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Alfred Vanderbilt-Frozen Out Of Society!

The Head of the Vanderbilt House Returns to Newport with His New Wife to Find His Family Fled, All His Old Friends "Not at Home," and His First Wife the Leader in His Social Ostracism

Newport, August 7. "WHATSOEVER a man soweth, that shall he reap," says the Bible, which also tells in another book an excellent story of a man who sold a birthright for a mess of pottage.

These remarks are apropos to the fact that Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt and Mrs. Alfred Vanderbilt Number Two (who was Mrs. Margaret Emerson McKim, of Baltimore) have returned to Newport from England bringing with them their youthful son and heir.

And, returning, Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt have found themselves effectually frozen out of that society of which, had Alfred Vanderbilt been content with defying only half its conventions, he might and probably would be leader to-day. Society has put the ban on the Vanderbilts, and they are as lonely in Newport as beachcombers on a Pacific isle.

In the twelve years since his marriage with Elsie French, Alfred Vanderbilt has run the gamut of human indiscretions. His return to Newport forced society to answer the question whether it could possibly condone so many breaches of standards as Alfred Vanderbilt has been guilty of. Also it was forced to choose between the first wife of Alfred, who is head of the Newport colony, and the second wife of Alfred, who was Mrs. McKim. Almost unanimously it was decided that it would not condone, and that it would stand by the first wife.

PHOTO BY NALCEAU NY



Mrs. Alfred Vanderbilt No. 2 (Formerly Mrs. Margaret Emerson McKim) Who Meets This Year at Newport Her Bitterest Disappointment

Therefore when the Alfreds arrived in Newport recently they found none of the Vanderbilt family in residence except the Reginald Vanderbilts, and of course they do not count in giving social or family recognition. Reginald Vanderbilt, it will be remembered, is Alfred's brother and the sharer in many a scrape and escapade.

"Where is your mother?" asked the new wife of Alfred when she arrived. "Gone to England," replied Reginald. "Where are your sisters twain?" "Gladys is in England and Gertrude is in Scotland," answered Reggie, a bit embarrassed.

"And where are your cousins and your aunts?" thus the new Mrs. Vanderbilt anxiously. "Just left for a trip around the world," stammered Reggie. "But didn't they know we were coming with baby?" asked poor Mrs. Vanderbilt Number Two. "Oh, yes, they knew all right. That's why—Reggie did not finish the answer."

In silence the little party made its way to Oakland Farms, the splendid mansion of the Alfred Vanderbilts.

"Aren't there any of the family here except you, Reggie?" at last asked Alfred.

"Oh, yes," replied the unctuous Reggie. "There's Elsie, Elsie's the whole show up here now." He stopped at a look from his brother.

"Elsie!" said the second Mrs. Vanderbilt. "Elsie?" Then she realized that Reggie meant the first Mrs. Alfred, and her heart must have grown very heavy, for even the most optimistic person would recognize that abandoned by his powerful family and with his first wife commanding the field there was little chance for her husband to regain his lost social position.

Newport knew this before the Alfreds arrived. In fact, the news that they were coming disturbed that frivolous colony as it has never perhaps been disturbed. "Is it bravado on their part?" asked the matrons. "Surely Alfred at least must know that he has put himself beyond the pale." "It isn't bravado," said others, who still held a kindly feeling for the holder of the most of old Commodore Vanderbilt's millions. "He is anxious to realize his wife's ambitions, and he feels no doubt that the baby will reconcile him with the family."

"Well, whatever it is that makes them come they're going to make it very awkward for everybody," was the general verdict.

This was only too true. Early in the Spring the Vanderbilts family had planned a brilliant season. Mrs. Vanderbilt was to open The Breakers and have the Laszlo Szechenyis with her for the Summer. The Harry Payne Whitney's were to open their house on Bellevue avenue, the "Neely's" to open Beaulieu, and Mrs. McKay Twombly was to open her handsome place on the cliffs. Then, like a bolt from the blue, came word that Alfred intended to come to Newport. Oh, what a scurry there was!

Mrs. Vanderbilt ordered the shutters put back on The Breakers and had to Sussex to stay with the Szechenyis, the Harry Payne Whitney's took refuge in Scotland, and the day after the Alfreds arrived Mrs. Twombly and her daughter, Ruth, closed their doors, picked up their petticoats and started for a trip around the world.

Only the Reggies were left. And why do not the Reggies count? Why is their influence not sufficient to place the Alfreds back in society? Reggie, the youngest of the family, has been on the verge of being kicked out himself; he is received only because his wife continues to live with him; he has figured in too many escapades to attempt to foist his brother on Newport. Of what use is it for the blind to lead the blind?

It is a new thing for a Vanderbilt to be ostracized by Society, in which the family has moved for two generations. It is hard upon Alfred Vanderbilt, for he might now will have none of him. When his father, the late Cornelius, in a great error of judgment, disinherited Cornelius, his eldest son, because of his marriage, and made Alfred his chief heir, he was given an opportunity to become a social and financial leader. Instead of doing so, he kicked away the golden platter on which the birthright was given.

But if it is hard upon Alfred, there is much more to be pitied in the position of his second wife. She has striven very hard for the social acknowledgment which is now irrevocably withheld from her. The story of how Emerson, "the headache cure king," and his wife chartered a yacht and took with him only young Dr.



"FORGOTTEN"

(With apologies to the old familiar classic picture of that name.) Here are Alfred and his new wife (who has struggled so hard for social recognition) out in the cold. Newport is frozen to them and they can only peer from the outside at the inside and mourn. What a position for the man who might have led Newport fashion!

McKim and their daughter, Margaret, is an old one. That trip was planned solely for the purpose of letting propinquity work its way until Dr. McKim would fall a captive to the charms of Miss Margaret and ask her to be his wife. Dr. McKim at that time represented to the Emersons the highest point of social attainment that could be looked forward to. It is on record that the moment Dr. McKim proposed to Miss Emerson and the glad news was given to her parents, the yacht was turned around and made back for Baltimore.

But Mrs. McKim soon saw that there were heights far beyond her husband's position. She cast her eyes upon Newport and Alfred Vanderbilt. Alfred was divorced from Elsie French, and Mrs. McKim was divorced from her husband after the payment to him of a large amount of money for his complaisance. Then they went to England. No doubt her reception at Newport has been an enormous shock to the second wife. Of course one season she was there before and was ignored by society because society resented her friendship for young Vanderbilt. He was not then divorced; the divorce followed that season. And yet Mrs. Alfred Number Two displays astonishment to find that her husband's first wife is chosen over her head; that she has not married into the Newport set by marrying Alfred.

"You cannot enter here," says Mrs. Robert Golet, as she orders the gates of Eastbourne closed to the Alfred Vanderbilts. "Nor here, either," says Mrs. Elbridge Gerry, as she tells her butler to say, "Not at home," should the Alfreds call.

There are degrees of ostracism. The Vanderbilts will be put through them all. They felt their first great pang when they were not invited to Mrs. Fish's fairy tale ball, to which three hundred of Alfred's former friends were asked. These same three hundred sat themselves down to dine in Mrs. Hermann Golet's superb dining room before going on to the ball; but Alfred and his wife were not among those present.

Oakland Farms was left to Alfred by his father. It is one of the most luxurious places about Newport. It holds to-day two of the unhappiest of mortals. What means their great wealth if they have no friends to lavish it on? They are marooned amid its luxurious contents. Does he blame himself or does he blame the young woman he married, for there is no doubt that his family at least would receive him if he had not remarried.

When he drives along Bellevue avenue and comes face to face with his former wife, what happens? Mrs. Vanderbilt looks at him but does not see him, looks at the woman by his side and does not see her. When he meets the women he used to be friendly with, what happens? If he is alone there are some women who will stop and chat a few moments with him, but the spirit of cordiality is gone.



Mrs. Elsie French Vanderbilt, Alfred's First Wife.

Why, hello, Alfred, where did you drop from? Pleasant weather we are having, aren't we?"

In the early days she would have wrung his hand and begged him to "Come home and have a bite of luncheon with us."

If his new wife is with him, the women turn to look the other way. If brought face to face, they speak to her in the most casual manner. Being a man, Alfred does not see all the man's slights administered to his wife by the women who were his friends, and who are friends of



Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt in Coaching Costume.

It not for his wealth. He presented to Newport a splendidly equipped Y. M. C. A. building; he has bought interests in newspapers and magazines, but nothing has won for him the birthright he sold for the mess of pottage.

Where has this social outcast differed from many others who have trod the same pine-strewn path? Why have others been forgiven and Alfred Vanderbilt sent into exile? Perhaps because he has not played the game. The man who plays the game, even a losing game, receives the respect of his kind if he is a sportsman. Society would have come to the forgiveness stage had Alfred not made a second marriage; given the marriage, it might have forgiven in time if he had remained in England. But his frequent returns to New York and his efforts to rehabilitate himself and his present wife at the expense of his first wife and son have turned society to adamant. So society may not have a sense of decency, but it has a certain amount of pride, and it refuses to accept this man who willfully outraged its conventions. Society assumes that Alfred Vanderbilt counted on his wealth and family to force society to take him back, and society kicks him out.

After all, the most interesting lesson taught by this chapter of American family history is the foolishness of dictating your children's marriages. The late Cornelius Vanderbilt disinherited his son Cornelius simply because he married a perfectly estimable girl, whose family position did not suit the father. Alfred got the restiary estate that Cornelius lost. Ever since then Cornelius has been a model citizen and a happy husband, while Alfred has become a horrible ex-ample.