

"I SAID A MOUTHFUL," quoted Lady Astor on the occasion of her first public address in New York, for, despite her membership in the British House of Commons, she is as jolly an American as when she was Miss Langhorne of Virginia. On the ship, coming over, the quartermaster called her "a regular guy," and reporters seem to have got very much the same impression. According to the *New York Evening Post*,

"You look like a lot of white trash," she shouted from the rail of the steamer to her sister, Mrs. Charles Dana Gibson, and a deputation of Women Voters' League members who went to the pier to greet her. "You just ought to see my new coat."

It was Nancy Langhorne speaking, and no mistake. The new coat, incidentally, attracted the attention of a dozen women reporters, who journeyed down the bay at daylight to greet the world's foremost woman in politics. It was a furry affair of black broadtail with a collar of gray chinchilla.

"And I bought it just for the occasion," explained Lady Astor, with a twinkle. "At home I dress like Cinderella."

Viscount Astor came with her. At her request he remained at her side while the photographers cranked and the interviewers plied her with questions. And he seemed to enjoy it.

There is something Rooseveltian about Lady Astor. She is ready for any question that comes her way. She is more than ready. [Knowing what she was in for, she took the precaution to interview herself before landing and to supply the results to the press in the form of a two-page typewritten statement on things in general.

Reporters and photographers swarmed aboard the steamer after leaving Quarantine. But Lady Astor was ready for them. Some one made the mistake of hailing her as the "leader of the woman's movement."

"That's nonsense," she broke in. "I have been very much overrated. I am just an ordinary woman. I am only a symbol. If an ordinary woman can do what I have done, what can not the others do?"

Lady Astor talked like that—in short, crisp sentences, always coming back at her questioners as quickly as they could think up things to ask her about. On only one subject was she determined to remain silent—Margot Asquith. She would not talk about that.

When one insistent reporter, unwilling to take the hint, returned to inquire what she thought about Margot's views on Prohibition, Lady Astor fixt him with her clear blue eyes and said: "Man, you ought to go back to Texas." She guessed the place he came from by his accent.

Speaking of accents, Lady Astor is proud of the fact that she hasn't acquired a full-grown English accent after all these years.

"I still talk like a n*****," she said—tho, if the truth must be told, she didn't talk quite like that.

Whatever else may be thought of Lady Astor during her stay here, it can be set down right now that she won the hearts of the women reporters who went down the bay to meet her.

They found her a "darling." And a sort of a Russian blouse much decorated with Bulgarian embroidery, which she wore under her new coat, caught the feminine fancy quite as much as did the soft, black velvet hat which adorned her slender, girlish head.

Lady Astor was alone when the vanguard of reporters and photographers discovered her.

"Help! Where's my husband? Steward, find my husband at once," she shouted, as the firing squad closed in.

THE "ROOSEVELTIAN" LADY ASTOR



LADY ASTOR, A "REGULAR GUY."

This is what the Quartermaster called her on the way over, and he, too, "said a mouthful."

The Literary Digest
for May 6, 1922

Viscount Astor was found lurking somewhere in the background, and arm in arm with his Lady, led the way to the boat deck. Here, with the Statue of Liberty as a background, Lady Astor was photographed and photographed and photographed, now with her coat on, now with her coat off, now with the Viscount by her side, now all by her lonesome—whatever the camera sharpshooters commanded her to do was done. Through it all Lady Astor laughed and joked and chided the photographers.

"You think I look foolish," she told them, "but you ought to see how funny you look yourself."

In the midst of it she sighted a gray-haired sailor.

"Come on, Petty," she called, "get into the picture. I love sailors."

Bashfully the tar complied, taking up his stand opposite to the Viscount while the cameras whirred.

"What's your name?" he was asked.

"Murphy," came the reply. "Quartermaster Murphy, and this is my sixty-seventh trip. Get that down."

Lady Astor laughed.

Later on, when interviewed by a squad of newspaper men, she gave her views on various matters, among them Prohibition. It is not yet a political issue in England, she said.

"I have been told tho," she went on, "that the wets are prepared to spend \$50,000 to keep me out of Plymouth. I say, let them come on. We need the money."

To another question she said she did not advocate the formation of a woman's party.

"No," she snapt, "we've suffered too much from men's parties, haven't we? There isn't any such thing as the woman's point of view."

"Women are just as individual as men," she assured the nearest woman reporter—who, incidentally, came all the way from Philadelphia to ask Lady Astor what she thought of that city. "The woman's point of view is just as variegated as the man's point of view, and that's a veritable whirligig, isn't it?"

"How about Lloyd George?" some one asked.

"Oh, he's still got his head above water," was her answer "and"—this with a sly wink—"it's a head, too."

Women's dress? It was "unfortunate."

"Nothing," she declared, "lets women down more than to go about half naked. There is no use talking about equality so long as we use our liberty to expose our hideousness."

There was much more talk—as to her six children, whom she called "mongrels," being more American than English; as to flappers, whose parents, she thought, ought to take them in hand; as to the South, which she was glad to hear was beginning to wake up; as to a score of different things.

And then, as the liner was being warped into her pier, Lady Astor turned the guns on her besiegers.

"Here," she exclaimed, gripping the arm of her neighbor, ex-Gov. James Goodrich of Indiana; back from a visit to Russia, "why don't you reporters interview this man? He's done something. He's seen things. He can give you a real story. And yet you come to me, just an ordinary woman. Why," she concluded, "you are a lot of half-wits."

In its account of Lady Astor's address at the Town Hall—her first on reaching New York—the *Post* tells us:

On the platform Lady Astor displayed the same quick wit and

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No. 2421 SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1909 [16 PAGES.] One Penny.

PLYMOUTH ELECTS LADY ASTOR: FIRST WOMAN M.P.



sly jesting which some of her colleagues in the House of Commons know to their sorrow. She praised the members of Parliament, tho, even if they did greet her as a pirate instead of as the political pilgrim from Plymouth, which she felt herself to be. "They bore their shock with dauntless decency," she said, "for it was almost enough to have broken up the House."

When Lady Astor had finished her speech, Mary Garret Hay presented her with a bouquet matching the city colors, and said jokingly that she wasn't "the Mayor of New York—yet."

"I hope it would not seem tactless of me," said Lady Astor, with the smile which the audience had already learned to interpret, "but I wish to goodness the presenter was the Mayor of New York."

This remark brought forth a din of approval that shamed ordinary applause to silence, and redoubled itself as the speaker followed up her smile with, "I see you know what I mean." Again there was a big demonstration, but Lady Astor was not yet content. She had another delicate dart in her sheaf, and she launched it with a full appreciation of its barbed edges.

"And that's a saying a 'mouthful,'" she concluded, and turned and left the platform.

Lady Astor was accompanied on the platform by her husband, Viscount Astor, and Vincent Astor. She said her husband was "the one who started her off on this downward path—from the fireside to public life," and declared that if she has helped the cause of women, "he is the one to thank, not me." "He doesn't think you can right wrongs with philanthropy," she said, again referring to Viscount Astor; "he realizes that you must go to the bottom of the causes of wrongs and not simply gild them up." He is, she said, "a strange and remarkable man."

After relating with much gusto her experiences in the House of Commons, Lady Astor discust the more general aspects of woman in politics. There was one point, she declared, at which she agreed with Schopenhauer, namely, when he remarked of woman, "The race is to her more than the individual." She added:

"I feel, somehow, we do care about the race as a whole; our very nature makes us take a forward vision; there is no reason why women should look back—mercifully we have no political past; we have all the mistakes of sex legislation, with its appalling failures, to guide us.

"We should know what to avoid, it is no use blaming the men—we made them what they are—and now it is up to us to try and make ourselves—the makers of men—a little more responsible in the future. We realize that no one sex can govern alone. I believe that one of the reasons why civilization has failed so lamentably is that it has had a one-sided government. Don't let us make the mistake of ever allowing that to happen again.

"I can conceive of nothing worse than a man-governed world, she declared earnestly—"except a woman-governed world—but I can see the combination of the two going forward and making civilization more worthy of the name of civilization based on Christianity, not force. A civilization based on justice and mercy. I feel men have a greater sense of justice and we of mercy. They must borrow our mercy

and we must use their justice. We are new brooms; let us see that we sweep the right rooms."

Lady Astor advised women to enter local politics, saying that it is a "fine apprenticeship to central government," and declaring that women are up against unseen forces, "generations and generations of prejudice." To overcome this prejudice of men, who, she said, have "without knowing it, westernized the harem mind of the East," "woman must go on being his guide, his mother, and his better half. But we must prove to him that we are a necessary half not only in private but in political life."

"The best way that we can do that is to show them our ambitions are not personal. Let them see that we desire a better, safer, and a cleaner world for our children and their children and we realize that only by doing our bit, by facing unclean things with cleanliness, by facing wrongs with right, by going fearlessly into all things that may be disagreeable, that we will somehow make it a little better world.

"I don't know that we are going to do this—I don't say that women will change the world, but I do say that they can if they want, and I, coming in from the Old World, which has seen a devastating war, can not face the future without this hope—that the women of all countries will do their duty and raise a generation of men and women who will look upon war and all that leads to it with as much horror as we now look upon a cold-blooded murder. All of the women of England want to do away with war.

"If we want this new world, we can only get it by striving for it: the real struggle will be within ourselves, to put out of our consciousness, of our hearts and of our thoughts all that makes for war, hate, envy, greed, pride, force, and material ambition."

"Our Nancy," as they still call Lady Astor in Virginia, is the subject of a biographical sketch contributed to the *Richmond Times-Despatch* by Mr. Harry Tucker, who observes:

Many of the middle-aged gallants of to-day remember the Langhorne girls, of whom "Our Nancy" was one of the sprightliest. They could ride and hunt and swim and row with the best of them. They were leaders in their set, and they all came into the public eye more or less. They set the styles, and whatever the Langhorne girls achieved, their followers, a big crowd, tried. Some won, but most of them failed to keep along with the leaders. They all became famous. Yet it was up to "Our Nancy" to reach the apex.

Nannie Langhorne took her seat in the House of Commons on December 1, 1919, following a picturesque and exciting and withal entertaining campaign in the Plymouth District. All America and all England watched that whirlwind campaign. The newspapers pictured it as "charming and classy." The seat which she won was vacated by her husband, Major Waldorf Astor, when he was elevated to be Viscount Astor upon the death of his father, William Waldorf Astor, of Hever Castle and New York City.

Her great wealth, drawn largely from Virginia and New York real estate, and her Virginia birth, gave the famous British hecklers plenty of opportunity to intrude themselves upon her otherwise peaceful stumping tours. But, held up by that old spirit which is so well remembered by pres-

ent-day not-so-old gallants here and hereabouts, she met every onslaught, as one reporter said, "with a flashing courage, which she boasted of having derived from the very pilgrims who helped make Plymouth famous, parrying every thrust with a quip or a witty story."

It was generally agreed that her campaign represented a triumph of personality over adverse conditions. The Liberal and Radical newspapers fought her and all she stood for, but even at that, it was said by British journals that if she had run on an anti-government ticket, her majority would have been greater. Here is the *New York Times* appreciation:

"Twenty-odd years ago: A Virginia belle, 'dancing all night in Richmond, or riding to the hounds in the Albemarle hills, playing a great deal, thinking none too much along conventional lines, yet always brilliant, alert, witty, with a mind that made up in natural flash what it lacked in serious training; altogether fascinating, temperamentally fit for endless social gaieties in town or grueling outdoor sports in the country, a typical Southern girl of the leisurely, pleasure-loving type not unusual in the aristocracy of her day in the Old Dominion.

"To-day: A British viscountess, wealthy beyond imagination, still beautiful, turning from the world's pleasures with which she has been surfeited, to seek new excitements in the field of British politics, candidate in yesterday's election for a seat in the House of Commons; using her old wit and fluency, and sometimes displaying her old temper, in a picturesque campaign among the rough elements of her neighborhood, still fascinating, still the same Nannie Langhorne who contributed to the fame of the 'five Langhorne sisters' and made their beauty a by-word."

Continuing, Mr. Tucker remarks, "This is Nancy Astor, who has been making many American hearts warm by her piquant campaigns in English Plymouth," while, he proceeds:

According to her friends here, it is their old Nannie Langhorne who has been letting the staid old Britishers know that, English peeress as she is, she has not forgotten her American traditions, and is not ashamed of them. Don't think for one moment,' she said when heckled to American charities, 'that I am ashamed of my Virginia blood. I married in England; my interests have been in Plymouth; every drop of blood in my veins is Anglo-Saxon, and I am proud of my American birth.'

Lady Astor has always been deeply religious. Not in the sense of being a devoted churchwoman, but in having a fine faith in the words of the Bible. She quotes Scripture on most untoward occasions in a manner that only she can do and not offend one. She is big-hearted and tender, and many a time has drudged around to relieve some tired mother with half a dozen kiddies running about half-washed and half-fed. She has acted as nurse-maid often, and will probably continue to do so whenever occasion demands or opportunity offers.

She is fond of children, and is never happier than when in close communion with her own numerous brood. Nancy never did like the word charity. She hates the things it implies, and yet there is no one on the other side who has the reputation she has of taking care of folks. When a child, she was famous for giving away her slices of pie and her molasses candy to some little girl whose mother could not afford the supply the Langhorne children got. And all the little girls loved her—not to say the boys.

A recent writer, in an interview with Lady Astor, says: "Her day begins about 8 o'clock, when she breakfasts with Lord Astor and her younger children (the older boys are at school). Then she has two hours with her home and social secretaries, looking after the affairs of her several households, answering correspondence, declaring or accepting invitations, etc. Her mail is all sorted out, and the begging, political or business letters go to her other secretaries. In these morning hours only home and social correspondence is dealt with.

"Lady Astor has a great belief in what women may accomplish in statesmanship and municipal politics, and I have no doubt she will urge women in the United States to take up political careers. She has already urged several of her Virginia cousins who visited her in London last season to try to enter the State Legislature."

Perhaps the most impressive of Lady Astor's utterances has been her plea for the League of Nations. According to the *New York Tribune*, she said:

"Now I'm going to take the plunge and walk where angels fear to tread. I am going to speak of the League of Nations. I was warned not to speak of it, but why shouldn't I? My heart is all right and I have no personal motives, no ax to grind. Any one who has lived through four years of war in England has been purified and is not thinking of personal ambitions or low motives when it comes to finding a solution for war.

"The much misrepresented and despised League of Nations, which, after all, is only half a league, is, thank God, half a league onward.