

# Mystery of Her Bleeding Wrist and "Medicine" Bottle

**Fashionable Society Awaits the Details of the Separation Suit of Mrs. Theodosius Stevens to Clear Up the Secrets of That August Afternoon When the Young Wife Was Found Among Such Tragic Surroundings**

**T**HE recent published announcement that proceedings for divorce had been begun by Mrs. Frances Watts Stevens against her husband, Theodosius R. Stevens, member of the fashionable Stevens family of New York and New Jersey and brother of the master of the famous Castle Stevens at Castle Point, Hoboken, has revived most intensely the interest of fashionable society in the attempt at suicide of this young and charming wife last August.

The Stevenses have been married less than three years. Their match was considered, at the first, an ideal one, and when the little more than bride was carried from the Sea Spray Hotel at Easthampton, Long Island, unconscious from a drug she had taken and with the veins of her left wrist severed, great indeed was the consternation in the high social circles in which she had moved. Many, too, were the conjectures.

It was known that despite the fair auguries which had attended the launching of their marital craft it had sailed a year ago into troublesome waters. There were hints of estrangement. It was known that the wife was living alone in the Long Island hotel. Mrs. Stevens was temperamental and Mr. Stevens was inclined to be matter of fact.

Yet whatever incompatibility existed between them, everyone was certain that the husband could not possibly have given the wife any real cause to kill herself. Mr. Stevens is a gentleman of education, cultivated and kindly. It is true he is seventeen years older than Mrs. Stevens.

There was an explanation offered that grief over the death of her father, the late Ethelbert Watts, diplomat and statesman, once Vice-Consul of Russia and during the early years of the war American Consul-General at Brussels, had caused the attempt.

It was whispered, too, that she had never really forgotten a certain young officer of King Albert's staff who had been violently in love with her, with whom, it was said, she had been as much in love, and who had been killed in the first year of strife.

But the majority wondered whether the strain of keeping up appearances, of entertaining the smart people who were their own kind upon an entirely inadequate income had not accentuated the differences of temperament and widened the rift between the two, until to the wife's overwrought nerves and high-strung temperament death seemed preferable to the life she had been leading.

The mystery of Mrs. Stevens's attempt at suicide has never lost its interest, and now fashionable society is wondering whether in the papers which will be filed there will be revealed the true cause—hints that Balzac might have used for another book of his *Comedie Humaine*, or which would have provided Thackeray another chapter for *Vanity Fair*.

Mrs. Stevens herself says, "I have not yet decided whether the legal action will be for separation or for absolute divorce." Still another curious factor is added by the apparent friendliness of the pair upon all matters except as to living together as husband and wife. They met several weeks ago in their apartment at No. 10 East Fiftieth street, and divided their furniture between them, each moving to a separate domicile.

Mrs. Stevens said, "I met Mr. Stevens a week ago and we both laughed together heartily over some of the rumors which had been flying around regarding our disagreement. Among other things I had heard that Mr. Stevens is going to divorce me, which, of course, is absolutely untrue."

Mrs. Stevens was Frances Watts, of the old Philadelphia family of that name. She comes from a long line of aristocrats who won honors in diplomatic affairs. Her grandfather was the American Minister to Austria. She herself is a beauty.

During the most formative years of her life, from fifteen to twenty-one or two, the girl lived in Brussels, where she saw and later became part of the brilliant cosmopolitan society of that very gay city. She was thrown constantly into the company of men of true continental training and tradition; her ideas of what a man should



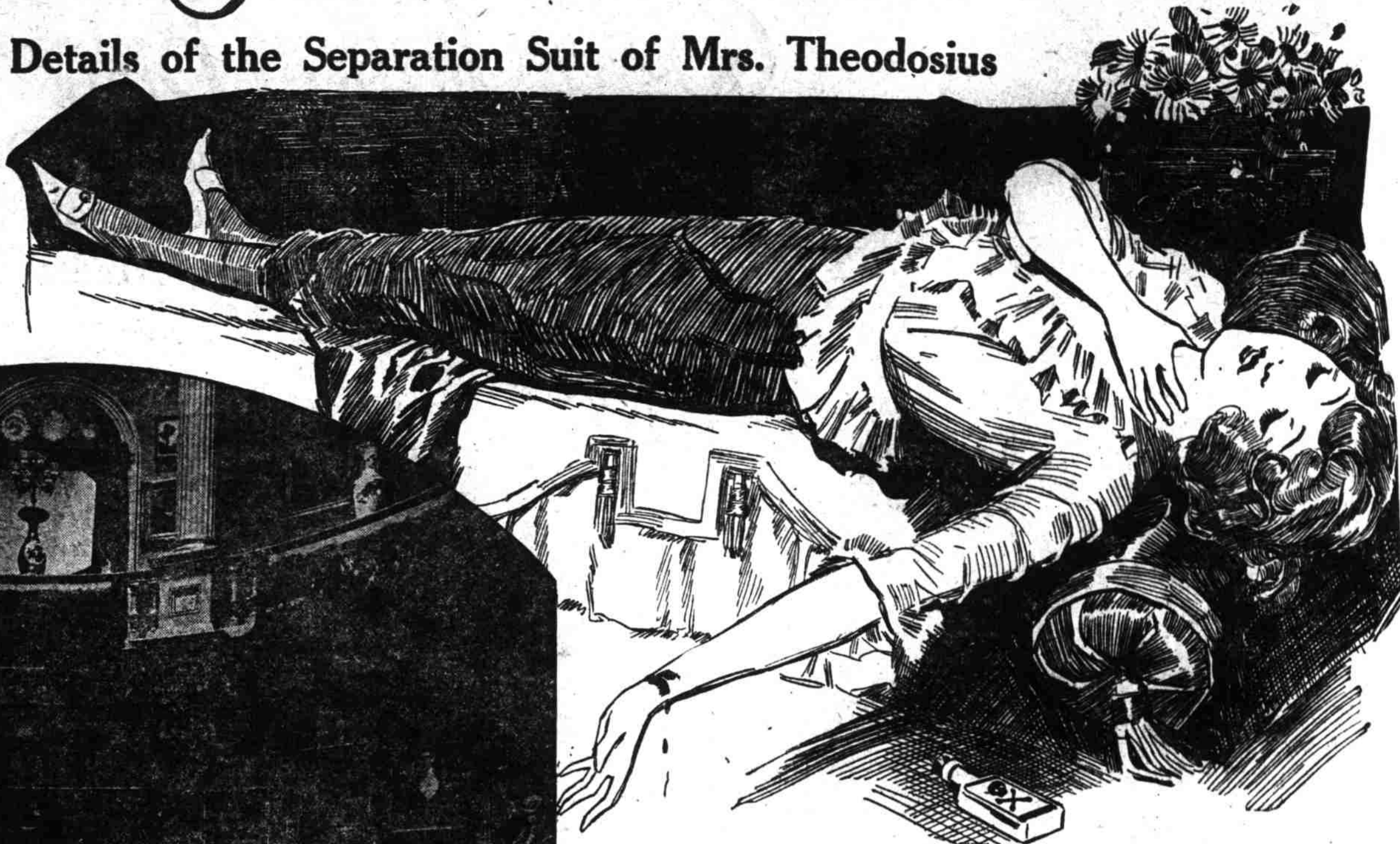
**The Rotunda of the Interesting Old Stevens Mansion at Castle Point, Hoboken, and Portrait of Mrs. Theodosius Stevens.**

Watts family, and gradually Miss Frances slipped back into her former social niche. She became the leader in the relief work for the Belgians, and New York saw her frequently in the war tableaux and other benefits given for Belgian babies. Her dashing beauty and wonderful hair made her a spectacular figure in entertainments that netted large sums for the stricken country.

Finally her activities led to a friendship with Mrs. Richard Stevens, of Castle Point, the historic home of the distinguished Stevens family on the Hoboken side of the Hudson River. Mrs. Stevens, who was older than Miss Watts, was a striking brunette, as beautiful in her way as the Philadelphia belle. The two became great friends; they were splendid foils for each other, and were well nigh inseparable.

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**The Unconscious Form of Mrs. Stevens Was Found, Her Left Wrist Slashed by the Blade of a Safety Razor and a "Medicine" Bottle at Hand.**

larly in the brilliant young married set in New York, and naturally was besieged by suitors.

The war threw her into a fit of melancholy. It was openly stated that she was in love, perhaps even engaged, to a Belgian officer on King Albert's staff. It was no secret that this man had been a constant caller at the Watts home in Brussels, and was with her more than any other. When war came he followed his King, and was reported to be in the greatest danger.

Later, when Miss Watts withdrew from all social life for several weeks, it was reported that this suitor, a nobleman of fortune, had been killed. As no formal announcement had been made, no formal recognition of his death was given by the

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Society did not take his love affair very seriously—for the two were so dissimilar in taste and outlook on life. The girl was used to the superficial but very delightful manners of the Continental men.

Stevens, on the other hand, was a downright, rather stolid American, who looked upon women as more or less his equals. He had graduated from Columbia in 1900, studied law and was already well known in his profession. He was also deeply interested in politics, and had been appointed counsel to the Bronx Parkway Commission. His family tradition was one of serious effort and splendid accomplishment. He was the grand-nephew of the Edwin A. Stevens who founded the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken and whose engineering prowess had given him an international reputation.

Into his life, at forty-two, floated the delightfully brilliant young butterfly from Philadelphia, a girl who knew little of and cared less for law and politics. Mrs. Dick saw her chance to make a match, and, woman-like, did her best to bring it about, irrespective of what might happen after.

With the passing of time and the pressing tragedies of the three years of fighting, Miss Watts had outgrown or controlled the sorrow brought to her by the death of her reported lover. She first became mildly interested in her new admirer, and later apparently fell in love with him. In January, 1917, their engagement was announced, and in March they were married.

Following a short wedding trip the happy couple settled down in New York, and society having given them the once-over left them alone as objects of gossip. All looked most happy on the surface. And in the beginning they were happy.

Several months went by before any uneasiness was roused. Then it became evident that all was not well in the new household. Rumors of friction, of quarrels even, over money matters and over temperamental differences, went up and down Fifth Avenue. Finally these rumors reached the castle over on the Jersey side of the river, and great was the consternation in the family stronghold. The Richard Stevenses flew to the rescue, but the objects of their solicitude would not talk. They were patently unhappy, but would admit nothing. Neither would they accept money from their richer folk.

And in this regard it was recalled that young Mrs. Stevens had always been determinedly independent in money matters. Indeed, not long before her marriage she found it difficult to get along on her own small income and decided to go upon the stage. But so shrunken were her resources that although a position was open to her, she did not have money enough to buy her costumes for it. She went into motion pictures—hiding her real identity—and in a few weeks earned enough to buy the dresses and hats for the more ambitious part. After that the play went upon the road, but failed. Although her relatives in Philadelphia are numerous and wealthy, she would accept no help from them.

So it was not long after the wedding that the clash of ideals and temperaments began. As a member of the Stevens family Theodosius had a goodly income and this he added to with his law work. But there is an appalling difference between what is necessary for a single man to be comfortable upon in fashionable society and what is necessary for a young couple. They were entertained and had to entertain in turn. Mrs. Stevens had known, of course, before she married that her husband was not in the multi-millionaire class. But she had not realized the difference between a "good income" and a really big fortune.

Brought up as she had been by indulgent American parents, she had been given everything in reason and assumed that her husband could, of course, give her a great deal more. She had no dot, because Ethelbert Watts was in no position to settle a

fortune on his daughter, but after her marriage he did continue her allowance. This, however, did not place her, financially, on a par with the young married women who formed her social setting.

In plain English, even so early in her married life, Mrs. Stevens found that she could not compete with the gay Long Island colony, led by Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, Mrs. Willie K. Vanderbilt, Mrs. George F. Baker, Jr., Mrs. Goadby Loew and others whose incomes ran into many millions. Being high spirited and fond of giving as good as she received, Mrs. Stevens became unhappy.

One of her greatest complaints was that her husband's interest in politics interfered with his money making, and she tried hard to make him give up his ambitions and settle down to grubbing for wealth.

Now, Mr. Stevens takes his public duty very seriously; he had ideals and he wished to preserve them; also he really longed to give his beautiful wife everything her heart was set on. As a lawyer with a social background, Mr. Stevens realized that while Greenwich Village may be a state of mind, Fifth Avenue is undoubtedly a state of the pocketbook, but even this realization could not make him change his method of living and working.

The seventeen years difference between the husband and wife suddenly became very apparent; he saw himself ten years from now a settled man of fifty-six, with a brilliant, society-loving wife of thirty-three or four, eager to be a real leader in her set and more than eager to have millions at her command. This depressed him, but served to make him work harder, day and night.

His wife, naturally, saw the same picture. She also saw her husband wearing himself out in his effort to live up to his ideals. She developed even greater unhappiness and depression.

Last Summer she wanted to take a Southampton house and assume a prominent position in that very smart and expensive colony. Mr. Stevens refused and suggested that they spend the Summer quietly at Easthampton, just a short drive from the gayer place.

There were many bitter discussions before this course was decided upon. Finally the husband and wife appeared at the hotel in Easthampton and after a few days' visit the former returned to New York and business and the latter spent her days with her friends in Southampton, but making the hotel her headquarters.

Mr. Stevens, according to the hotel proprietor, did not come down to Easthampton again. Shortly after noon on August 1 cries of a woman calling for help were heard on the beach and a crowd of bathers rushed toward the hotel. Mrs. Stevens, it developed, had been found in her room unconscious from loss of blood and from some internal trouble, due, it was said, to poison. Doctors called, took her instantly to the Southampton Hospital, eighteen miles away, and superhuman efforts were made to save her life and to keep the trouble a complete secret.

Mr. Stevens was sent for, but he, like every public official and personal friend, refused to talk.

And so for four months the "conspiracy of silence" has done its full work. Society talked for a while and then decided to await the course of events. The published report of Mrs. Stevens's divorce suit against her husband proves that watchful waiting sometimes has its reward.

Mr. Stevens, it is said, has entered no protest, but will let the divorce go through unquestioned. Society smiles confidently and says that before long its curiosity will be gratified and the true explanation of the Easthampton mystery will be known. It is no puzzling thing for society-bred women to get divorces, but attempted suicide is very different.



**The Famous Stevens's Residence.**