

"I HAD TO LEAVE

"I HAD to leave John Gilbert, and there will be no reconciliation."

Virginia Bruce was emphatic. She usually speaks of him as "Jack."

"I have retained W. I. Gilbert as my attorney, and I shall sue for divorce."

The pretty, blonde fourth wife of the dashing screen lover was talking in the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Briggs, at Beverly Hills—a home Gilbert gave them. Virginia went there after her final break with her husband and took Susan Ann, their seven-month-old daughter.

"I do not think Jack will contest the action," she said.

"Our separation was not brought about by any particular quarrel or climax. I simply realized that it was impossible to go on living with Jack, making myself and him both terribly unhappy. There were so many things which made it so, I just had to pack up and leave.

"Jack, for one thing, is extremely nervous and high-strung. My nature is just the opposite. I am quite passive.

"Our conversations became dramatic episodes. And we were together continually. Perhaps too much so.

"I still think he is the grandest person in the world. I was very much in love with him when I married him, and all the while we were married. But living together is something else.

"He did not want to go out, to shows, to parties or dances. He had had so much of that in his time. But I had not.

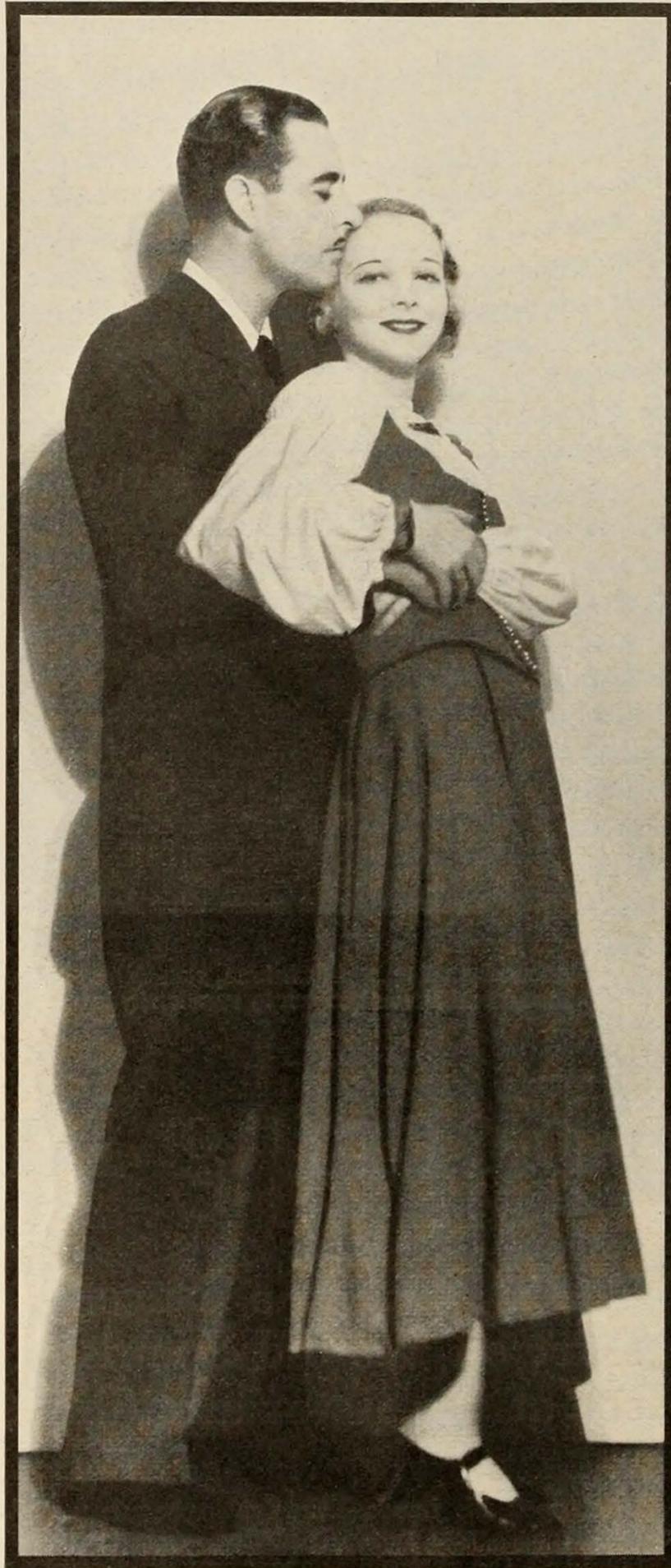
"THE difference in our ages meant little, except in this respect—that I am young enough to want social life, while people make Jack terribly nervous and temperamental."

This was no news to anybody who knows John Gilbert. His temperament has been something to be reckoned with ever since those early days when he played in the silent picture version of "The Merry Widow," and became, overnight, the screen's most exciting romancer.

But more of this later. What Virginia Bruce had to say about Gilbert's temperament was this:

"I don't think Jack should be married—he just hasn't the temperament which makes it successful.

"His state of mind makes mountains out of mole hills. He is always quite



1932—when love was fresh and hopeful. Their betrothal was known the day Virginia started work in John's own story, "Downstairs"

**She yearned for fun;
he was sullen, moody.
She's fond of him, but
won't remain his wife**

By Virginia Maxwell

sure that no one likes him, that the world is down on him, when everyone, including myself, thinks the world of him. It is also harder for Jack to fit into marriage than most people, because he never had a home when he was a boy.

"There was no one else in my life, or in Jack's. I know that.

"It was just my conviction that it all had to end sooner or later, and the decision to end it now, before we made each other more unhappy, and while I am still young enough to start anew, seemed the only logical thing to do."

As though she did not want it to appear that her ambition was an immediate cause of the split, Virginia explained:

"I HAVE no plans at present for resuming work. Later, perhaps. . . .

"Maybe I made a mistake in abandoning my screen career when we were first married. I was advised against retirement by studio officials at the time. They said that a man with only two pictures a year to make would have a lot of spare time. If I were idle, too, it might throw us together too much.

"But if I had kept on with my career, things might have been even worse. You see, Jack is demanding and he is jealous, too.

"I'll always be terribly fond of him, and always glad to see him. I hope he comes here often to see Susan Ann.

"But we could never make marriage work. I'm sure of that, because I tried terribly hard. I was sincere in my efforts to make a go of it. I did everything I could—but it was just impossible."

Virginia's hope that Jack will come often to see Susan Ann recalls how he has wanted a son—and has had two daughters. Charming Leatrice Joy, once so popular in silent pictures, is the mother of his other child, now nine-years-old.

Poor Gilbert never seems to have gotten what he wanted—never has been satisfied with things that would have puffed the satisfaction of many another Hollywood personage to balloon-like proportions. He has had plenty of critics, many of them harsh, even cruel. But few have written and talked of his career with such severity as he, himself, has.

Virginia said he had no home when

JOHN GILBERT

—Virginia Bruce

he was a boy. Well, he did not have a real one, and surely the shifting backgrounds of his boyhood must have much to do with his peculiar temperament.

His parents were theatrical people, troupers. Jack was born in Logan, Utah (July 10, 1897), and christened in Montreal, Canada, three thousand miles distant.

He was in a military school in California—fourteen-years-old—when his mother, Ida Adair, died. He has taken the name of Gilbert from his stepfather, and had only a vague, if any, memory of his real father.

This, then, is the Jack Gilbert that Miss Bruce says is made "terribly nervous and temperamental" by people. He is the man who would not take her to parties and places where she could see life. Because he had seen enough!

Yet, with all the faults he may have, women find him irresistibly attractive. And there are those who believe Virginia is still in love with him.

All of his wives have been fascinating women, and two of them were famous.

Olivia Burwell, his first wife, was a dark-eyed, dark-haired Southern beauty of twenty years when Jack married her.

Theirs was impetuous, youthful romance. Their wedding was in 1918. Whatever dreams she herself had of a glittering Hollywood career ended then, it appears. And Jack could not get started on his. They were divorced in 1922.

Leatrice Joy had a screen reputation far ex-



"I still think he is the grandest person in the world," Virginia, wife No. 4, says of the father of seven-month-old Susan Ann Gilbert. John wanted a son; he has two daughters



Vivacious Ina Claire was Gilbert's third transient wife. This wedding followed the Garbo romance



Lovely Leatrice Joy, Gilbert's second wife, meant only brief joy in his stormy life



Mrs. Gilbert No. 1—for four years. Olivia Burwell's was youthful, flaming love

ceeding Gilbert's, when they married March 2, 1923. They were divorced August 19, 1924. Their daughter was born a month later.

Between that marriage and his next, to Ina Claire, came the tempestuous Garbo romance.

Gilbert had skyrocketed to fame. He was an overnight sensation in "The Merry Widow," with Mae Murray—one of his best friends. But the great Greta from Sweden entered his life, and seemed to sour the taste of his success by her evasiveness in *amour*.

THE most sought after social lion in the film colony, he had time only for Greta Garbo. He was practically in retirement. And he passed up many an invitation to gay parties to stay home and stare dreamily into the crackling fire—with Garbo's face no nearer than a picture in the flames.

Do you remember when he and Garbo eloped to Santa Ana to be married? Something happened to thwart him then, too. Those who knew both Gilbert and Garbo intimately at the time, agree that the elopement was no staged publicity stunt. When Gilbert returned to Hollywood alone he was a disappointed and much more embittered man.

Vivacious Ina Claire of the Broadway stage went to Hollywood and, somehow, her vivacity did not get over so well on the screen. But it got over with the pessimistic Gilbert—such [PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 109]

"I Had to Leave John Gilbert"

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strange ways has romance! They were married in 1929, started divorce proceedings in 1931. Ina was very gracious about it all, with professions of lasting friendship.

On August 6, 1932, an hour after the final decree of divorce from Miss Claire was issued, Gilbert filed notice of intention to wed Virginia Bruce. But Hollywood had learned about Virginia's engagement several months earlier, the day she started to work with John in "Downstairs," at M-G-M. This was a story Jack, himself, wrote.

MISS BRUCE entered the Gilbert nuptial history with an added handicap. Up to that time, he had not fared well in talkies. The critical spanking he began to receive with the appearance of his first talkie, "His Glorious Night," was stinging, incessantly irritating.

Gilbert was more sensitive than he had ever been before. And he had been sensitive aplenty, as Mae Murray can tell you.

Miss Murray, who was the widow in "The Merry Widow," believes she is one woman who sees Gilbert in his true light.

Mae, unlike Jack's four wives, has never been in love with him. She simply became convinced of his ability as an artist.

"Jack is an odd form of artistic integrity," Mae Murray said, after hearing about his latest trouble with Virginia Bruce.

"He's always been baffled and thwarted by inhibitions which he senses but cannot combat."

"Meaning what?" I asked.

"Meaning that Jack is terribly sensitive. He is easily hurt. But instead of lashing back like most of us do when we are hurt, he goes in for bravado—some gesture which is merely an emotional outlet. That's why his troubles are always headlined, I think. It's the reason he seems to be in difficulties constantly.

"Really, he isn't—not any more so than most of us. But Jack has a habit of running out—wanting to get away from inharmonious situations and surroundings.

"Once, during the filming of 'The Merry Widow,' I recall that Director Von Stroheim yelled at Jack. It wasn't just an ordinary call down, either—a little unnecessary, I think.

"Jack suddenly disappeared from the set. Very quietly. And for hours we searched for him. And where do you suppose he was discovered? Upstairs in his dressing-room—in the clothes closet, sitting in a melancholy huddle on the floor.

"And another time, when everything seemed to go wrong, when after many petty arguments over the famous waltz routine we did in the picture, John Gilbert disappeared again. I didn't blame him.

"One of the stage carpenters yelled that Gilbert had ducked out a side door and was running down Washington Boulevard.

"I was in my costume. But I rushed out of the place, ran breathlessly down the street yelling for Jack to come back. He had thrown his bath-robe over his Prince's costume and was on his way—to China—when he was caught and talked into coming back."

EVEN now, after his newest temperamental smash-up, Gilbert has gone quietly into seclusion. He has nothing to say. He'd rather say nothing, and let the world think what it will, than to get into the strain of a controversy.

But if John Gilbert became wrought up over his part in "The Merry Widow," which was his first golden opportunity to reach the heights of stardom, his nerves went all to pieces while filming "Queen Christina."

That, after all, was the bigger moment: He

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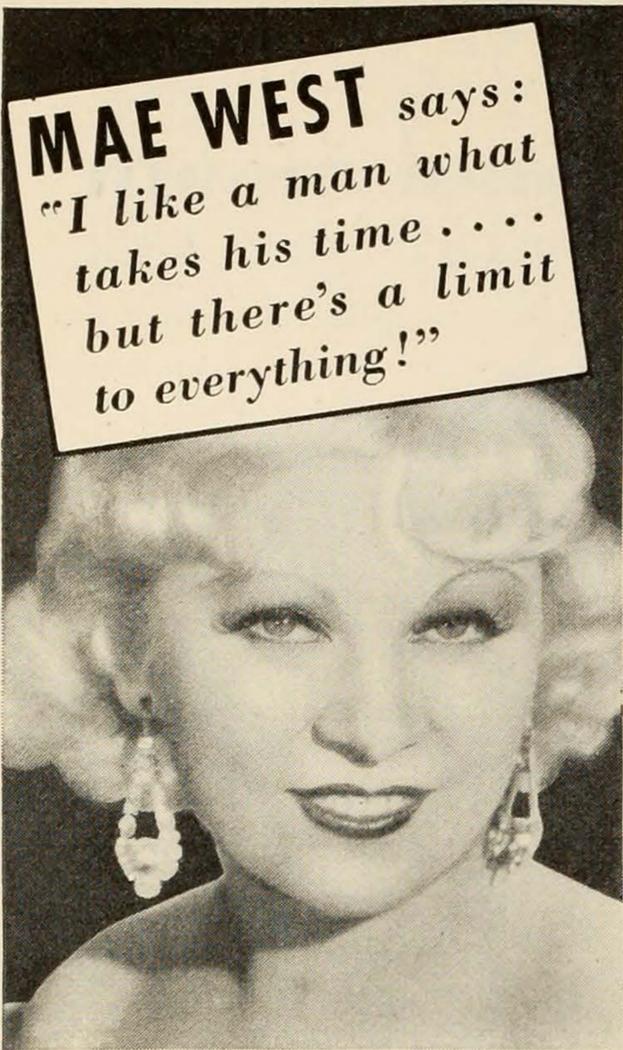
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would either come back or drop forever into oblivion.

It is said among his friends that the filming of this picture precipitated the marriage rift. He thought he might fall down on the studio job. He worried over it. He brought these studio worries home to his young wife, who tried to understand the seriousness with which he regarded this new chance.

Surely, that was nothing to bring joy into

the life of a young wife who wanted parties and fun! But does this pathetic experience mean that John Gilbert will be "fed up" on women—that if the beautiful girl-wife divorces him, as she says she will—that she will be the last woman to figure largely in his life?

One doubts it.

Women have always loved Gilbert.

There's something about him women adore. Probably they always will!

Spring! 'Tis Forgiving Time in Hollywood

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"Anyway, I found out afterward it wasn't the Holland Tunnel at all. It was just a billboard picture of Joe E. Brown with his mouth open. But I'm not really mad at Joe anymore. If he'll just hang a red lantern in the opening after this, I'll never make that mistake again. So please tell Joe E. he's forgiven."

You're forgiven, Joe E. Happy?

BILL POWELL forgives Adolphe Menjou for choosing himself the best-dressed man in Hollywood. "I forgive him," big-hearted Bill smiles, "and not only that, I nominate him the best gum chewer, bar none, in Hollywood. 'It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing,' and Dolphie has that swing. (You should have seen the downcast look on Will Rogers' face when he heard that.) Now, Adolphe chews well with everything," Powell concedes. "He's marvelous with a lounging suit. But you should really see Adolphe's technique with a tuxedo. There's rhythm for you."

Curly, stooge number two, forgives Ted Healy for that awful accident. Ted, fond of playing with Tillie, the M-G-M lion, prevailed upon Curly to accompany him into Tillie's cage. And then, in his hurry to get back to the set, he forgot Curly. And locked him in with Tillie. Just from Tuesday morning till Wednesday evening.

"I was just raising my tea-cup, with my little finger well out, of course," said Ted, "when I happened to think of Tillie. And, thinking of Tillie, I naturally thought of Curly. Strangely enough, Curly, at that very moment was thinking of me."

But, mind you, it wasn't until the pretty dandelions peeped their innocent little faces through the grass around Tillie's cage that Curly could bring himself to forgive. Ah, spring. What wonders are performed in thy sweet name.

Why, Jean Harlow actually forgives Joan Crawford for refusing to work on that set with Harlow's picture on the wall. It was a night club scene, when the face on the barroom wall startled Joan out of that Franchot calm. But now it's over. And Jean has forgiven. Like Brutus forgave Caesar.

Even li'l Lee Tracy—bless his heart—steps up in the budding business of springtime and forgives. Everybody. Mexico, that balcony, and a fellow named Romeo who got away with more monkey business on a balcony than Lee ever dreamed of.

Why, our own Garbo, ours and Sweden's, forgives those Arizona custom officers who insist upon prying into people's cars for boll-weevils and such. When she was scurrying gaily from one state to another, they insisted



No, he isn't watching for the enemy. He's looking for his horse. It's Walter Huston, as the hero soldier, in "Keep 'em Rolling," an army story about a friendship between a private and his mount