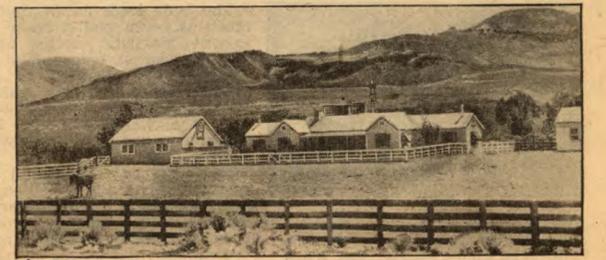
Schnitzer commuted between New York and Reno, where he had now become a resident and a member of the Bar Association, conducting divorce clients toward freedom in the West.

It is sad to relate, but such is human gratitude, that this man who helped uncover the rich pay dirt of divorce for Reno and Nevada, who helped immeasurably to make the town what it is today—as all Reno lawyers freely admit—was subsequently disciplined by his peers for the type of advertising he used.

For his advertisements, Schnitzer was suspended by the Bar Association from practice for eight months. That was away back in 1911.

In the heroic pattern of almost all true pioneers in a new field, Schnitzer—alas—paid the price of bigotry! Now Reno's attorneys pay tribute to him. But there is not so much as a bronze plaque to his memory in the Washoe County Courthouse. Reno lives at the top of the pot on the profits which he started rolling into its kitty. Unless some public spirited citizen gets up a fund to memorialize him, Schnitzer will be Reno's Forgotten Man.

Next week Miss Robb will tell the effects of poverty and prosperity on the rate of divorces granted by the Reno courts.



Acme
Luxurious Dude Ranches Provide All the Comforts of Park Avenue to the Maritally Maladjusted in the Chips.