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Mother Love Or Ambition?

Has Mrs. Astor No. 1 Returned to America to File Her Claim on Social Leadership as the "Real Widow" of Col. Astor --Or Just to Keep Vincent from Some Ill-Advised Marriage?

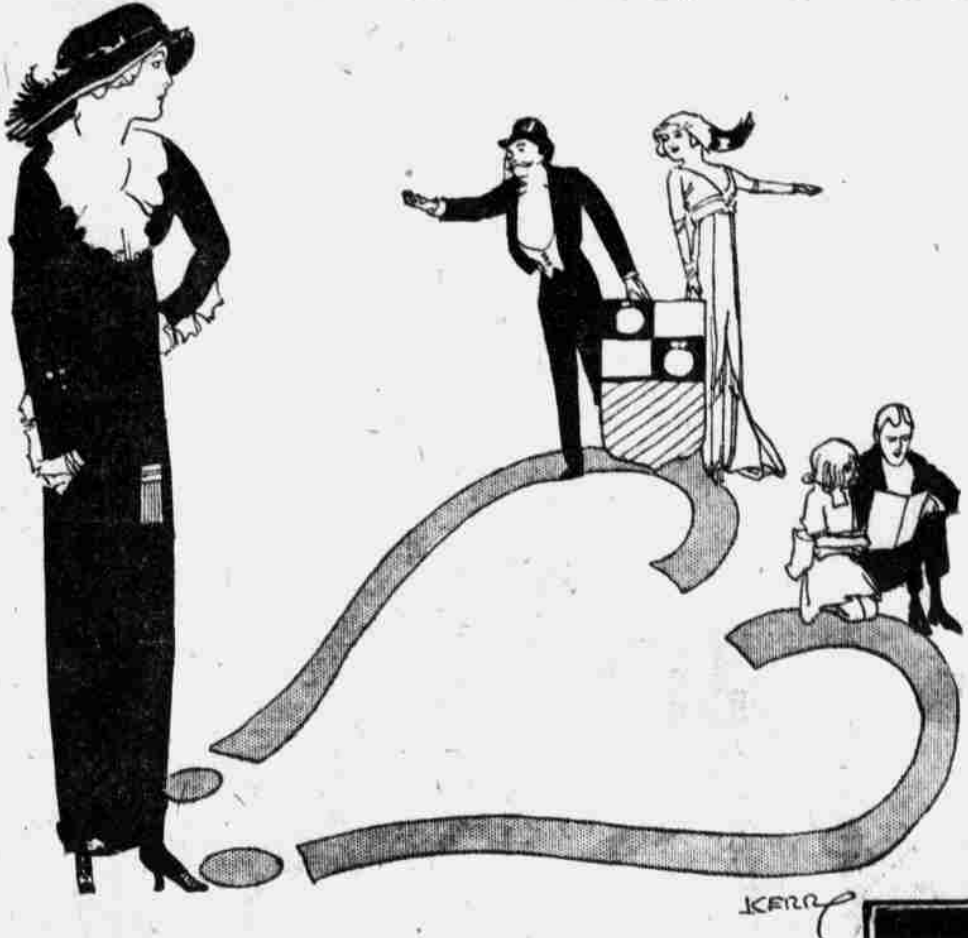


Mrs. Orme Wilson, Youngest Sister of the Late Colonel John Jacob Astor Who Never Recognized His Second Wife—Mrs. Madeleine Force Astor.

THE return to New York of Mrs. Astor—as the late Colonel John Jacob Astor's first wife desires to be called—and her active preparations for the coming social season have added complications to an already extremely complicated social situation. Mrs. Astor's determination to take part again in American fashionable activity was quite unexpected. After her divorce she went to England to live. She said that nothing could ever induce her to return to this country to stay. She bought a house in London and spent a fortune on its decorations and furnishings. It was to be her permanent home and there she would bring up her only daughter, Muriel, as the typical English girl is brought up.

Is Mrs. Astor's return prompted because of mother love or ambition, asks fashionable society. Is it a fact that, always deeply resentful of Colonel Astor's marriage to Madeleine Force, she considers herself the only real Astor widow and has made up her mind to act accordingly, forcing all her world so to accept her? Or does she feel it her duty to direct personally her son Vincent's love cruises to some perfectly satisfactory matrimonial haven, and so avert any mesalliance which would make even more complex the Astor family relations? And in the former event what will be the social standing of young Mrs. Astor No. 2, who was Madeleine Force, and who, since the tragedy that made her a widow, has become a mother?

As all the world knows, Colonel Astor married Madeleine Force, went to Europe on a postponed wedding trip and was drowned on the Titanic. From the day of the marriage a great part of New York and Newport society has ignored the new Mrs. Astor. She is to-day hardly more than a very rich young woman, living in the magnificent mansion on Fifth avenue built by the late Mrs. William Astor and her son for their joint use. This will be her home until she marries again. Not even her tragic widow-



"Fashionable society imagines Mrs. John Jacob Astor No. 1 standing at the beginning of two widely different roads. Has she chosen the one that leads to social supremacy and will enable her to extinguish all the social claims of Mrs. Astor No. 2? Or has she chosen the one that leads to a happy home for her son Vincent?"

hood won her the friendship of society. She is as much apart from the fashionable world as though she had not married one of its most important men. She lives alone in her superb home, unsought by society—and not seeking it.

There is no doubt that the most important factor in the affair is the returned exile herself. Her attitude will settle a part of the vexed problem. If she succeeds in breaking off all communication between Vincent Astor and his stepmother there is no manner of doubt that society will continue its present policy of neglecting the young widow.

Many of Mrs. Astor's friends say that this is her sole reason for returning to New York. One prominent matron says that Mrs. Astor does not intend to let the young widow and her family carry things with a high hand; that Vincent is not to be allowed to be on friendly terms with the new connections brought into the family by his father's second marriage, that he is to be a stranger to his baby step-brother.

"This," said the matron, "is Ava's sole reason for coming back, and a very good reason, too," she finished. But an equally important matron says that mother love is the reason for the return.

"Ava," says this matron, "is devoted to Vincent, and when he appealed to her to come and assume charge of his home she gave up her most cherished plans. It is mother love that brings her back. Why, Ava might marry into the English nobility. She is on the most friendly terms with the 'Court Circle,' even Queen Mary has singled her out for attention, and no American has a more valuable position in London. But for Vincent's sake she gives all this up. Only mother love could make such a sacrifice."

On the contrary, several of the women who have known Mrs. Astor for many years say that mother love was never her strong point and that it has nothing to do with her return. They call attention to the fact that she gave Vincent to his father at the time of the divorce and made no effort to hold him.

"Ava," say these critics, "is not guided by mother love, but by social ambition. She has never given up her right to use the name of Astor and calls herself either 'Mrs. Astor' or 'Mrs. John Astor.' She has absolutely refused to add her maiden name as so many prominent divorcees have done. This shows clearly that she realizes the social value of her late husband's name and family and does not mean to give this advantage to her successor. It is social ambition, pure and simple, that made Ava come back."

Who shall decide when society disagrees? Whatever Mrs. Astor reasons, the fact is that she is here and that she will be much in the public eye all winter. By virtue of her beauty, her family and her wealth, she will naturally assume her old-time position in society. She

can no longer reign in the three-million-dollar mansion fronting Central Park where her former triumphs occurred. But the women who will flock to her in her new home further down the avenue will never call on the second Mrs. Astor.

In her winter's campaign Mrs. Astor will have the moral support of her sister-in-law, Mrs. Orme Wilson, who was Colonel Astor's youngest sister. Mrs. Wilson never accepted the new wife. She has never spoken to her. When the baby was born Mrs. Wilson made no friendly inquiries. She did not even send her new nephew a pair of baby socks!

Society has watched Mrs. Wilson closely, and undoubtedly has been guided by her. Last winter when Colonel Astor appeared in his box at the opera with his pretty bride, Mrs. Wilson sat in the next box and did not turn her face once toward her brother or his wife. She openly cut them before the crowded opera house. Not even her brother's tragic death won a kind word from her. She has not entered the great mansion where her mother died since Madeleine Force entered it as a bride.

Mrs. Astor will therefore have Mrs. Wilson's help in keeping Vincent among his old friends and in furthering her plans for marrying the hundred-million-dollar heir to a girl of family and high social standing. There must be no mistake made in Vincent's marriage. The Astor line must be perpetuated, as it has been in the past, by a carefully arranged marriage.

Young Mr. Astor undoubtedly needs a mother's care. He is one of the richest young men in the world and his path will be beset with temptations. He is not particularly capable of managing his great estate and he is just at the point where he might make a most serious mis-step. His mother, by surrounding him with her friends and by keeping him in the rut carved by the Astor family, will be of incalculable service to him. Of course there will no entertaining this winter, for in spite of her divorce Mrs. Astor is observing a period of mourning. She is refusing all invitations to formal affairs and is wearing black. The very quietness of their life makes it all the more necessary to surround the heir with family friends.

Was there ever a more peculiar state of affairs? The divorced wife, wearing mourning, refusing all social engagements, and insisting on her right to be "Mrs. Astor." The second wife, wearing deeper mourning, living quietly and with dignity in her husband's home, caring for her baby, and evidently content to be known as Mrs. Madeleine Force Astor! What will happen when her period of mourning is over? Will she then make an effort to conquer society for the sake of her small son? Or will she marry one of the friends of her early life, giving up the five million

dollar heritage and the great mansion?

There is a side to the problem confronting society that is much discussed behind closed doors. What does the first Mrs. Astor mean to imply by assuming all the rights of head of the family? Does she really believe that her divorce did not alter her status as the wife of the late Colonel Astor? Does she mean to imply that she is the real wife, the real widow? Does she mean to imply that Mrs. Madeleine Force Astor is only an episode, that she is only entitled to second place, socially?

Colonel Astor was forbidden to marry again. His divorce was granted in the State of New York and there is but one reason for such a divorce. In the decree he was told that he could not marry again in this State. He married Madeleine Force in Rhode Island nevertheless.

Madeleine Force and Colonel Astor were legally married. In his will, Colonel Astor made such arrangements for his bride as the Astor men have always made for the women they have married. Society, headed by Mrs. Astor and Mrs. Wil-

Mrs. Madeleine Force Astor (Mrs. John Jacob Astor No. 2) Who Is Not Recognized by the Majority of Fashionable Society as the Leader of the Astor Family.



PHOTO BY ANNE DUPONT.



The Newest Photograph of Mrs. John Jacob Astor No. 1, Showing the Weariness Which Has Settled on Her Face Since Her Divorce from the Late Colonel Astor.

son, cannot affect the widow's legal standing. It can and does make her very unhappy, but that is society's own prerogative. Mrs. Astor displayed intense dislike to New York after her divorce. Giving up her social leadership here, she went to London and there had many social triumphs. She was a guest at many dinners where King George and Queen Mary were guests

of honor, and she was courted by a dozen men of title. She spent nearly half a million dollars in establishing her place in English society. She transformed an originally plain house into one of the handsomest places in Mayfair.

"England will be my future home," she wrote her friends. All this she has given up. Her London house is for rent and to-day

she says, "I shall live in this country until Vincent marries." Deep in Mrs. Astor's heart, whispers the one friend who knows her best, is a great sadness. A sadness caused by the marriage she contracted when a debutante. It has been a silent sadness, but it shows in her face and in the new photograph here shown the artist has caught it unawares.

- What Mrs. Astor Gave Up When Divorced—AND NOW GETS BACK**
- 1.—Ferndiff, the magnificent 2,000 acre country estate on the banks of the Hudson. (But Mrs. Astor, as Vincent Astor's mother is now reigning over this great estate, just as though she never had left it.)
 - 2.—Beechwood, the handsome Newport estate on Bellevue avenue, where the late Mrs. Astor entertained royalty. (Mrs. Astor, as Vincent's mother will reign there next Summer, just as though she had never divorced his father.)
 - 3.—The town house on Fifth avenue that cost \$3,000,000. (This belongs to the second Mrs. Astor until she marries, then it goes to Vincent. In that event the first Mrs. Astor would again reign over it, just as though she had never given it up.)
 - 4.—The superb steam yacht, Nourmahal, valued at half a million.
 - 5.—The Astor Jewels valued at \$5,000,000. (Mrs. Astor can now wear these wonderful gems, whenever Vincent wants her to.)
 - 6.—Her only son Vincent Astor, the richest man of his age in America. (Mrs. Astor now has him with her, just as though she had never given him up.)
 - 7.—A wife's share of a fortune of One Hundred and Fifty Million Dollars.

- A Few Things That Mrs. Astor Gives Up in Order to Live in This Country with Vincent Astor.**
1. The London house that she spent \$300,000 to make one of the handsomest "American" homes in Mayfair.
 2. The friendship of Queen Mary.
 3. Royal dinner parties and balls.
 4. One dozen perfectly good noble suits, including Lord Curzon.
 5. Her ambition to eventually succeed Lady Paget as the leader of the American set in London.
 6. A firmly established position in the "Court Circle," where the most exclusive members were her friends.

- A Few Things That the Second Mrs. Astor Has and Which She WILL HAVE TO GIVE UP IF SHE MARRIES AGAIN.**
1. The \$5,000,000 dollar house on Fifth Avenue. This includes all its wonderful furnishings.
 2. \$50,000 worth of motor cars and other vehicles.
 3. \$5,000,000 left to her by her husband for the up-keep of the town house and her own expenses.
 4. The steam yacht Noma, the vessel that Colonel Astor bought to replace the Nourmahal.