

# How Mrs. Oyster "Mislaid" that \$200,000 Nest-Egg



The Septuagenarian's Bride and the Pearls She Got from Her Oyster.

**W**ASNT Mrs. George M. Oyster, the pretty Syracuse widow of the aged Washington millionaire, a little careless with her pin-money?

He was seventy-three and she was twenty-three; she gave up her girlish dreams of love and children to marry Oyster, the Granddaddy Longlegs who wanted to adopt her. Then he died and willed her a shabby \$25,000. Mrs. Oyster was indignant. She said that it was a sin and a shame, after all she had sacrificed, to be left with a stingy \$25,000; she even hinted that she might be forced to go back to work.

What had become of that \$200,000 pre-nuptial settlement, Mrs. Oyster was asked. She rubbed her forehead. Goodness—yes; there had been \$200,000, hadn't there?

And what had she done with it?

Oh—she had mislaid it somewhere. She had deposited it in a bank, she believed. She must look up her papers and ascertain just which bank. She was glad to have her attention called to it—every little bit helped, you see.

Moreover, there were the famous pearls which she had gotten from her Oyster. Fish-tush—The pearl market was low, and she could not realize on a string of the bangles?

And last but not least, comes the news that Galt & Brother, jewelers, of Washington, in which Mrs. Woodrow Wilson owns the controlling interest, have brought suit against the estate of Oyster, for \$10,000 alleged to be due for jewelry bought for Cecil Ready, prior to her marriage.

All the items mentioned in the bill of complaint, except a diamond necklace valued at \$3,500, were bought a few weeks before the marriage. Included in the list were a diamond wedding ring at \$400, diamond ring, \$2,700; diamond bracelet, \$2,000; sapphire and diamond bar-pin, \$1,800; gold vanity case, \$230, and a gold drinking cup, \$60. The diamond necklace was bought two months after the wedding.

It was hinted that the proportionately small inheritance was so fixed not because Oyster had ceased to love her—quite the contrary; there were those who said it was because he feared if he left her his millions they would more readily draw younger suitors for the hand of the attractive widow; and attractive she still is—more suggestive of the bride of a young man than the widow of an old one.

Before her marriage the following was written of her:

"Cecil's hair rippled in natural waves, sweeping the floor when it was hanging down her back. She had big, lustrous eyes, that sent thrills down the spine of many male admirers. Her features were perfectly chiseled, she had fine coloring, a svelte figure and a Cinderella foot, with hand to match."

But, alas and alas, she had no special yearning for "book learning."

It was in this that her sister, Muriel, shone. A graduate of the historic Onondaga Academy, Muriel had distinguished herself in amateur-dramatics. She was as beautiful as Cecil, but was afflicted with a gift of oratory which landed her in the camp of the suffragettes and won for her Honorable mention when the women scored their final victory.

Their mother was justly proud of them.

"Cecil is so beautiful that she will marry a rich man," she mused. "With Muriel's beauty and talent, she should be a great actress some day."

And thus it became a matter of course that Cecil was to marry for wealth, the while Muriel was to study for the stage.

Cecil never particularly strong, was taken ill before she finished her course at teachers' college, and when she was better took a position in the office of the

*"If he bought me, why didn't he pay for me?" She Asked When It Seemed That a Shabby \$25,000 Was All She Got*



The Oysters Honeymooning in Florida.



Poor "Cinderella" Ready—Her "Prince Charming" Was Old Enough to Be Her Grandfather.

Bell Telephone Company instead of returning to her studies. Muriel passed a state examination with flying colors and was appointed a worker in the Americanization League. A few months after she obtained her position, she succeeded in having her sister named as an assistant worker. Incidentally, they both did some "lyceum" work for a Syracuse bureau.

Americanization and lyceum work did not make up a very lively existence for the Ready girls. But they stuck to it bravely.

And that was how things stood last November at the opening of the New York State Fair, with its great horse show and grand circuit races which brought to Syracuse lovers and breeders of horses from all over the country.

There was a pageant for the entertainment of visitors, devised by an organization of business men and the Ready girls were asked to assist in the production and take part in it.

Mrs. James E. Merrill, a pretty young matron, who had come to Syracuse from Washington a few months before, was one of the figures in the pageant. On the opening day Cecil Ready was busy at the Americanization League booth when she heard her name called. Looking up she saw Mrs. Merrill—and the Prince.

The Prince was not the beautiful youth with dark eyes and waving hair of whom Cecil had perhaps dreamed. He had white hair and a white mustache and a pleasant smile, and he wore a Panama hat and flannels whose cut and line

spoke of a fashionable tailor.

"Uncle George, I want you to meet a friend of mine—Miss Ready," said Mrs. Merrill. The girl held out her slender hand.

He was George M. Ayster, Jr., of Washington—seventy-three years old, a widower of twenty years standing, gay debonaire, a member of many clubs and with an income of not less than \$80,000 a year.

From that time on, it was understood that none of the acquaintances of whom Mr. Oyster made in Syracuse or those whom he had known in New York and Washington and who were attending the Fair could expect to see the wealthy exhibitor at any function unless Cecil Ready was invited. He loaded her with flowers and bon bons and books. He took her for long drives in the morning and planned parties for afternoon and evening in which her pleasure alone was consulted. He gave her his first-prize blue-ribbon horse.

"It's like a dream. I have to pinch myself to be sure that I am awake," the girl told her friends who joked with her about her "grandpa," as they called him. The fair had not been over for a fortnight when Mrs. Merrill received a letter from Oyster. Would she come to Washington and visit him? And would she bring Cecil with her?

"Do everything possible to persuade her," the letter ran. "Tell her that it will give me the greatest happiness of my life if she will accept."

If State Fair week in Syracuse had seemed like a fairy dream to the little Onondaga Valley girl, it is not hard to imagine what life in one of the most beautiful and luxurious hotels in Washington must have been. She was laden with costly gifts. On the eve of her departure for home her fairy godfather told her what he had in his mind.

"Cecil," he said, "I don't feel as though I could let you go away from me. I want to adopt you as my daughter and take you with me all over the world—to give you all the luxuries and all the beautiful things that you ought to have."

"I'd love it," said Cecil promptly and honestly. And she went back to Syracuse and told her mother and Muriel, who at once threw cold water on the project.

A man, even if he were seventy-three years old, they told her, couldn't adopt a girl of twenty-three whom he had known for only a few weeks, without placing her in a position likely to give rise to unpleasant comment. Cecil must write Mr. Oyster, thank him for all his kindness to her, and tell him that her family wouldn't consider the idea for a moment.

An answer came at once. He would take Mrs. Ready and Muriel around the world with them if it were necessary to stop gossip. Mrs. Ready was obstinate. Then came another letter. If he couldn't adopt her, could he marry her?

"I think all the world of you and I'd love to be your daughter, but I couldn't marry anyone so much older than I," the girl wrote back.

It is said that Mrs. Ready pleaded: "Look what it will mean for Muriel. She will be able to study for the stage, and you will be her fairy godmother."

"If you all demand it," she sighed, "I'll sacrifice myself."

"But I can't love you as I could if you were young," the girl told him. "I wouldn't be fair to you."

"If you'll only let me love you, I'll be satisfied so long as you merely tolerate me," the ardent wooer is said to have replied.

The announcement was made generally and Syracuse stood amazed. But on Thursday, January 13, Cecil, accompanied by her mother, her sister and Mr. and Mrs. Merrill, left for Washington. And at 9:30 o'clock on the night of January 13, Cecil Ready and George M. Oyster, Jr., were married in the drawing room of the bridegroom's apartment at the Wardman Park Inn.

"I'm the happiest man in the world," said the bridegroom.

At midnight the bride and bridegroom left on a special train for Miami, Fla., where Mr. Oyster had engaged an entire floor of the new Flamingo Hotel for his honeymoon.

"And we were happy," she said a little while ago in telling the story to a friend. "Everything went on beautifully until one day early in March when Henry M. Bronner, Mr. Oyster's business manager, arrived from Washington. He said that Mr. Oyster must go back with him at once on account of preparing the statement for his income tax."

"I reached Washington about a week after he got there. He met the train, but he would scarcely speak to me. I do not know what had come between us of what influence had been exerted to alienate him from me, but the work had been accomplished. I begged him to tell me what had changed him, but he only made some bitter answer that told nothing."

"When on April 1 he told me that he was going away I asked at what hour I should be ready. I was told that I was not to go—that I was not wanted. He did not write me during his absence—I was as utterly cut off as though I was a stranger. One morning I picked up a newspaper and saw in glaring headlines that George M. Oyster was dying at Atlantic City. I called the Hotel Ambassador and was told that the telephone was answered, but that no one would talk with me."

"Late that night the telephone rang and the operator told me that a telegraph message was to be read to me."

"It was a terrible message. It told me that my husband had given orders that he did not wish to see me and that if I came to his apartment I was not to be admitted."

"I was almost beside myself. Of course, I did the only thing there was to do—I started immediately for Atlantic City. But when I reached there I learned from the newspapers that Mr. Oyster had been dead for several hours."

The codicil to George M. Oyster's will, drawn at Atlantic City three days before his death, gave his young wife a bequest of \$25,000 and provided that his "faithful friend and employee, Henry M. Bronner, might be allowed to purchase any share which he desired of the testator's business," which was supposed to yield an income of at least \$50,000 a year, thus preventing Mrs. Oyster from retaining a half-share in a highly profitable business in which there is a relatively small investment.

And thus ended the romance of December and May—as it always will, in shipwreck and unhappiness.