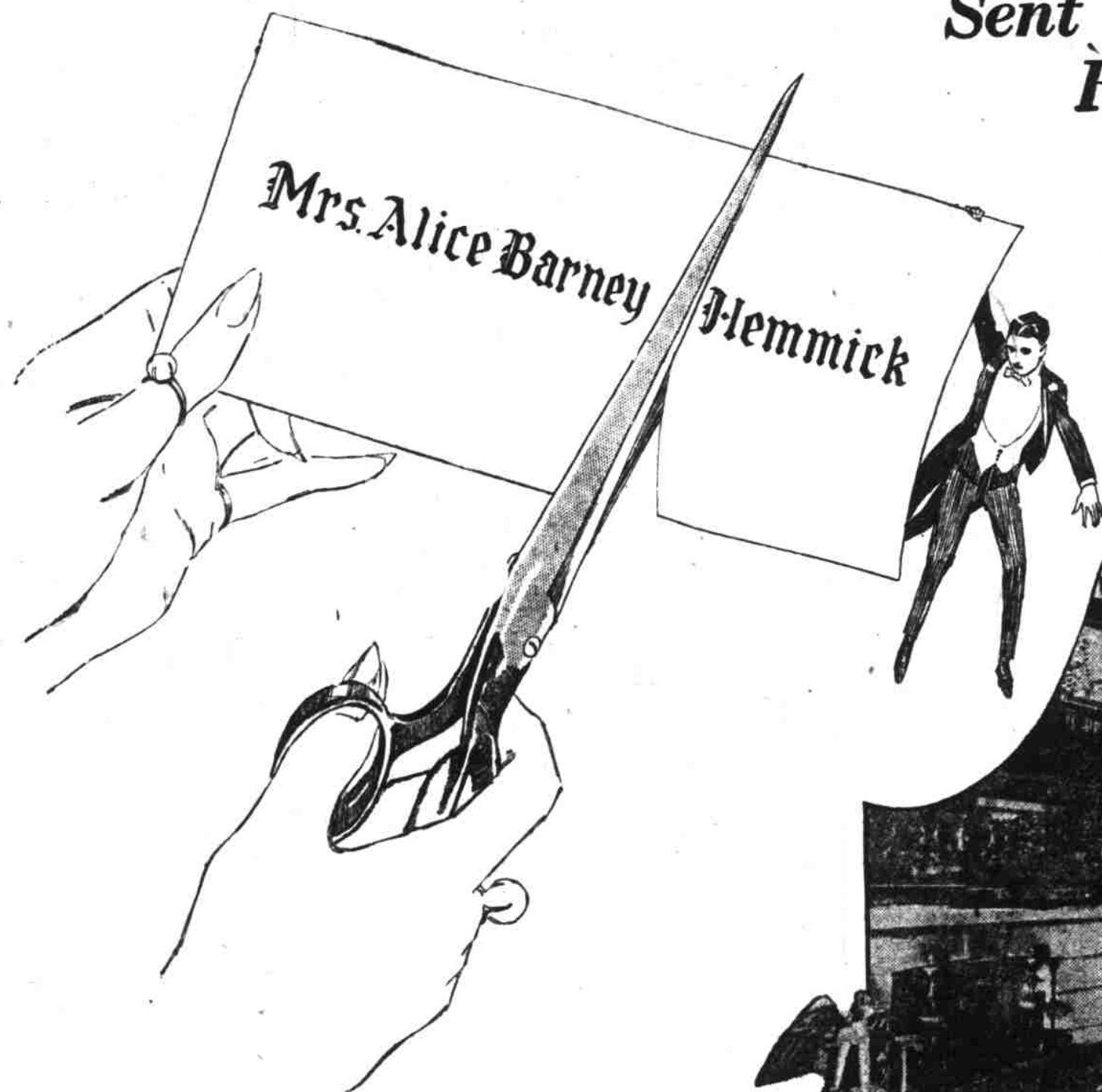


How Mrs. Hemmick Astonished Washington Society

Sent Out Invitations to Her Reception but Cut Off Her Husband--Divorced? Oh! No. Just Her Way to Announce Her Estrangement



It was back in 1911 that Mrs. Alice Natalie Barney, the very wealthy widow of the late Albert Clifford Barney, and one of the leaders of Washington fashionable society, married Mr. Christian Hemmick in Paris. Mrs. Barney was then fifty-seven years old—the bridegroom only twenty-six. Young Mr. Hemmick had no wealth, but as Mrs. Barney put it, "he looked like a young Greek god." The daughters of the somewhat ripe bride, both of whom were older than their new stepfather, objected. Mrs. Barney did not care. She kept right on and got married.

"It is just like Alice," said her friends. "She always does things differently."

They recalled many other interesting things that Mrs. Barney had done. Her advocacy of trousers for women of fashion, her many plays and pageants, her adherence to the little known Persian religion of Baha, or Babism, as it is more generally called; the residence she built on fashionable Sheridan Circle, Washington, which is in the likeness of an ancient Roman house; the sarcophagus on the lawn that once held the mummy of an Egyptian princess, and so many other interesting things.

And time went on.

Then just a few days ago fashionable Washington rubbed its eyes and raised its eyebrows in utter perplexity. To the charmed inner circle had come an invitation to a certain function—"Mrs. Alice Barney requests," etc.

But who was Mrs. Alice Barney? There had only been one lady of that name, and she was now Mrs. Christian Hemmick! Strange, too, the address was Mrs. Christian Hemmick's Sheridan Circle house!

If this Mrs. Alice Barney was Mrs. Alice Barney Hemmick, what had become of the Hemmick? It had been acquired by due ceremony. Legally and in the eyes of the law as well as her friends she was Mrs. Christian Hemmick. There had been no reports of separation, none at all of any legal action whereby the fashionable lady was authorized to return to her pre-matrimonial nomenclature. What could it all mean? Surely there must be some mistake.

Those who had received the invitations and dutifully presented themselves found that there was no mistake. There was no longer a Mrs. Christian Hemmick. There was only the former Mrs. Alice Barney.

Had she been divorced so secretly that not even her closest friends had heard of it?

Oh, no, it was just her way of announcing that she had dropped her husband!

It was so delightfully simple. It saved money, minimized gossip. The marriage had been a mistake and so she had just decided to go right back and begin again where she had left off when she had placed her life in the hands of her young Greek god.

"Well," gasped fashionable society again, "Alice certainly does do things differently."

But were there reservations? How about her checks, business details, etc.—for in the eyes of the law she was not Mrs. Alice Barney, but still Mrs. Christian Hemmick. Would she dissociate the unclear

ant matter of business and join it with the unpleasant matter of matrimony and use the name of Hemmick for such purposes, keeping her reincarnation of Mrs. Barney for the pleasant social things of life? Indeed no! Her signature hereafter will be Mrs. Alice Barney. Mr. Hemmick had been cut off her visiting cards and correspondence definitely and finally!

It was an astonishing situation, to say the least! And what could possibly have led up to it? And how did Mr. Hemmick feel at being thus arbitrarily and cruelly thrust into the cold, regarded as though he had never been—absolutely ignored, his very existence wiped out—so far as his ingenious and clever wife was concerned?

Of Mr. Hemmick's feelings there is no record, for he has steadily refused to commit himself in any way. But of the circumstances leading up to this separation, of the can it be said at least November and May factors of this romance?—there are some interesting lights. Not so much as one would think a battle of varying years, for Mrs. Barney, in many ways, is much younger than her husband, but a battle of temperaments.

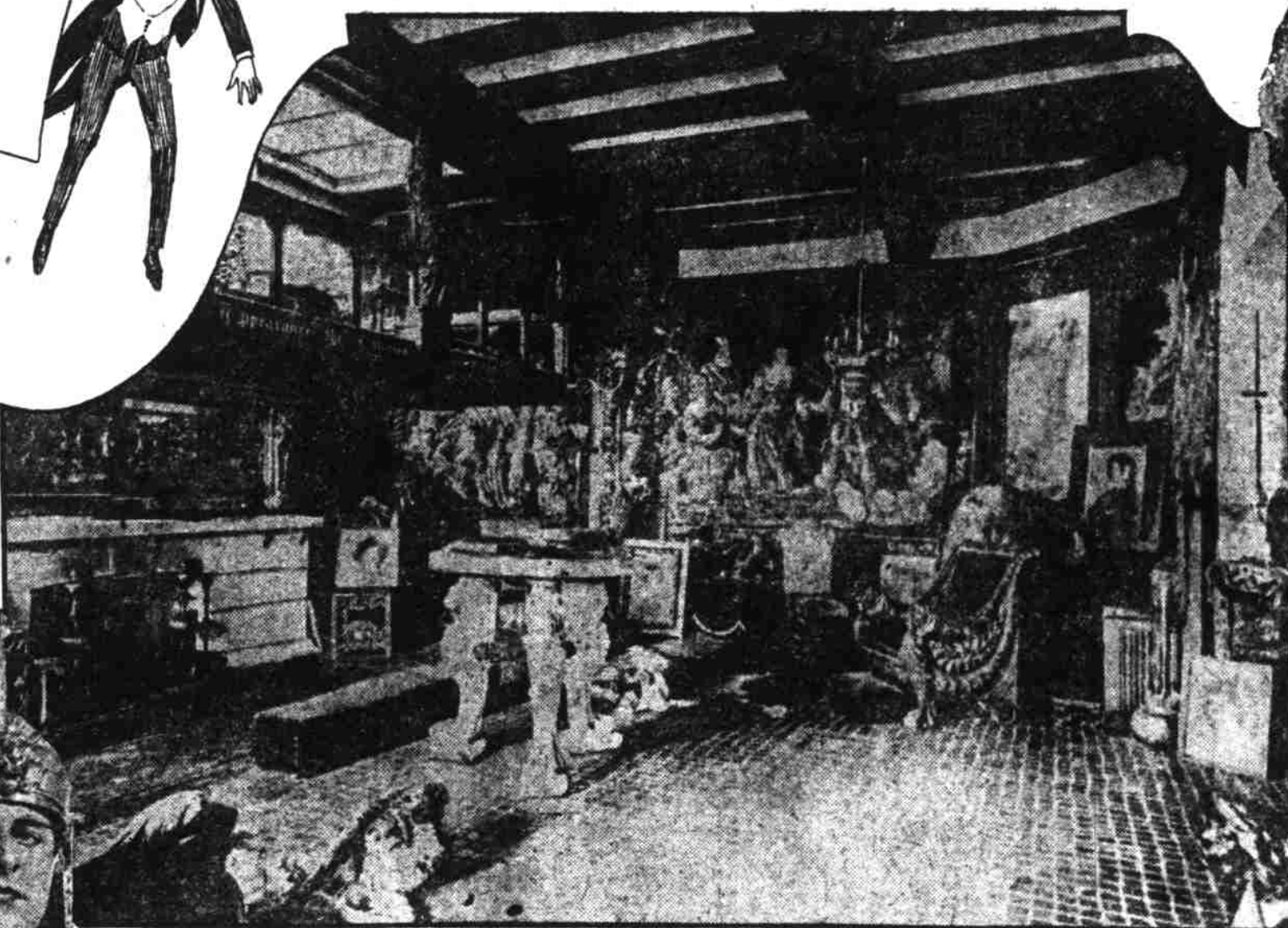
It is needless to say that although Mrs. Barney issued invitations to her old world to which she was returning from New York, Mr. Christian Hemmick's name did not appear upon the list. At least it may be assumed that it did not, for although

he was paying a visit to his sister, Mrs. H. P. Johnson, at No. 2205 Massachusetts avenue, in the capital, the family reunion consisted of a trio, not a quartette. Mrs. Barney's card precluded that. Mr. Christian Hemmick at Mrs. Barney's party would certainly have been an incongruity.

To a few friends in New York, before she resumed her life at Washington, Mrs. Hemmick—that is, Mrs. Barney—confided that life with a reincarnation of a Greek god may not be as heavenly as the reputed origin of deities.

"I didn't expect much attention from Christian," she said plaintively. "But toward the last I got none. He was angry because I wouldn't sign any more large checks for him and went away. He took up the society of actors. Of course Christian's family took his part. His sister said: 'It is positively absurd of Alice to object to Christian's friendships. She herself has stage friends.' But I did mind."

While the reception at which no one mentioned Mr. Hemmick's name and the erasure of his name from her cards were gentle means taken by a gentlewoman, there are rumors of more strenuous personal scenes in the other artistic abode of the Hemmicks during their three years' stay in Washington.



Studio in Mrs. Hemmick's Washington Residence on Sherman Circle



Mr. Christian Hemmick in Fancy Dress Ball Costume

There were quarrels in which the wife and her son-like husband spoke their minds to each other. Once, it is said, he flung his arm in a disdainful gesture that included his spouse's paintings.

"They're punk!" his cruel remark is quoted.

"But it is work," she retorted. "You won't do any work."

The friends who received Mrs. Hemmick's confidences heard of her efforts to inculcate industry.

"His father was Consul at Geneva, and Christian thought he wanted to be a diplomat. I paid for lessons in diplomacy, but he wouldn't study. Diplomacy requires concentration, and Christian would not concentrate."

After he wearied of preparations for a diplomatic career, according to his personally severed wife, Mr. Hemmick undertook the mastery of chemistry in a practical form that included the manufacture of soap. But the tall and handsome young husband, Mrs. Hemmick complained, wearied of it all and grew tired, too, of the inelegant fumes that issue from a soap factory. At last, she sighed, he appeared no more at the factory.

They went from Washington to New York and joined the upper bohemian stratum. Their apartment at the Hotel des Artistes was a centre for actors and playwrights. Mrs. Hemmick gave there a reception to her friend, Mme. Yorska. There were held meetings of the directors of the Actors and Authors' Theatre, in which she was prominent. Her husband conceived a desire to own a play. She bought from Walter Knight a share in the first of the patriotic plays produced during the late war. Mrs. Hemmick saw that her husband was deeply interested in the project. He was so much interested in the play that he went with the company to Boston. It was during this time, she says, that he formed his attachment for the Theatrical life.

Mrs. Hemmick's recital of the rifts in

the lute of her matrimonial happiness included one striking detail. "Chris looks as strong as a Greek athlete," she said to a friend, "but he is really in frail health. After he and I would discuss personal matters he would close his lips and utter a sound like escaping steam or the hissing of snakes. It was terrifying!"

It was well known to a few friends that at this time, a year ago, Mrs. Hemmick seriously considered obtaining a divorce. But she was aghast when she learned that there is but one reason for divorce in New York.

"How crude," she said. "Then, of course, I can't get it here."

"Establish a residence in New Jersey and sue for desertion," was the counsel of her sympathizers.

Mrs. Hemmick shrugged her aesthetic shoulders.

"I just couldn't live in New Jersey," she said. "Besides, Christian doesn't want a divorce. I can't bring him to see that it will be best for both. He has called and we have talked about it several times."

Came then a removal from the Hotel des Artistes, a short residence at a smaller apartment at No. 20 Central Park South, and Mrs. Hemmick, wearying of New York and Bohemia, returned to Washington. At nearly the same time Mr. Hemmick assumed a new role in the drama of livelihood earning. He turned broker.

Whether or not this new venture was the result of an arrangement between Mrs. Hemmick and her once lord is only surmised. But many believe that the couple had reached an understanding and that Mr. Hemmick agreed to the separation and to being erased from his wife's visiting cards.

The separation of Mr. and Mrs. Hemmick appears to be the end of what started nine years ago as one of the most romantic episodes that ever stirred Washington society. Mrs. Barney, who was then a widow, and occupying her mind with writing and staging plays was on one occasion rehearsing her play "The Man in the Moon," for the Sylvan Theatre, which she had persuaded the Government to open at Washington.

"I need a wonderfully handsome young man for the part of the man in the moon," said Mrs. Barney. "Where can I find one young enough and handsome enough?"



Mrs. Alice Barney Hemmick.

"Christian Hemmick is just back from Geneva. He is the very man. You never saw a handsomer one." A friend was enthusiastic.

"Do bring him around." The friend brought the handsome Mr. Hemmick. Mrs. Barney asked him to play the role. He bowed, saying, "I would be charmed." It must be admitted that as the man in the moon he would cause the pupils of any girls' school to look twice or ten times. Mrs. Barney wore a Spanish costume and did a Spanish dance. The man in the moon was her partner.

Thereafter they were frequently seen together.

The bride desired that the ceremonial of the Baha religion of her adoption be used. The young bridegroom insisted that it be solemnized according to the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church. The bride yielded the point, although her profession of faith in Babism was renewed. Her daughters, who have lived in Paris since their mother presented them a step-papa, are also Bahaists.

Perhaps the church's repugnance to divorce is one cause of Mrs. Barney's strange way of dropping her husband.

For she says: "No, I shan't get a divorce. Why bother?"

Why, indeed, when the way she has chosen seems so simple?

It would be counted by most a hardship to be separated from the very beautiful homes Mrs. Barney has built for herself from her millions. Her studios are famous among artists the world over. In the Roman interior of the Sheridan Circle house she has had a small bedchamber built close to her atelier so that she may be near to the influence of the exquisite art treasures it contains. The roof garden is a special hobby of hers and from it one of the most magnificent and far-reaching views is obtained. In one apartment are the famous ancient tapestries of Count de Allemand, portraying the wanderings of Ulysses.

Her other homes are equally wonderful in their accumulation of treasures.