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PHOTO BY CAMPBELL STUDIO N.Y.

Mrs. Madeline Force Astor and her sister Katherine (on the right.)

## Oh, What a Plot for a Melodrama!

**"My Sister's Life Shall Not Be Wrecked as Mine Was Wrecked"--The Heart-Throbbing Climax of the Real Life Drama in Which Unhappy Madeline Force Astor Saved the Happiness of Her Sister Katherine**

mad! Are you not one of the wealthiest girls in America? Are you not the mother of a son—

The Widowed Sister (interrupting)—Yes, yes; of a son whose father, however, I did not love. Think what it would mean to me to-day if I had loved my baby's father and had married him for love not for—what I did.

The Sister—But tell me, sister, how could you decide to marry a man whom you did not love?

know you did, mother. I do not blame you. But you see we left love out. We must not leave it out of sister's life. (Drawing her slender figure to its height and twisting her fingers frantically.) Love the man who gave me—everything! How could I? I did not know what love meant. I only know now that I hate the gold he showered on me; that his diamonds burn my hands, my neck, and I want my sister to have love, love in her life. Let me be

old homestead for the scene. How perfect. Bring in the rich lover who wants to marry sister. Have him slinking out with rich but unhappy sister, indicating the exit into the snow; poor and happy sister clasped in the arms of her equally poor but unhappy lover.

Not, though, that Miss Katherine will want for anything. Mrs. Astor, not content merely with making her mother consent to the marriage, is making the marriage financially pos-

it cannot buy love," said Mrs. Astor recently, "and a steam yacht is a very unsatisfying place when one has to live in it with a man one does not love. I have had the yacht and the wonders of wealth, but I have not had love. Katherine is a most fortunate person. She will not have the yacht, nor the jewels, but she will have something far greater, she will have love. And she will be happy, while I, with all the luxuries in the world—I am not happy."

FASHIONABLE society, always on the alert to take chances on everything, from the swearing off of taxes to the granting of a divorce, is betting 10 to 1 that in spite of the opposition of Mrs. William Force the marriage of her daughter Katherine will take place as per the schedule arranged by young Mrs. John Jacob Astor, Katherine's sister. Miss Katherine loves earnestly and wants to marry Mr. Henri Harnickel, a poor, but honest, young clerk earning in a stock broker's office down on the Street just about enough to keep himself. And although the wedding day is set Mrs. Force still fights against the match. She can honestly see only unhappiness ahead for Katherine if she insists upon wedding her humble lover.

Mrs. Force is very ambitious and keenly resourceful, as the matching of Madeline Force to the late Colonel Astor proved. Miss Katherine could have the pick of half a dozen men extremely desirable in the eyes of almost any ambitious mother—men with money, ancestors, holding the entree to the innermost circles of the circle that throws the glamour over Newport. Why is it, then, that Miss Katherine goes on more or less serenely with her preparations to marry a man her mother will not think of tolerating? Why is it that the maternal influence is not potent with her, as it was in the case of the younger daughter?

The answer is Madeline Force Astor herself. The unhappy young widow, brooding in loneliness over her baby boy in her Fifth avenue mansion, cut off as mercilessly, ignored as mercilessly by fashionable society as though she had never been Colonel Astor's wife, has issued from her isolation to save her sister from a duplication of her own fate.

There are all the makings of a fine old-fashioned melodrama in this contest between Mrs. Force and her two daughters. But she who would take the part of the mother would have a wealth of characters to study from. Mrs. Force is not alone by any means in her ambitions to have her daughters "marry well." There are scores of women in what is known as society who have been married out of hand without love in just the way Madeline Force was. Is not the marriage de convenience as old as literature and did not Tennyson have the situation in mind when in "Locksley Hall" he wrote of the mother "with her little hoard of maxims preaching down her daughter's heart?" One of the phases of the tragedy is that the mother herself in such cases really believes that she is doing what is best for her daughter's good; is really striving might and main to save that daughter from what she believes will mean only unhappiness. And the mother only repeats the dominant belief of society when she acts as she does. Indeed, the woman who puts her daughter on the auction block is as much

to be pitied as is the daughter herself.

No; in the case of the Force girls it is not the mother who is unique. Rather is it the figure of Madeline Force, her soul awakened by the terrible tragedy of the Titanic and given the opportunity to save her sister from a loveless marriage, taking that opportunity that gives the new touch to the drama.

But the stage is set, the characters ready. What of the dialogue and the plot?

In her magnificent Fifth avenue home, left to her by her husband of six months, sits a young widow. Leaning over her and pleading with clasped hands is her sister.

The Sister—They tell me that I must follow your example. I must marry for money. They say there is no happiness in life unless one has pearls and diamonds, motor cars and steam yachts. I must marry so that we can go anywhere. And I love my Henri, who has nothing.

The Widowed Sister (looking off into distance and sighing)—I know. They told me that. But one marriage for wealth and social position is enough; there is no need to offer up two sacrifices.

The Sister (eagerly)—That is what I tell mother. But she says that I do not know what I am talking about; that I do not know what misery it is to want money and not be able to have it. But she will listen to you, I am sure. Won't you plead for me?

The Widowed Sister (bitterly, as she looks about her boudoir filled with the Dead Sea fruits of her own sacrifice)—Yes; she will listen to me. So many will listen to me now that I have become rich. I have become indeed one of great importance. But do not worry. I will bring mother to terms. You shall marry Henri.

The Sister—Oh, sister; love, love, it is everything. Even if he were only a peddler it would not matter. The Widowed Sister (her hand to her heart)—And I passed love by; I betrayed love. And how I am punished. And I was but a child. Yet, sister, I have learned much. I no longer blame mother. It is not her fault, it is the fault of the society in which we move; a society that enthrones wealth and looks upon true love as a beggar, to be turned away from our doors with empty hands; that places position



"Put the situation in melodrama. Substitute the old homestead for Fifth avenue. How perfect—the rich villain slinking out into the snow, rich but unhappy sister indicating the exit, and poor but happy sister clasped in the arms of her honest lover."



Mrs. Force, mother of the beautiful sisters whose love affairs have been so different.

before worth and thinks that happiness is in externals. There is no mother so cruel as to wish her daughter to be unhappy. That is the tragedy—that they think these things will make us happy. But I promise you that you shall have love.

The scene changes. The mother and her two daughters are together.

The Widowed Sister—Sister shall marry the man she loves. Her life shall not be wrecked as mine was wrecked. The Mother—Wrecked! Are you

The Widowed Sister—I was young and I was overcome by the adventure of it all. You know that we never heard love glorified in the set in which we moved. Love was derided or forgotten. I thought it meant just fun and having lots of money to spend and going everywhere and wearing a diamond tiara and great pearls and being looked up to by everybody! I did not know, sister, what marriage meant. And now—money! I hate the very sound of it. I have never worn my tiara. I cannot bring myself to put it on my head.

The Sister—Love is crown enough. The Mother—Don't be hysterical. How do you know you didn't love the man who gave you everything—wealth beyond the dreams of avarice—diamonds—a box at the opera—oh, everything your heart could wish for? How do you know you would not have come to love him if he had lived? I was so proud of your marriage. How every girl envied you! I thought you would be so happy.

The Widowed Sister (gently)—I

the only sacrifice. The Mother—She must marry a rich man. A man who can give her a house in Newport, high social position, who will put her beyond the reach of want. She will be happy.

The Sister—Mother, I shall marry the man I love and live in a Harlem flat or board on the West Side. I could live in a hut with him and be happy.

The Widowed Sister—She shall marry the man she loves and you will not interfere. Else I shall take her with me and she shall be married from my own home. I will see that she shall not want.

The Mother—Oh, the scandal of such a thing. You are ungrateful, cruel to me. And I am powerless.

The Widowed Sister—Don't cry, mother. It's not your fault. I quite know you think you are doing everything for the best. But I have learned. Misery is a sharp teacher. Am I happy? She shall be.

Was there ever a more complete plot for a melodrama? Stage the situation anywhere. Substitute the

sible. She has given her sister a beautiful trousseau, and has settled a handsome allowance on her. The wedding is to take place late this month at Mrs. Astor's beautiful Summer home in Bar Harbor, and young Harnickel is spending all his spare time under his future sister-in-law's roof.

The young widow who has made all this possible looks at the lovers with wonder in her big blue eyes. She has never known love, but she now realizes that it must be something very wonderful, something very different to her own romance. One sure thing has come about during this fight against social ambition and wealth—the young widow in her fight for her sister has found herself; if she had her life to live over again she, like Katherine, would insist on marrying only for love. In spite of her training and her marriage, Mrs. Astor finds that she knows now what love is, and she believes in it, oh, so firmly.

"Money can buy pearls and diamonds, grand houses and yachts, but



Henri Harnickel, the poor clerk, who wins the hand of Mrs. Astor's sister.