

How Mrs. Oelrichs' Divorce and Perfume Shop Have Upset Fashionable Society

Exclusive Newport Unable to Agree Whether it Is the Proper Thing for a Former Charming Leader to Turn Merchant and Make Cash Customers of Her Smart Friends

Thus Annoying the Proud Family of the Husband She Has Dropped

NEWPORT, Aug. 13. **S**ELDOM if ever has fashionable society been more amazed than it was the other day when Mrs. Charles de Looney Oelrichs divorced her husband and went to Newport and opened on Bellevue avenue, right in the centre of the smart Summer colony, a perfumery shop.

It had long been known that Mrs. Oelrichs felt the necessity of eking out her personal resources in some way. But the double news that she had dropped her husband and was to carry her quest of dollars into the fashionable Summer colony of which she has for many seasons been a prominent member was so astonishing that many Newport residents could hardly credit the story until they paid a visit to the attractive little shop and saw for themselves who was managing it.

As they quickly found out, it is quite true that Mrs. Oelrichs has actually had the courage to go into trade in Newport. There she sits behind the counter every day, personally superintending the sale of the costly perfumes, powders and other cosmetic luxuries which form her stock in trade.

If she were playing the role of "a plucky little woman thrown upon her own resources" in some Broadway melodrama she could hardly look or dress the part any better. Against the effective background furnished by the pink geraniums in the windows of the store and the gay labels of the perfumery bottles on the shelves she makes a charming picture in her black crepon frock and fetching black toque. The appealing air of wistfulness which even the coquettish black beauty spot on her cheek cannot belie combines with her sombre garb to give the appearance of a thoroughly worthy gentlewoman in reduced circumstances.

In fact, Mrs. Oelrichs' much discussed perfumery shop forms the rock which has split Newport society as it has rarely been split before. One faction maintains that she is doing perfectly right and lauds the courage she has shown by extending the field of her business activities to Newport. The other faction, quite as large and quite as outspoken, insists that Mrs. Oelrichs might easily have found a less odorous way of relieving her financial difficulties—one that would be less jarring to the sensibilities of her former husband's family.

The faction that frowns coldly on the beautiful young matron's daring pursuit of prosaic dollars on Bellevue avenue is made up of the still-married-to-their-first-husband wives, while practically all the women, led by Mrs. May Brady Harriman, who are backing Mrs. Oelrichs with their friendship are those who have at least one divorce to their credit.

Every one, of course, who is anybody, or hopes to be some day, knows the Oelrichs family and what it has stood for socially. At the time when pretty, blonde Marjory Turnbull, of Morristown, New Jersey, married Charles de Looney Oelrichs, his family rode on the crest of society's wave. His aunt, Mrs. Herman Oelrichs, was one of the most powerful members of the Newport set and an important figure in the wider reaches of New York society. It is no secret that she could, if she would, have wrested away Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish's leadership.



Photo INTERNATIONAL.
Mrs. Leonard M. Thomas No. 2, Who Does Approve of Mrs. Oelrichs' Enterprise and Is Giving It Her Hearty Support.

were equally prominent, although not blessed with the wealth that gave Mrs. Herman such power. Mrs. Charles May Oelrichs, mother of the man whom Miss Turnbull married, belonged to the more conservative social element in New York and Newport. She had, however, married her older daughter, Lily, to Peter Martin, of San Francisco, one of the richest men by inheritance on the Pacific coast.

Her other daughter, Blanche, a great beauty, was being trained to make her debut and a rich marriage. And there were two sons, both considered highly desirable catches by reason of their social position in spite of their lack of wealth. Newport at the time actually looked to the Oelrichs family.

By her marriage to the older son Marjory Turnbull was considered to be doing herself very well. Her people were by no means in the Newport set, nor in the exclusive set of New York. By her marriage, however, she was drawn into the innermost circles. She became quite the rage during the first years of her marriage, for she had unusual beauty and charm. When her sister-in-law, the beautiful Blanche, married Leonard Thomas, one of the richest of the Newport eligibles, Mrs. Charles rose to even greater heights, for she had made a close friend of the younger girl.

With all this prestige, with invitations to dinners, dances and house parties pouring in on her, Mrs. Charles realized more and more that her husband's income spelled poverty, and as the seasons passed she grew discontented and unhappy. To be poor in the Newport crowd was far worse than being poor in Morristown.



Photo THE OREGON JOURNAL

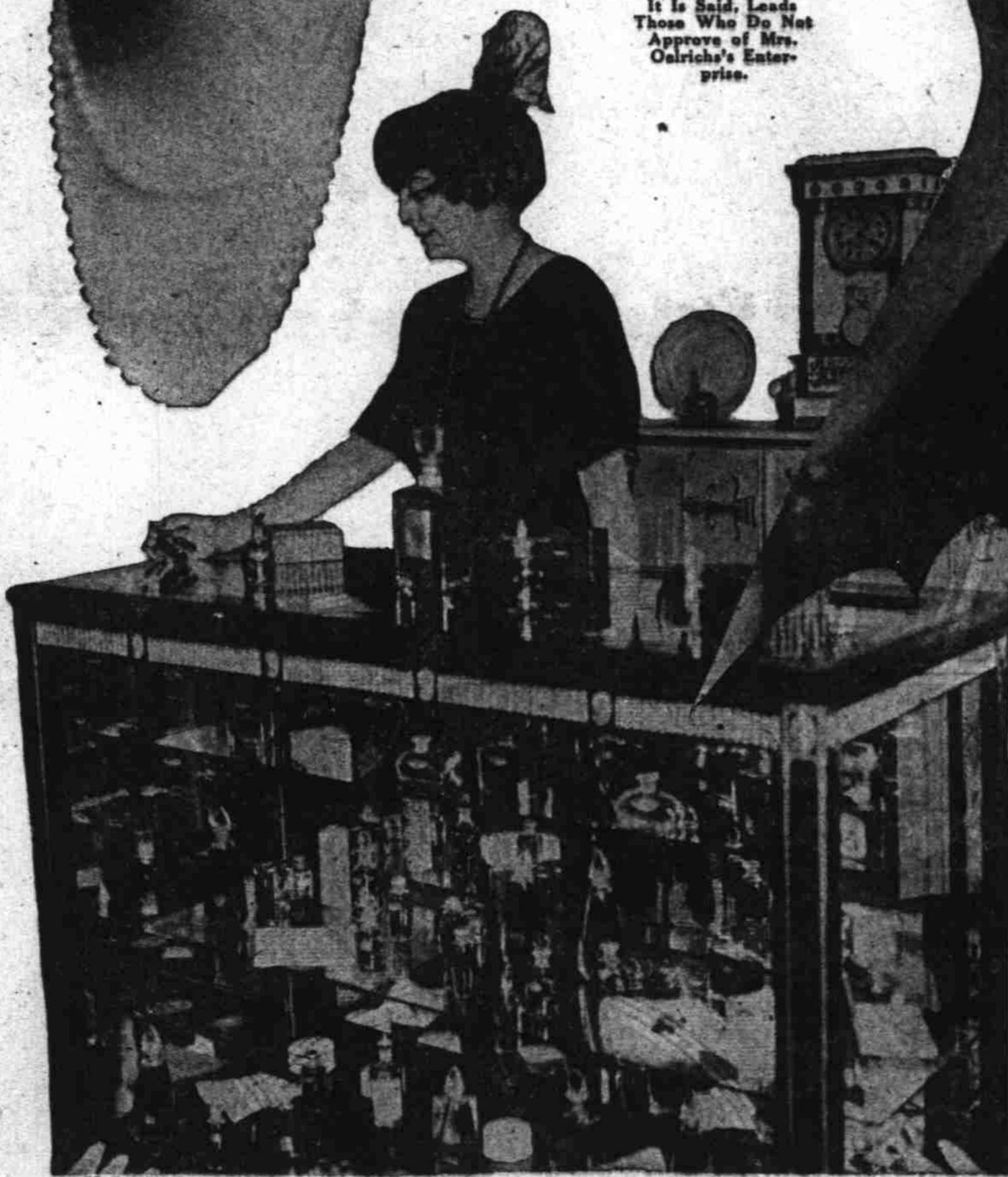


Photo Western Newspaper Union
Mrs. Oelrichs Behind the Counter of Her Perfume Shop on Aristocratic Bellevue Avenue, Newport.

During these years, too, Mrs. Herman Oelrichs withdrew from Newport and her powerful backing was a great loss. The Len Thomases began to grow apart and Blanche gave up her social life to a great extent. Peter Martin died and Lily, his wife, refused to spend her Summers in Newport.

Marjory Oelrichs, therefore, found herself facing a losing battle. No longer in love with her husband, no longer a part of a family group of social leaders, she found herself fighting for freedom. If her husband could not keep her in the Newport set, why, then, should she retain him in her life? If she had to go without the pleasures she had married for, she preferred to go without them alone.

As a last straw Blanche Thomas divorced her husband and married the actor, "Jack" Barrymore. With nothing more to depend on in the Oelrichs family, Mrs. Oelrichs decided first to go into business, and, second, to get a divorce, provided that she found she could earn her own living. Her husband's family knew that she wanted

a divorce, but they knew nothing of her business ambition until the day she opened her perfumery shop just off New York's Fifth avenue. It was more than a shock—it was frightfully annoying! The Oelrichs women had frequently considered divorce, of course, but not one of them had ever gone into trade. Blanche, to be sure, wrote poetry, but that did not necessarily mean making money!

Three months later Mrs. Oelrichs went to Paris "to buy stock" and when she returned she had her divorce in her hand along with numerous bills of lading. More shock, more annoyance!

On the steamer returning from Paris was Mrs. "Jack" Barrymore, the one-time Mrs. "Len" Thomas. Mrs. Barrymore met her former sister-in-law face to face and cut her dead! Mrs. Oelrichs bore the affront calmly and ignored Mrs. Barrymore's presence on the boat.

But when Mrs. Oelrichs landed in New York the very first woman she telephoned was the new Mrs. Leonard Thomas! In a day it became known that the recently

Mrs. Leonard Thomas No. 1, Former Sister-in-Law, Who, It is Said, Leads Those Who Do Not Approve of Mrs. Oelrichs' Enterprise.



Mrs. Charles de Looney Oelrichs, the Beautiful, Fashionable Society Leader Whose Venture Into Business and Out of Marriage Has So Interested Newport.

take special orders and to see that everything runs smoothly.

When the news came out everybody wondered what would happen. Would Newport pass by on the other side? Or would it play the good philanthropist and do its perfume buying in the attractive little shop? Naturally, the newcomers, tourists and such, dropped in, for there was something thrilling in giving orders to the young beauty who had once queened it in the smart colony.

But what of the others? This was soon settled. Mrs. Harriman, divorced last Spring from Herbert Harriman; Mrs. Williams P. Burden, divorced from Gordon Douglas and married to Mr. Burden a year ago; Mrs. Gustavus White, twice divorced; Mrs. Donald McRae, divorced two years ago from Samuel Wagstaff, and, last of all, Mrs. Paul Fitz Simons, the former Mrs. Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, practically formed themselves into a committee to encourage Mrs. Oelrichs.

Was there ever a more intriguing situation? Here were five of the most important figures in Newport society standing solidly back of the fair and plucky Mrs. Oelrichs.

Why have these women gone against tradition to espouse Mrs. Oelrichs' cause? The best answer is that they believe that the tremendous change which has come over economic and domestic conditions must be accepted, even in the smart set. Deeper than this lies the sympathy these women feel for the difficulties facing a Newport woman who takes two such important steps as divorcing her husband and going into trade.

From actual experience none of the five knows anything about the business side of Mrs. Oelrichs' life, but they appreciate that many society women are going into trade in New York and see no good reason why Newport should have a "connoisseur" over the shop on Bellevue avenue. They feel that the other wives are archaic in their attitude, and because of their inexperience unable, mentally or morally, to understand!

Every day or two there come enthusiastic letters from Mrs. Leonard Thomas, who, while not spending the Summer in Newport, considers herself a charter member of the group that is backing Mrs. Oelrichs. It gives her keen pleasure to help along any cause that will annoy the present Mrs. Barrymore and her family.