

HOUGHTON'S TWO WIVES

A REMARKABLE CASE OF ALLEGED BIGAMY.

ONE WIFE AT YONKERS, THE OTHER AT WOODLAWN, AND INTERCOURSE BETWEEN THE TWO FAMILIES.

Great excitement and scandal have been occasioned in the City of Yonkers by the discovery of a case of bigamy in that place. On the 4th day of May, 1858, John J. Houghton married Miss Mary C. Mairs, and lived with her from that date up to Saturday last. On the 9th of October, 1878, Mr. Houghton also married Miss Emma C. Cole, daughter of Eli Cole, and lived with her up to Monday night last, when he was arrested at his house. During this time, from the date of his marriage to her, he also continued to live with his first wife, in New-York City, until about a month ago, when she moved to Woodlawn, on the New-York and Harlem Railroad. This removal was caused by her having received a legacy, with a part of which she bought a house and lot, where she intended to continue the occupation of keeping boarders, which she did to assist in supporting herself and children, as she had done in New-York. Her husband had not entirely provided for them, but only gave her \$10 a week up to the time of his arrest on the charge of bigamy. Seven children were the issue of the first marriage, only two of whom are living now. One, Stella, is an accomplished young woman of 15 years, the other a child of 7, and both have continued to live with their mother at Woodlawn. Mr. Houghton, who for the last few years has been employed as book-keeper for Peene Brothers, proprietors of the Ben Franklin Line of barges, at Yonkers, has been in the habit of bringing Stella from Woodlawn to the house of his second wife, and made the returning with her to Woodlawn his excuse for visiting his first wife, but telling his over-confiding second wife that his daughter was living with his mother. His second wife, however, made the discovery that a first wife was living last Saturday. On that morning Mr. Houghton was late in arising, and his employers sent to him for the keys of the office, which were given, and he decided to keep away from the office that day. He told his wife he intended to visit his mother at Woodlawn, and would return that evening. As he did not return according to promise, his wife No. 2 became anxious and uneasy, and sent her brother the next day to Woodlawn to ascertain the cause. He went to the residence of the so-called mother, and was met at the door by Mr. Houghton, the husband, to whom he stated aloud that "Emma wanted to know why he did not come home on Saturday evening, as he said, when he left, he intended to do." Mr. Houghton became all at once greatly excited, and, after coughing several times, held up the first finger of his right hand, and leaning forward said, "Sh! don't say anything more now; tell Emma I will walk up this afternoon." Mr. Cole being puzzled at the strange actions of his brother-in-law, accidentally looked at the end of the hall, and there saw a lady at a half-open door intently listening to their conversation. He departed, and reported to his sister the result of the interview and what he had seen. That evening Mr. Houghton returned to wife No. 2, and on the following morning a gentleman called at the office of Peene Brothers and inquired for Mr. Houghton, having been sent by wife No. 1 with a message to him with reference to some money. He was informed that Mr. Houghton was at his brother-in-law's residence, in School-street. With surprise, having been acquainted with the family for some years, and not having heard that he had a brother-in-law in Yonkers, the gentleman proceeded as he was directed, and saw Mr. Houghton, who retreated and sought to avoid a meeting. The gentleman, however, delivered his message, returned to Woodlawn, and reported fully what had occurred to Mrs. Houghton No. 1. On that same evening wife No. 2, accompanied by her brother, called at the Woodlawn residence and there met the so-called "mother" of Mr. Houghton. Inquiry as to whether she was the wife of Mr. J. J. Houghton was answered in the affirmative, and the date of their marriage was also given, with other particulars. Wife No. 2, after becoming convinced of the fact, and in view of the evidently honest and truthful statements made by wife No. 1, then informed her that she was also Mr. Houghton's wife, was married to him on the 9th of October, 1878, and had since been living with him at Yonkers. She then returned to her own home, and made a complaint against her husband. At about 10 o'clock the brother of wife No. 2 sought an interview with Mr. Houghton, told him all about their discovery, and asked him whether it was true. He said it was, but that he was divorced from his first wife. The brother asked for the papers showing that such was the case, but Mr. Houghton said he had lost them. He was then asked for anything that would give a clue to them, so that by their production the honor of his sister, as well as his own, would be preserved. Mr. Houghton said he did not know where they were, and became very much agitated, and cried out in agony and despair that nothing could save him. An officer then came in with a warrant and took Mr. Houghton into custody. The next morning (Tuesday) the prisoner was taken before Judge E. P. Baird for a preliminary examination upon the charge of bigamy. His second wife was examined, and stated the fact of her marriage, their living together, and the birth of one child, now 5 months old, and said that before the marriage he had declared to her, as she had heard of his former marriage, that his wife was dead and buried in Green-Wood Cemetery alongside of his father, and he had told her that if she doubted it he would take her down and show her the grave. Mr. Houghton during this testimony was completely broken down, and seemed to realize his position keenly. His first wife was then called, and after having been sworn and stated her name, Lawyer Matthew H. Ellis came into the court-room and whispered a few words to the prisoner, then saying to the court that he had been retained as counsel for him, asked for an adjournment of the examination till 3 o'clock in the afternoon, which was granted, and the prisoner was remanded until that time.

At 3 o'clock the court reassembled. Lawyer William Riley appeared for the people, having been in the meantime retained by the two wives, who have joined forces to punish their mutual husband. The court-room was packed by an eager multitude, and great public excitement prevailed throughout the city, the news having spread like wildfire. The second wife being well and favorably known for her quiet and modest deportment, her personal beauty, and general attractiveness and accomplishments, had the deepest sympathy in her trouble. The proofs were submitted, clearly establishing, beyond doubt, the marriage to both Miss Mairs and Miss Cole at the times alleged. His daughter Stella, by the first wife, through whom he managed to carry on his deception, was threatened with personal violence by him if she ever divulged what she saw occur at the home of Miss Cole, at Yonkers, or if she revealed anything about her mother or even said that she had one. He sought her faithful promises to these injunctions by giving her costly presents. One of the greatest puzzles in connection with the affair is that Mr. Houghton paid \$10 a week at the house of his mother-in-law, at Yonkers, for the board of himself and second wife, and gave her \$5 a week besides as pin-money, and at the same time gave his first wife \$10 a week also, when the only salary he received from Peene Brothers was \$15 a week, and he was not known to be employed in any other business. The case, on Tuesday evening, was adjourned, by consent of Messrs. Ellis and Riley, till next Saturday, to enable them to produce other witnesses and proofs.