

Oxfordshire Libraries provides members free access to the "Times Digital Archive 1785-1985" from the comfort of their homes. Due to their generosity, I've had the chance to view an interesting (or indeed scandalous!) article concerning my great (x4) great-uncle. The entire transcript can be seen by clicking the more button. The reference for this is: The Times, Friday, May 19, 1848; pg. 7; Issue 19867; col B.

JERVIS'S DIVORCE CASE HOUSE OF LORDS, THURSDAY MAY 18

The arguments in the appeal of "Rowley and others v. Adams and others" having been further proceeded with, and again postponed to a future day, the parties were called in "Jervis's Divorce" case.

Mr. Crowder and Mr W.R. Bigg appeared at the bar as counsel.

Mr. Crowder said that the petitioner was a captain in the Indian service, and having returned to England on leave, he in the year 1838, being then a widower, married a [Miss Mary Amelia Dobbie](#), a young lady of a highly respectable family in Essex, and early in the following year the happy couple sailed for India, whither Captain (then Lieutenant) Jervis had been called by his professional duties to participate in the war in Afghanistan. Thither he went, leaving his newly-married wife, after several months of cohabitation, in the month of November, 1839, and remained absent from her until about the 20th of December, 1842. From that time until the month of March, 1844, the parties had lived together in the most perfect happiness, the lady giving birth to two children. In March, 1844, [Captain Jervis](#) was again called away from his wife. They were living at Ferozepore from his return until March, 1843, when in consequence of ill-health, the result of a wound Captain Jervis had received in an engagement, they went to Landour (a hill station in the north-western provinces of India), where he was ordered to do duty with the depot establishment. In March, 1844, the Captain, having received the appointment from the Governor-General of India Pension Paymaster at Barrackpore, a place which is upwards of 1,000 miles from Landour, was once more compelled to leave his wife. This separation was in March, 1844, and in the same month in the following year, although no connexion had taken place between the husband and wife, Mrs. Jervis, gave birth to a child. The reason Mrs. Jervis had not accompanied her husband to Barrackpore was, that their medical attendant had represented the danger that lady and her children would run by making the journey at that particular season of the year, as it was the hot season. Captain Jervis quitted his wife in March, and in the following May Mrs. Jervis commenced an illicit intercourse with [Mr. Henry Vansittart](#), who held the official appointment of superintendant of Deyra Dhoon, and in the

Mary Amelia Dobbie

Written by Sylverton76

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month of March, 1845, she was delivered of a child, the fruit of that intercourse. Eventually Captain Jervis made a discovery of his wife's conduct, for in April, the month after her confinement, she wrote a letter, which their Lordships would find in the evidence, wherein she confessed the course of life she had taken to. That letter ran as follows:-

April 25

My dear William, I am determined to write you now an explanation of my long illness, though by doing so I shall inflict a wound I can never heal. Painful, most painful is the task. I hardly know how to begin. I shrink from causing you the great distress of this communication, and yet I must force myself at once to throw aside all deception, and, though I cannot ask forgiveness, I solicit your forbearance. Your unhappy wife is not worthy of that title, and it rests with you to expose me to the world, and bring disgrace on your name and my family, for as yet by no open act have I compromised either. I have delayed writing till now, as it was my earnest wish that your father should go to his grave in peace, and not have his last days embittered by a knowledge of your domestic sorrow and my fall. This wish has been granted, and I will deceive you no longer. I feel that I have much to explain, but I attempt no excuses. I must bear the penalty of my conduct and be wretched the remainder of my life. After months of suffering I went through a difficult and dangerous confinement four weeks ago. I thought for many reasons that I could not have passed the seventh month, and hoped all would have been over in January; not that if it had I would have eventually have deceived you, but that I might have saved my name with the world-that is, if such had been your desire. When January passed my misery was so great I could not write. I remained entirely in my room. I saw no one. I hired no nurse. I lived in perfect seclusion; so if you choose to save me from public exposure and degradation and your own name from disgrace it is in your power to do so, and I will go where you please to direct, and live no burden upon you; but otherwise I shall have no alternative but to seek his protection for whose sake I have forfeited all that life makes dear. Oh! William, call to your mind what I once was; think of my happy and innocent days, when I was full of hope and smiles and merriment. Contrast that with my present position; forsaken by the world; an outcast from my family. I cannot write any more. Let me hear from you, and let me implore you to spare me reproaches and upbraidings.

I cannot feel my own disgrace or your grief more than I do. I do not ask you to write kindly. I do not ask you to forgive me-you cannot do either. I only pray for mercy-a little gentleness. I have no right to ask this; but it will be generous in you to have pity.

I alone am to blame; there is no one but me who should suffer. I alone deserve punishment; have I not already suffered enough? I know I must bear much more, and be miserable for ever. Farewell, my dear William; I trust when the first shock is over than you may be happy, happier than you would ever have been with me. Farewell, I still have much to write about, but will wait till I have heard from you. Perhaps you will not write to me.

May I still sign myself

Yours affectionately

M.A. Jervis?

After the discovery Captain Jervis took proceedings against Mr. Vansittart, and obtained damages to the amount of 8,000 rupees; and on the 2nd December, 1846, he had instituted a suit in the Ecclesiastical Court in England for a divorce, and, having obtained a decree in his favour, he now came to the bar of their Lordship's house to petition for the bill of divorce. The letters in the evidence sent from India clearly established the acts of adultery, but in that evidence there appeared to be the necessary proof of the marriage wanting. That proof he was now prepared to supply by the copy of the register, and also by the testimony of [Mr. Jervis John Jervis](#), who was present at the ceremony, by which their Lordships would find that the marriage had taken place at the parish church of St. Pancras on the 20th of December, 1838.