

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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REVISED STATUTES
OF THE
STATE OF MAINE
1954

1959 CUMULATIVE SUPPLEMENT

ANNOTATED

IN FIVE VOLUMES
VOLUME 4

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THE MICHIE COMPANY
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
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Sec. 20. Remedy on claim not filed within 6 months. — When such claim has not been filed in the probate office within said 6 months, the claimant may have remedy against the heirs or devisees of the estate within 6 months after it becomes due and not against the executor or administrator. (R. S. c. 152, § 20. 1957, c. 126, § 4.)

Effect of amendment. — The 1957 amendment changed the first time mentioned from “12 months” to “6 months” and the second time mentioned from “one year” to “6 months”.

Sec. 21. Limitations claimed for or against old administrator continued.

Applied in *State v. Crommett*, 151 Me. 188, 116 A. (2d) 614.

Chapter 166.

Domestic Relations. Marriage. Divorce.

Parents and Children.

Cross reference.—See c. 158-A, §§ 1-10, re Uniform Gifts to Minors Act.

Sec. 19. Custody and support decreed when parents live apart.

Cited in *Dumais v. Dumais*, 152 Me. 24, 122 A. (2d) 322.

Sec. 21. Funds paid to minor not having guardian.—Whenever, under any decree or order of the supreme judicial court or superior court of this state or of any justice of either of said courts, in term time or in vacation, or of any judge of any probate court in this state, any receiver, master, executor, administrator, trustee, guardian or other person acting under authority of either of said courts, or any justice or judge thereof shall have in his hands any funds not exceeding \$500 to be distributed or paid to any person under the age of 21 years, not having a guardian legally appointed in this state, payment may be made directly to such minor, if such minor be 10 years of age, and such minor's receipt therefor shall be a sufficient voucher for such payment in the settlement in court of any account by the party who makes such payment, and shall discharge and release him from any and all further liability on account of the same. When said minor is under 10 years of age, the payment may be made to either parent at the discretion of said person paying said money; provided, however, that where the money is paid directly to said minor the person paying the same may, in his discretion, require on such receipt the counter signature of one or both of the parents of such minor, and when the minor is under 10 years of age the person paying the same shall receive of either or both parents, or if neither parent is living may withhold payment until further order of court or until the appointment of a guardian. (R. S. c. 153, § 21. 1955, c. 199.)

Effect of amendment.—The 1955 amendment substituted “\$500” for “\$200” in line seven of the first sentence.

Sec. 22. Children to care for parents according to ability.

When less than all children, residing within the state, or owning property within the state, shall comply with the obligations imposed upon them by the preceding paragraph, one or more may complain to the superior court in the county where such parent or parents reside; and the court may cause any defaulting child or children so alleged, to be summoned, and upon hearing or default may assess and apportion a reasonable sum upon all children residing within the state,

or owning property within the state, as are found to be of sufficient ability for the support of such parent or parents to the time of assessment; and may enforce payment thereof by warrant of distress.
(1955, c. 141.)

Effect of amendment.—The 1955 amendment inserted the words “or owning property within the state” at two places in the second paragraph. As the rest of the section was not changed by the amendment, only the second paragraph is set out.

Sec. 22-A. Liability of parents for damage by children.—The parent or parents of any minor who is between 7 and 17 years of age and is living with said parent or parents, which minor or minors willfully or maliciously cause damage to any property or injury to any person, shall be jointly and severally liable with such minor or minors for such damage or injury to an amount not exceeding \$250, if such minor or minors would have been liable for such damage or injury if they had been adults. Nothing in this section shall be construed to relieve such minor or minors from personal liability for such damage or injury. (1959, c. 321.)

Bastard Children.

Sec. 29. Proceedings after verdict.—If, on such issue, the jury finds the respondent not guilty, he shall be discharged; but if they find him guilty or the facts in the declaration filed are admitted by default or otherwise, he shall be adjudged the father of said child; stand charged with its maintenance, with the assistance of the mother, as the court orders; and shall be ordered to pay the complainant her costs of the action and for the expense of her delivery and of her nursing, medicine and medical attendance during the period of her sickness and convalescence, and of the support of such child to the date of rendition of judgment; and shall give a bond, with sufficient sureties approved by the court, or by the clerk of said court, to the complainant to perform said order, and a bond, with sufficient sureties so approved, to the town liable for the maintenance of such child, and be committed until he gives them. The latter bond shall be deposited with the clerk of the court for the use of such town. If the respondent does not comply with that part of the order relative to payment of expenses and costs of the action, execution may issue therefor as in actions of tort.

The court, upon petition of either the mother or the adjudged father, and upon hearing, limited to the issue of proper maintenance, may alter, amend or suspend any such order, or make a new order in lieu thereof, when it appears that justice so requires. The court may order the adjudged father to pay to the court for the mother sufficient money for the prosecution or defense of such petition. Modification or suspension of the order shall neither invalidate obligations on any bond required under this section, nor operate to release the sureties upon such bond. (R. S. c. 153, § 29. 1959, c. 39; c. 317, § 295.)

Effect of amendment.—This section was amended twice by the 1959 legislature. P. L. 1959, c. 39 added a new paragraph at the end of the section. Chapter 317, § 295, substituted “the action” for “suit” once in both the first and last sentences of the first paragraph, substituted “otherwise” for “on demurrer” following “by default or” and deleted “in term time or in vacation” following “said court” in the first sentence of that paragraph.

Effective date and applicability of Public Laws 1959, c. 317.—Section 420, chap-

ter 317, Public Laws 1959, provides as follows: “This act shall become effective December 1, 1959. It shall apply to all actions brought after December 1, 1959 and also to all further proceedings in actions at law or suits in equity then pending, except to the extent that in the opinion of the court the application of this act in a particular action pending on December 1, 1959 would not be feasible or would work injustice, in which event the laws in effect prior to December 1, 1959 would prevail.”

Rights of Married Persons.

Sec. 37. Labor not done for married woman's family.

Section easily interpreted.—The wording of this section contains no ambiguities, is couched in simple language and is easy of interpretation. *McCarthy v. McKechnie*, 152 Me. 420, 132 A. (2d) 437.

Interpretation and construction generally.—This section very plainly says that for personal labor not performed for her family a wife may receive wages; that if the necessity requires, she may maintain an action for them in her own name and that upon acquiring the wages she may keep them against her husband or any other person. *McCarthy v. McKechnie*, 152 Me. 420, 132 A. (2d) 437.

Married woman entitled to separate property in wages earned.—This section of the statute removes a common law disability of a married woman by giving her a separate property in wages earned by her. *McCarthy v. McKechnie*, 152 Me. 420, 132 A. (2d) 437.

Section removes common law disability; effect of waiver of rights by wife.—This section removes the common law disability of a married woman by giving her a separate property in wages earned, although she may waive her rights to such wages and in such event they become the property of the husband under his common law right. *McCarthy v. McKechnie*, 152 Me. 420, 132 A. (2d) 437.

Husband without legal right to participate in wages received by wife.—There is nowhere to be found in this statute, by exact wording or by implication, that there is any legal right of the husband to share, control or in any other manner participate in the benefit of wages received by the wife for her personal labor. *McCarthy v. McKechnie*, 152 Me. 420, 132 A. (2d) 437.

Sec. 40. Proceedings in equity between husband and wife.

Cited in *Dumais v. Dumais*, 152 Me. 24, 122 A. (2d) 322.

Sec. 43. Husband or father compelled to contribute to support of wife or minor children.—Whenever a man, having a wife, a minor child or children, residing in this state and being of sufficient ability or being able to labor and provide for them, willfully and without reasonable cause, refuses or neglects to provide suitable maintenance for them, the superior court, the probate court and any municipal court, in term time, or any judge or justice of said courts in vacation, in the county where the wife or such minor child or children reside, or in the county where the husband or father may be found on petition of the wife for herself and for such child or children, or of such child or children by their guardian or by the municipality that is providing suitable maintenance, after such notice to the husband or father as it may order, and hearing, may order him to contribute to the support of his wife and such minor child or children or either of them such sums payable weekly, monthly or quarterly as are deemed reasonable and just, and may enforce obedience by appropriate decrees. Pending petition hereunder, the court may order the husband to pay to the court for the wife sufficient money for the prosecution thereof, upon default of which order execution may issue as in actions of tort. Execution may also issue for said sums when payable, and for costs, and when the husband is committed to jail on execution the county having jurisdiction of the process shall bear the expense of his support. Any party aggrieved by any order or decree authorized by the provisions of this section and made by a probate court or municipal court may appeal from said order or decree in the same manner as provided for appeals from such court in other causes, and appeal may be taken from the superior court to the law court. Pending the determination of such appeal, the order or decree appealed from shall remain in force and obedience thereto may be enforced as if no appeal had been taken. Said appeal shall be in order for hearing at the 1st term of the court appealed to, held after said appeal is taken, and no continuance thereof shall be had without the consent of the appellant or without legal cause shown therefor to the justice of said court

to which appeal is had. (R. S. c. 153, § 43. 1949, c. 349, § 137. 1959, c. 75, § 5; c. 199.)

Effect of amendments.—This section was amended twice by the 1959 legislature. P. L. 1959, c. 75, § 5, added the words “or in the county where the husband or father may be found” after the word “reside” and before the word “on” in the first sentence. Chapter 199, without giving effect to c.

75, § 5, added the words “or by the municipality that is providing suitable maintenance” after the word “guardian” in the first sentence. Both amendments have been given effect in the section as set out above.

Judicial Separation.

Sec. 44. Protection of wife deserted by or living apart from her husband.

Cited in *Dumais v. Dumais*, 152 Me. 24, 122 A. (2d) 322.

Illegal Marriages and Annulment.

Sec. 52. Illegal marriages annulled.—When the validity of a marriage is doubted, either party may file a complaint as for divorce, and the court shall order it annulled or affirmed according to the proof; but no such order affects the rights of the defendant unless he was actually notified of the action or answered to the complaint. (R. S. c. 153, § 52. 1959, c. 317, § 296.)

Effect of amendment.—The 1959 amendment substituted “complaint” for “libel”, a comma for a semicolon near the beginning of the section, “order” for “decree” twice, “defendant” for “libelee,” “actually” for “personally” preceding “notified” and

“of the action or answered to the complaint” for “to answer or did answer to the libel” at the end of the section.

Effective date of 1959 amendment.—See note to § 29.

Divorce.

The law of divorce, etc.

In accord with original. See *Dumais v. Dumais*, 152 Me. 24, 122 A. (2d) 322.

And jurisdiction of court is derived from statute provisions.

The subject matter—divorce—is entirely

governed by the statutes, to which alone the courts may look for jurisdiction. Equity on this ground has no jurisdiction of the case insofar as divorce is concerned. *Dumais v. Dumais*, 152 Me. 24, 122 A. (2d) 322.

Sec. 55. Causes for divorce; jurisdiction.—A divorce from the bonds of matrimony may be decreed in the county where either party resides at the commencement of proceedings, for causes of adultery, impotence, extreme cruelty, utter desertion continued for 3 consecutive years next prior to the filing of the complaint, gross and confirmed habits of intoxication from the use of intoxicating liquors, opium or other drugs, cruel and abusive treatment or, on the complaint of the wife, where the husband being of sufficient ability or being able to labor and provide for her, grossly or wantonly and cruelly refuses or neglects to provide suitable maintenance for her; provided the parties were married in this state or cohabited here after marriage, or if the plaintiff resided here when the cause of divorce accrued, or had resided here in good faith for 6 months prior to the commencement of proceedings, or if the defendant is a resident of this state. When both parties have been guilty of adultery, or there is collusion between them to procure a divorce, it shall not be granted. Either party may be a witness. The superior court has jurisdiction of actions for divorce in all counties. (R. S. c. 153, § 55. 1949, c. 311, § 1. 1953, c. 188. 1959, c. 317, § 297.)

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATION.

Effect of amendment.—The 1959 amendment substituted “complaint” for “libel” twice in the first sentence, deleted “that”

following “provided,” substituted “plaintiff” for “libelant” and “defendant” for “libelee” in the first sentence and deleted “or any justice thereof in vacation” fol-

lowing "court" and substituted "actions" for "libels" in the last sentence.

Effective date of 1959 amendment.—See note to § 29.

Purpose and intent of 1949 amendment.—The occasion for the 1949 amendments to what are now R. S. c. 166, §§ 55 and 61, was the misgivings of the court to hear divorce cases in vacation under what is now R. S. c. 113, § 39, and the paucity of court terms in most counties. The legislature intended to remedy those two mischiefs but in granting redress it expressed no purpose to nullify the *raison d'être* of the word, "vacation." *Dumais v. Dumais*, 153 Me. 24, 134 A. (2d) 371.

The legislature, in P. L. 1949, c. 311, amending this section, intended that the vacation jurisdiction of the superior court justice, of any given divorce libel (whether that jurisdiction devolved upon him as presiding justice of the court last adjourned or was assumed by him during vacation) must be culminated by him by a decree rendered in the same vacation or forfeited totally to the next succeeding term of court, to be availed of by him entirely *de novo*, if at all, following the latter term. *Dumais v. Dumais*, 153 Me. 24, 134 A. (2d) 371.

Upon establishing a cause for divorce alleged in the libel, the libelant thereupon gains an absolute right to a divorce. In other words, it is not within the discretion of the court to grant or refuse a divorce, provided the libelant proves his case. The court must look to the statutes for the rules governing divorce. *Kennon v. Kennon*, 150 Me. 410, 111 A. (2d) 695.

Sec. 56. Attachment or trustee process used in commencement of action for divorce.—Attachment of real or personal property or on trustee process may be used in connection with the commencement of an action for divorce. (R. S. c. 153, § 56. 1947, c. 368, § 1. 1959, c. 317, § 298.)

Effect of amendment.—The 1959 amendment rewrote this section.

Sec. 57. Repealed by Public Laws 1959, c. 317, § 299.

Effective date and applicability of Public Laws 1959, c. 317.—See note to § 29.

Sec. 61. Repealed by Public Laws 1959, c. 317, § 299.

Effective date and applicability of Public Laws 1959, c. 317.—See note to § 29.

Sec. 63. Alimony and other provisions for wife in case of divorce for husband's fault.

Decree not defective because it suggests method by which libelee may discharge liability.—A decree for the payment of a specific sum of money as alimony, under this section, is not defective because it suggests a method by which a libelee may

Factual findings not disturbed if supported by credible evidence.

In accord with original. See *Kennon v. Kennon*, 150 Me. 410, 111 A. (2d) 695.

Given cause, the libelant is entitled of right to a divorce. The decision does not lie within the discretion of the court. *Dumais v. Dumais* 152 Me. 24, 122 A. (2d) 322.

Equity without jurisdiction to enjoin divorce proceedings.—Equity court did not have jurisdiction of a bill by husband, a Catholic, to enjoin divorce proceedings by wife, a non-Catholic, on ground that wife had signed antenuptial religious promises relating to divorce and the religious education and custody of children. *Dumais v. Dumais*, 152 Me. 24, 122 A. (2d) 322.

III. CAUSES FOR DIVORCE.

D. Habits of Intoxication.

Habits of intoxication must continue, etc.

Gross and confirmed habits of intoxication are a ground for divorce only if they continue to the time of filing of the libel. *Kennon v. Kennon*, 150 Me. 410, 111 A. (2d) 695.

But continuance may be inferred.—It may be inferred, under certain circumstances at least, that gross and confirmed habits of intoxication, once proven, continue to exist in the absence of evidence to the contrary. *Kennon v. Kennon*, 150 Me. 410, 111 A. (2d) 695.

Effective date and applicability of Public Laws 1959, c. 317.—See note to § 29.

discharge his liability thereunder (by conveying to libelant his right, title and interest to certain real estate). *Whitehouse v. Whitehouse*, 154 Me. 78, 143 A. (2d) 751.

Sec. 64. Payment of alimony; attorney's fees; support of minor children; *capias* execution.—Pending a petition to enforce a decree of alimony, or a decree for payment of money instead thereof, or for the support of minor children, or a decree for support pending the divorce action or for payment of counsel fees, or for the alteration of an existing decree for the custody or support of minor children, the court may order the husband or father to pay to the wife or mother, or to counsel for the wife or mother, sufficient money for the prosecution or defense thereof, upon default of which order execution may issue as in actions of tort. Execution for attorney's fees shall not issue until the action for divorce has been heard. Petition for such execution may be signed by the person seeking same or his attorney of record in such divorce action. At the time of making a final decree in any divorce action, the court may order that execution and such reasonable attorney's fee as the court shall order shall issue against the body of any party to the action charged with the payment of support of minor children or payments of alimony or a specific sum in lieu thereof, upon default of any payment, and the court shall order that the clerk of said court shall issue such execution. When the husband or father is committed to jail on execution issued upon decree of alimony, or for payment of money instead thereof, or for the support of his minor children, or for support pending the divorce action or for payment of counsel fees, the county having jurisdiction of the process shall bear the expense of his support and commitment and he may be discharged from imprisonment by payment of the execution and all costs and expenses of his commitment and support, and he shall not be entitled to relief therefrom under chapter 120. He may petition the court issuing such execution for relief, whereupon a judge of such court after due notice to the wife or mother, and hearing thereon, may order his discharge from imprisonment on such terms and conditions as justice may require. (R. S. c. 153, § 63. 1947, c. 321. 1955, cc. 142, 308. 1959, c. 317, § 300.)

Effect of amendments.—The first 1955 amendment deleted, at the end of the fourth sentence, the words "upon the filing with the clerk an affidavit signed by the party to whom such payments are to be made, setting forth the amount in arrears under said decree." It also inserted the words "and commitment" in the fifth sentence and deleted the former second paragraph, relating to filing false affidavit alleging defaults of payments. The second 1955 amendment inserted the second sentence.

The 1959 amendment divided the last sentence into two sentences, deleting "provided, however, that" which came between the sentences, substituted "the divorce action" for "libel" in the first and fifth sentences, substituted "action" for "libel" in the second sentence and deleted "the provisions of" preceding "chapter 120" at the end of the fifth sentence.

Effective date of 1959 amendment.—See note to § 29.

Jurisdiction encompasses all of the coun-

ties of the state.—This section confers jurisdiction on the superior court in divorce actions and authorizes issuance of a *capias* execution based on a judgment. This jurisdiction of the superior court encompasses the sixteen counties of the state and the process issued shall be obeyed and executed throughout the state. *Jacques v. Lassiter*, 154 Me. 84, 143 A. (2d) 747.

Accordingly, a *capias* execution issued by the superior court at Androscoggin county upon a support decree of that court is enforceable by commitment in any other county even though this section provides, "the county having jurisdiction of the process shall bear the expense of his support and commitment." *Jacques v. Lassiter*, 154 Me. 84, 143 A. (2d) 747.

Proceedings of habeas corpus.—The proceedings of habeas corpus are restricted and primarily concern the judgment of the court. If the court has jurisdiction of the cause and of the person habeas corpus does not lie. *Jacques v. Lassiter*, 154 Me. 84, 143 A. (2d) 747.

Sec. 65. Provisions for husband in case of divorce for fault of wife.—When a divorce is decreed to the husband for the fault of the wife, he shall be entitled to $\frac{1}{3}$ in common and undivided of all her real estate, except wild lands, which shall descend to him as if she were dead. The court may allow him so much of

her personal estate as seems reasonable. In all cases the right, title and interest of the defendant in the real estate of the plaintiff shall be barred by the decree. (R. S. c. 153, § 64. 1959, c. 317, § 301.)

Effect of amendment.—The 1959 amendment divided the former first sentence into two sentences, and substituted “defendant” for “libelee” and “plaintiff” for “libel-

ant” in the present third sentence.

Effective date of 1959 amendment.—See note to § 29.

Sec. 65-A. Descent of real estate in divorce.—No rights acquired under the provisions of sections 63 and 65 by a libelant in the real estate of the libelee are effectual against any person except the libelee, his heirs and devisees and persons having actual notice of such divorce unless an abstract of the decree of divorce, setting forth the names and residence of the parties, the date of the decree and the court where granted, is filed in the registry of deeds for the county or registry district where the real estate is situated.

The clerk of the court granting the divorce, at the written request of the libelant or his attorney, shall within 5 days of the receipt of said request make and send such an abstract, for recording, by registered mail, or deliver said abstract, to such registry or registries as so requested.

When a divorce has been granted out of the state, the libelant, or his attorney, shall cause a duly authenticated copy of such decree to be filed with the clerk of courts in each of the counties where the real estate or any part thereof is situated, and upon written request of said libelant or his attorney, said clerk, within 5 days thereof, shall make and send such abstract, for recording, by registered mail, or deliver said abstract, to such registry or registries as so requested.

Such abstract shall be deemed recorded as of the time of its receipt in the registry where filed; provided, however, that such abstract if received within 10 days of the date of the decree of divorce shall have effect as if actually received on the date of the decree of divorce.

The clerk of courts shall be paid \$2.50 for each such abstract, \$1 of which he shall pay to the register and \$1.50 of which he shall retain as his fee and costs of registered mail, and an additional \$2 as filing fee of the authenticated copy of foreign divorce decree.

No such rights acquired under the provisions of said sections 63 and 65, after September 1, 1955, shall be effectual against the libelee or any other person, unless said abstract of the decree of divorce shall have been recorded, in the manner hereinabove provided, within 1 year from the date of said decree of divorce. (1955, c. 428. 1959, c. 12.)

Effect of amendment.—The 1959 amendment added the words “or deliver said abstract” after the words “registered mail”,

near the end of the second and third paragraphs.

Sec. 70. Disposal of minor children; change name of wife; employ compulsory process deemed proper; expense of maintenance and education.

The expense of maintenance and education of children committed to care and custody of the department of health and welfare under the provisions of this section shall be borne in accordance with the provisions of section 251 of chapter 25. The department of health and welfare shall have all the powers as to the person, property, earnings and education of every child committed to its custody under the provisions of this section during the term of commitment, which a guardian has to a ward.

(1955, c. 143.)

Effect of amendment.—The 1955 amendment added the second sentence of the second paragraph. As the first and third paragraphs were not changed by the

amendment, they are not set out.

Welfare of children governs court in its decree.

The rule is plainly and firmly estab-

lished that the welfare of the child is the controlling fact in determining care and custody. The paramount consideration for the court is the present and future

welfare and well-being of the child. *Dumais v. Dumais*, 152 Me. 24, 122 A. (2d) 322.

Sec. 70-A. Attested copy of decree mailed to libelee when duty of support.—In all cases where the decree of divorce imposes a duty of support on the libelee the clerk of courts upon issuance of such decree shall mail an attested copy thereof to said libelee by registered mail, postage prepaid, to be delivered to addressee only with return receipt demanded and the record of the registry of the mail and any receipt returned shall be filed with the case. It shall be the duty of the libelant and any counsel of record for this purpose to supply the clerk with the last known address of said libelee. (1959, c. 75, § 6.)

Support of Children.

Sec. 71. Failure to comply with court order relative to support of children, when felony.

Courts having jurisdiction in the places of residence of any of the dependents or the responsible parent shall have jurisdiction of the subject matter. (1947, c. 369, § 6. 1959, c. 75, § 7.)

Effect of amendment.—The 1959 amendment added a new paragraph at the end of the section.

As the rest of the section was not affected by the amendment, it is not set out.

Sec. 72. Failure to comply with court order relative to support of children, when misdemeanor.

Courts having jurisdiction in the places of residence of any of the dependents or the responsible parent shall have jurisdiction of the subject matter. (1947, c. 369, § 6. 1959, c. 75, § 8.)

Effect of amendment.—The 1959 amendment added a new paragraph at the end of this section.

As the rest of the section was not affected by the amendment, it is not set out.

Chapter 167.

Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act.

General Provisions.

Sec. 1. Purposes.

Cross reference.—See c. 167-A, §§ 1-13, re Uniform Civil Liability for Support Act.

Purpose and effect generally.—The purpose of the Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act was to remedy a deplorable situation. Under the law, as it existed prior to its enactment, a child or child's guardian could compel a father to support a child only by coming to the state having jurisdiction over the father and bringing proceedings in the courts of that state. As the law is now, the child

may in the state of his or her domicile initiate proceedings against the father in that state for action to be taken by the state having jurisdiction of the father. The final decision, or judgment, must be made by the court having jurisdiction over the father and while the initiating state makes recommendations, these are not binding on the responding state. *Rosenberg v. Rosenberg*, 152 Me. 161, 125 A. (2d) 863.