

## A Real-Life Melodrama in Fashionable Society

**How a Distinguished Newport and New York Family, Relatives of the Vanderbilts, Have Been Real Actors in a Strange Domestic Tragedy Quite as Surprising as Anything in Moving Picture Dramas.**



The Geraghty Baby—the Last Straw That Wrecked the Amos Tuck Frenches.

**S**URELY "truth is stranger than fiction." Nothing in the Bowery melodramas or the matrimonial mix-ups of the motion picture films is more surprising than the domestic drama in real life of the Amos Tuck French family, wealthy members of the Vanderbilt set of New York, Newport and Tuxedo.

The announcement of the divorce proceedings brought the other day by Mrs. Amos Tuck French against her husband is the newest act in this domestic melodrama. The curtain of publicity has been rung up on several previous acts and scenes from time to time in the last few years, and it is probable that the final scenes of this real-life play have not yet been enacted.

Friends of the Frenches insist that the elopement of Julia French with Jack Geraghty, the Newport chauffeur, formed the opening scene of Act I. In this drama of domestic unhappiness and reality. They are wrong. The opening scene was set over twelve years ago, when Ellen

French, the younger sister of Amos Tuck, married Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt. This carefully brought about marriage with the youth destined to be the head of the Vanderbilt family raised the Frenches' social ambition to the highest degree.

Before the real drama opened, however, there was a prologue, in which appeared the older members of the French family and, in which the seeds of social ambition were planted in their breasts by the marriage of Elizabeth French, Amos Tuck's older sister, to the present Major-General Lord Chylesmore. This marriage had been arranged by Mrs. Francis Ormond French in order to further her own social plans in England. Just at this time, too, occurred the marriage of Amos with the very rich and very pretty Pauline Le Roy, daughter of Mrs. Stuyvesant Le Roy, one of the proudest and wealthiest members of New York and Newport society. These marriages might have satisfied Mrs. French's ambitions, but there was a young daughter, a small girl with

Titian hair, who was still in the nursery. As this girl, Ellen, grew up, her mother planned to marry her to a man of great wealth and prominence in the society into which her son had married. Of all the eligible she selected Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, the youth who had been made the head of the Vanderbilt family. And this brings us to the opening scene of this real-life drama.

This scene was set in the beautiful Newport mansion belonging to Mrs. Francis French, and in The Breakers, the magnificent home of the Vanderbilts. In her campaign to win a Vanderbilt for her son-in-law Mrs. French was aided by her daughter, Lady Chylesmore; her son Amos and his wife, and, of course, by Ellen, now called Elsie by her own request.

Opposed to them were Mrs. Vanderbilt, Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney and Reginald. Alfred was in a way a non-combatant. The senior Mrs. Vanderbilt had other plans for her son, but Elsie and Alfred were in love, and Mrs. French wanted the match, and the Vanderbilts were beaten. This marriage realized Mrs. French's greatest ambition. The wedding was the most talked-of affair of the year, and everything promised well for the future.

But with this scene ended, a new development arose. Amos French became infected more deeply with his mother's social ambitions, and he began to build castles in the air. He was aided by his mother and his sister, Mrs. Vanderbilt. There was a pretty girl growing up in the French household, Pauline, the oldest child. She had attended her Aunt Elsie as a bridesmaid, and her head was filled with visions of a future husband who should be as rich and as important as Uncle Alfred. Her Prince Charming must be of high social standing, for at that period the Frenches could not afford to marry into any but the best social circles.

When Polly was eighteen Aunt Elsie gave a wonderful coming-out ball for her, and during that year showered her with gifts and pleasures. All this was done because Aunt Elsie intended to marry her satisfactorily. The husband chosen for Polly must be of good family, and have a fortune which would allow her to have her Winter in town and her Summer in Newport.

This act centres around Mrs. Alfred Vanderbilt's superb house in Newport, and her equally superb town house, with occasional excursions in the steam yacht, and in the Vanderbilt private car to Alfred's beautiful Adirondack Camp. Dances, cruises on Aunt Elsie's yacht, trips to Europe with Aunt Elsie, house parties at Oakland Farm and Camp Sagamore, filled Polly's days and nights. She was her own motor car, her own maids, everything that wealth could give. And of course she must marry as Aunt Elsie and Father French decreed.

Amos French, socially ambitious father, was proud of his oldest daughter and was just as sure as his sister was that Polly should make a good marriage. When, therefore, young Sam Wagstaff, the son of Colonel Alfred Wagstaff, appeared as her suitor, he was accepted. Great delight on all sides was expressed because he was so "suitable" and because Polly was wise and virtuous enough to follow the teachings of her worldly wise Grandmother French and of her father.

Up to the time of this marriage, which took place years ago, no domestic drama had been noticeable in the French household. Mrs. French seemed perfectly satisfied with her husband's plans for Polly, and, in fact, encouraged the good-looking young Wagstaff in his courting. The marriage was celebrated in Newport. Aunt Elsie showered her obedient and compliant niece with jewels and added a large check to her other contributions. In this scene virtue was rewarded, and the curtain rang down on a most harmonious and delighted family group.

And why should they not be pleased? Is there not always great joy in a family when a daughter makes a "suitable" marriage, a marriage which increases her wealth and which reflects added glory on the family itself?

But the suitably married Polly is not the only girl in the French household. There is a younger daughter, Julia, who was twelve years old when Polly married. And now the family ambitions settled on "Judy." She was trained to marry a rich man, preferably one in the Newport colony. Much money was spent on her education. She was taught French, the modern dances, how to be a gracious hostess and other necessary things. She had her tutors and her own maid, her valuable dogs and her horses. In every way she was being trained to hold a high position socially. Aunt Elsie promised to do as much for her as she had for Polly. Unluckily, Aunt Elsie had been forced to divorce Uncle Alfred, and thus Judy could not have house parties at Camp Sagamore, nor a big ball at Oakland Farm. But she could have everything else, including a London season with Lady Chylesmore.

And now we come to the third act. Judy is barely eighteen when before her dazzled eyes are dangled all the joys that wealth can bestow. She is told that to uphold the family position and tickle her father's pride she must marry in accordance with her family's wishes.

And what does Judy do? Poor, foolish Judy followed the dictates of her heart and ran away with Jack Geraghty, an honest young working-man of Newport. Oh, how the pride of her parents was shattered! Grandmother Le Roy, a proud and haughty matron, who felt that her daughter had married beneath her in marrying Amos Tuck French, almost died of shame and chagrin when her granddaughter married the hack driver's son. Grandmother French, eager to have Judy's marriage equal Aunt Elsie's and Sister Polly's, was mortified, angry, cruelly hurt.

Mr. French was angry with Judy and even more angry with his wife whom he blamed for the whole affair. His pride as a father was outraged, his pride in his social importance was tumbled in the dust, his proud confidence in his family's future was shattered. He blamed his wife for not having more carefully protected Judy. Mrs. French, whose pride was equally lacerated, replied that he, as a father, was equally responsible for the elopement which they called a "tragedy."

Mr. French was not in Newport when the elopement occurred. He was having a very gay and festive time in his handsome Tuxedo home. His virtuous daughter, the wise and provident Polly, and husband, were with him. They had been entertaining a house party for several days. Mr. French had just completed elaborate plans for Judy. She was to be sent to England the next week to spend a few months with Lady Chylesmore, and perhaps to be presented at court. All arrangements were finished and Mr. French sat down to dinner at the Tuxedo Club with the Wagstaffs, extremely well satisfied with himself and his plans for his family.

While explaining to his guests his delight at being able to send Judy to England, a servant whispered in Mrs. Wagstaff's ear that she was wanted at the telephone. She left the table, all smiles and composure. She returned shaking like a leaf and hardly able to speak. "Judy has run away with that Geraghty," she gasped. With these words Mr. French's rosy castles in air collapsed, and the curtain fell on another act of this real life drama. Just in time to prevent our seeing the lengths to which a proud society father's despair and rage could carry him.

Then came days of frantic anxiety. Mrs. Vanderbilt herself led the pursuing party which started hard on the heels of the fleeing elopers. They were in a high power motor car, and so was Mrs. Vanderbilt. But the

search amounted to nothing. Jack and Judy were legally married when they were next heard from—and perfectly happy.

But there was no happiness in the home Judy had run away from. The quarrel between the father and mother was so bitter that even a temporary reconciliation was effected only with the greatest difficulty. The father's feelings were more intensely bitter than the mother's. His blindest pride gave him suffering enough in a way, but other instincts suffered also. The mental picture of his carefully nurtured Judy serving Jack Geraghty, the town chauffeur, as a wife and housekeeper brought a bitterness to his soul that nothing could temper.

Every fatherly feeling was outraged as he contemplated what this marriage meant to Julia and to the French family as a unit. All this added to the bitterness of the quarrel with his wife. He refused to stay in her Newport home. He removed his belongings to his Tuxedo home. He would not admit that his wife's heart might be breaking—all he thought of was his injured pride and the damage the elopement might do to his social ambitions.

For the year following the elopement things were at a frightful tension. Whenever he saw his wife his reproaches grew more cutting. Mrs. French, on her part, was just as unhappy. She feared the worst for Judy. She saw her washing dishes, cooking the meals, washing Jack's clothes. She saw her going without the luxuries to which she was used. She saw her friends smile pityingly whenever they met her. She overheard gossip about her daughter and the plain uneducated Geraghtys. It was all very hard to bear, and to relieve her overwrought feelings she threw the blame for the tragedy on her husband, just as he was trying to throw it on her.

Then news came that a baby was expected. And suddenly the mother weakened in the attitude she had assumed toward Judy and Jack. She began to study ways to approach her girl. But the logical result of the runaway match did not weaken the father, nor young Frank French, the brother. They were made even more bitter. The baby would mean a final and complete link between Julia and the Geraghtys. It meant the start of a new branch of a family tree in which the blood of the poor Geraghtys blended with that of the aristocratic Le Roes and Frenches.

Mr. French by this time refused to meet his wife, even outside her home. He had forbidden her approaching Julia or giving her any money, but the mother ignored his orders and helped prepare for the baby.

Then the baby came. Mrs. French swept the baby and Judy in her arms and defied her husband. This was the end.

Amos French raged. He kept on his side his sister, Elsie Vanderbilt, and his sons, who threatened to horsewhip Geraghty. And the breach in his domestic affairs widened so that he communicated with his wife only through his lawyers. He would not go to Newport for fear of meeting his grandchild running about the streets. He basked in the happiness of his obedient daughter, Mrs. Wagstaff. She, alas, has no children, but she is a leader socially, and what more could a father ask?

The Geraghtys, after the baby came, moved to Woburn, near Boston, to live. Mrs. French bought a

### Characters in the Amos Tuck French Divorce

- AMOS TUCK FRENCH** . . . . . Brother of Mrs. Elsie French Vanderbilt and father of the rich Mrs. Wagstaff and the poor Mrs. Geraghty, who is being sued for divorce by Mrs. French.
- MRS. AMOS TUCK FRENCH** . . . . . The mother whose heart proved stronger than her pride, who is suing her husband for divorce because he would not forgive their daughter.
- MRS. SAMUEL WAGSTAFF** . . . . . Pauline ("Polly") French, the obedient daughter, who lived up to her training by marrying the son of the wealthy Colonel Wagstaff.
- MRS. JACK GERAGHTY** . . . . . The "silly" daughter, Julia, who obeyed the dictates of her heart and married the honest young working man, Jack Geraghty.
- FRANK FRENCH** . . . . . The oldest son of the Frenches, who threatened to horsewhip young Geraghty and who refuses to forgive his sister.
- MRS. ELSIE VANDERBILT** . . . . . The first wife of Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, whom she divorced just before her niece Julia eloped with Geraghty. She had planned a wealthy marriage for Julia.
- STUYVESANT LE ROY** . . . . . Brother of Mrs. French and uncle to Pauline and Julia, who showers the obedient niece with jewels and refuses to recognize "silly" Julia Geraghty.

**SCENES OF THE DRAMA**—Mrs. Alfred G. Vanderbilt's town and country residences, the New York, Tuxedo and Newport homes of Mr. Amos Tuck French, automobiles, yachts and clubs—and the poor little chauffeur's humble cottage.

Judy, the "Silly Sister," Who Married Out of Her Social Station—a Chauffeur.



Polly, Who Married a Social Equal, to the Satisfaction of Mr. French.

