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Redefinition of the American Heiress**

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“Dollar Princesses” and “Husband Hunters”: The Gilded Age Redefinition of the American Heiress

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the late 19th-century phenomenon of “Dollar Princesses,” affluent New York City socialites who strategically married into the British Aristocracy to secure their social status and power. This study focuses on figures such as Consuelo Vanderbilt, Jennie Jerome, and Minnie Stevens, examining how these women strategically utilized their marriages as platforms to advance their personal ambitions while navigating the rigid social hierarchies of the period. The analysis contends that these transatlantic unions were not merely transactions of wealth and status but were instrumental in challenging and redefining traditional social structures. By securing influence and asserting their identities within both American and British societies, these women contributed to a broader understanding of the intersections between social mobility, marriage, and gender. Through a detailed examination of their motivations and the societal pressures they encountered, the study offers new insights into the ways in which these marriages reshaped expectations and expanded possibilities for women during the Gilded Age.

In the early 1890s, Former Speaker of the House of Representatives, James Blaine, summarized the general perception of the transatlantic woman with the statement that,

Every woman who leaves the duty and decorum of her native land and prosti-

tutes her American name to the scandals, the vices, the social immoralities and moral impurities of foreign cities not only compasses her own shame but mars the fair fame of the republic.¹

Within the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the period is best characterized by the striving toward the so-called “American Dream.” The concept of wealth and power dominated the social sphere. It was a period that saw changing geopolitical landscapes, growing demarcations of social classes, and attempts to deal with the new ramifications of industrialism. During this time, society revolved around understanding the modern world, tying it to exclusivity, wealth, and status in hopes of achieving some variation of the “American Dream.” Beginning with the overseas marriage of the first “dollar princess,” Lady Randolph Churchill, and ending after the divorce of Consuelo Vanderbilt from the 9th Duke of Marlborough, the period from 1870 to 1915 saw a significant and almost isolated trend of transatlantic marriages. Many American women decided or were reluctantly forced, to marry abroad for various reasons, including promises of wealth and social status. Often, these relationships were business contracts between families, offering hefty sums of money in exchange for a status title. The women who engaged in these practices were seen as hoping to

¹Candice Lewis Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own: Women, Marriage, and the Law of Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 45.

buy their way into society, even if seemingly unfit by their peers, and therefore became known by history as the “dollar princesses” of the Gilded Age. Although these “dollar princesses” faced countless challenges of humiliation, degradation, and ostracism presented by the societies they married into, my research aims to shed light on their complicated stories. Their high-profile marriages allowed them to make their own strides in philanthropy, social development, and securing dynasties.

1. Social Climbing and The Role of Wealth in Social Mobility

“Husband Hunters,” “Dollar Princesses,” “Titled Americans,” and “American Duchesses” were all modern terms coined to describe these socially ambitious young women. These titles, which certainly had a tinge of humiliation associated with them, specifically referenced the women who chose to use their wealth to find a suitable partner. This headline of a 1905 Chicago article was reminiscent of British sentiments towards these women at the time. It exclaimed,

ENGLAND IS ANGERED BY
AMERICAN INFLUX OF VISITORS
COMING ACROSS THE SEAS
TO PUSH INTO SOCIETY
AROUSE FEELING TOO MANY,
DECLARES KING
WOMEN WHO MARRIED TITLES
RESENT EFFORTS OF
NEWCOMERS TO GAIN A
POSITION²

One of the main criticisms had been that, in many cases and for many reasons, these women took their money abroad. The dollar princess often

²“England is Angered by American Influx Visitors Coming Across the Seas to Push into Society; Arouse Feeling Too Many, Declares King; Women Who Married Titles Resent Efforts of Newcomers to Gain a Position,” *The Record*, September 10, 1905.

hoped to resettle in societies with established hierarchical structures or monarchies, aiming to find a husband among the nobilities of Russia, Spain, and, most notably, Great Britain.³ The title was a great aspiration for these young American women as it was a sign of distinction and success within New York and British society if one had not achieved the desired social status. It was especially sought after by many of the *nouveaux riches* families who found it continuously challenging to fit in with the older money crowd. For centuries since the first European settlements on the island of Manhattan, the Knickerbockers were the highly esteemed vestiges of the Old World. Mostly descendants of the original Dutch and English settlers, they deemed themselves the most exclusive and proper members of New York society. They respected traditional institutions, as they maintained the typical Georgian-era habits of modest dress, heavily curtained interiors, and intricate eating manners. The Knickerbockers thrived on exclusivity, forbidding the marriage of their children into new money and refusing to acknowledge the presence of the other sect altogether⁴ In the eyes of this group, New York City was theirs and theirs only, and anyone who dared dream of joining their rank would indeed be met with disappointment or even greater social outcast. Regardless, such class distinctions did not subdue the efforts of the newly wealthy. Having made their fortunes from scratch in a booming industrialist economy following the Civil War, grit had to be an inherent trait of this group. New ideas for industry were never-ending as the United States entered the modern age, teeming with spectacular inventions of convenience and technological advancement. Unbelievable concepts for steel mills, steam engines, oil rendering, and real estate mo-

³Titled Americans: A List of American Women Who Have Married Foreigners of Rank (New York: Street & Smith Publishers, 1890), 14-25.

⁴Anne de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters: American Heiresses Who Married into the British Aristocracy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017), 7.

nopolies dominated American life, servicing the public while making barons richer.⁵ These profits were then invested to further these business endeavors and enhance personal life.⁶ new form and was seen as a method of preserving the traditional and proper New York City.⁷

Extravagance and wealth defined the opposing aristocracies of New York City, and there was an expected standard of decorum for those who wished to operate within them. Mansions spanned half a dozen city blocks, weddings were multimillion-dollar affairs, and most luxuries were contained among only the most elite circles.⁸ This was the cultivated ideal of the famed Four Hundred Club in New York City, led by Mrs. Caroline Webster Schermerhorn Astor. As she was nicknamed by those close to her, Lina took the reins in establishing this exclusive yet intriguing clique. The Schermerhorns had been descendants of the original Dutch settlers and made their great fortune in shipping over the centuries. She became Mrs. Astor through her marriage to Mr. William Backhouse Astor of the equally prominent Astor family, who had made their fortune in the fur-trapping business in the late 1700s.⁹ Her social power solidified, and all decisions on social acceptance were made through her. As Americans and immigrants were flocking to New York City, the elite native New Yorkers saw it as their duty to codify the rules of proper etiquette and their esteemed status in society.¹⁰ Mrs. Astor, with the

help of her close friend, the New York Times reporter Ward McAllister, published the names of the Four Hundred Club members in an 1892 article. McAllister deemed that only 400 people in New York society could possibly be “fashionable enough” to hold such a valuable place and “feel comfortable in a ballroom.”¹¹ Among these 400 families were names such as Vanderbilt, Whitney, Astor, and Stevens.¹² Furthermore, as a personal rule of Mrs. Astor, it was decided that any individual aspiring to enter New York society must be at least three generations removed from the ancestor that started the family’s fortune. Conveniently, this was the perfect distance to unquestionably provide social privilege to the Astor Schermerhorn family tree.¹³

Accordingly, all socially ambitious families who were not yet “in” were judged on the personal whim of Lina Astor. The family matriarch often took on the task of securing a familial reputation¹⁴ Oscar Wilde, a famous Irish playwright who had spent much time enthralled in high society of both New York and London, once wrote, “The American father... passes his life entirely in Wall Street and communicates with his family once a month by means of a telegram in cipher,”¹⁵ meaning, given the patriarch’s disinterest, the social reputation of the family was almost entirely in the hands of his wife. While the London Social Season coincided with notable sporting events and the sitting of Parliament, New York society often revolved around the social calendar of “female affairs.” In an exceptionally modern way, New York women occupied themselves more with social matters than their domestic du-

⁵Mary L. Booth, “New York,” *History of the City of New York* 2, no. 2 (1851): 879-81.

⁶William A. Croffut, “The Vanderbilts,” in *Popular Culture and Industrialism: 1865-1890*, ed. Henry Nash Smith (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 84-90.

⁷Emily Bibby, “Making the American Aristocracy: Women, Cultural Capital, and High Society in New York City, 1870-1900” (M.A. thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 2009), 8.

⁸Bibby, “Making the American Aristocracy,” 32.

⁹Eric Hornberger, *Mrs. Astor’s New York: Money and Social Power in a Gilded Age* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2002), 221.

¹⁰Anderson Cooper and Katharine Howe, *Astor: The Rise and Fall of an American Fortune* (New York: Harper Collins

Publishers, 2023), 4:00:00.

¹¹“New York’s Social Dictator—How Ward McAllister Reigns in Gotham’s Upper-Tendom,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 15, 1888, 10.

¹²Ward McAllister, “The Only Four Hundred,” *The New York Times*, February 16, 1892.

¹³Cooper, *Astor*, 2:15:09.

¹⁴de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 8.

¹⁵Oscar Wilde, “A Dramatic Review of *Olivia*,” May 30, 1885.

ties.¹⁶ The pleasure of upper-class living most often stemmed from the events planned by the matriarch, whether it was exquisite balls or extravagant luncheons. She often filled her agenda with mingling events, seeking to gather a solid group of peers to entertain regularly. The women chatted about the social scene, popular fashion, and upcoming events as their husbands, on the other hand, “either talked of business or sat silent and apathetic through course after course, too nerve-racked by the strain of building a fortune to be able to relax.”¹⁷

Those who did not meet the initial criteria required of their ancestors may have impressed Mrs. Astor through their involvement in philanthropic and charitable organizations, sizeable donations to the community institutions of New York City, or simply through mutual friends.¹⁸ As Lina was a highly coveted figure and presumably busier with far more exciting responsibilities, most would try first to catch the eye of Ward McAllister.¹⁹ Hoping that he may relay his utmost fascination and invaluable opinion to Mrs. Astor, dinner parties and balls were lavishly thrown and personally catered to the interests of Mr. McAllister.²⁰ If a meal had been wonderfully served in the traditional English fashion as he most notably enjoyed or the hostess was pleasantly curious and sociable, it would be likely that Mrs. Astor guaranteed an invitation to other social events. Given that Ward McAllister’s southern background was the furthest image of an elite New Yorker and certainly had to labor to reach his rank, he operated with a certain

kind of openness and curiosity in his work.^{21,22} Thanks to his attitude, he embraced many whom Mrs. Astor may have otherwise rejected. He invited those new to society to the spectacular galas, dinners at Delmonico’s, and summer excursions to Newport, and many went on to live lavish, public lifestyles.²³ On the other hand, an unsatisfactory review or a simple spat with Mrs. Astor or one of her closest friends could have also just as quickly sent a family into social oblivion.²⁴ Families that found it difficult to enter this elite circle would attempt to use other methods to sway the opinions of the Knickerbockers. One such idea was to gain a status title abroad, often through marriage, and return to New York City with new fame, refinement, and “gloss” that not even Mrs. Astor could ignore. Regarding reputation, it was sometimes deemed less embarrassing to go abroad than to admit one was not welcome in New York society.²⁵

2. Cultural Challenges and Assimilation

Still, the practice remained controversial. Proving that the American heiress was socially and financially attractive enough to enter a foreign society, nonetheless one of royals and nobles, certainly boosted the self-esteem of her and her family back home. When contrasted against the dynastic society of Great Britain, often prided in generational wealth and royal relations, the American “nouveaux riches” were the center of great ridicule to the English. Great Britain had strict, established rules dictating who was noble and when without much discrepancy, while New York society was quite different. Thanks to the workings of industrial capitalism, more opportunities to social climb presented themselves, especially if one had adequate cash flow, along with the material abundance and public grace to match it. Indeed, this

¹⁶Maureen Montgomery, “Hussies, Poachers and Pork-Packers’ Daughters: Anti-American Feeling in Britain at the Turn of the Century,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, 6, no. 1 (July 1987): 26.

¹⁷Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, *King Lehr and the Gilded Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1935), 45.

¹⁸Ward McAllister, *Society as I Have Found It* (New York; Cassell Publishing Company, 1890), 233-236.

¹⁹de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 19.

²⁰“New York’s Social Dictator,” 10.

²¹Cooper, *Astor*, 4:17:41.

²²McAllister, *Society as I Have Found It*, 14-29.

²³McAllister, *Society as I Have Found It*, 167-168.

²⁴de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 21-24.

²⁵de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 3.

elite circle was not open to all, especially recent immigrants or people of color. However, it certainly made social mobility more of a possibility and simultaneously more of a threat to the current social structure.²⁶

This led to a growing American attraction to a different form of elitism, historically found among the royalty of Great Britain.²⁷ English society's drastically different fashions, social etiquette, customs, and manners quickly became a source of envy, ushering in a new craze of "Anglomania," spreading throughout Western Europe and the United States.²⁸ Upper-class New Yorkers slowly saw their city taken over by immigrants, factories, and tenement housing, while Great Britain reflected the beauty of a once glimmering New York City. Queen Victoria led the forefront of fashion, introducing the white wedding gown in 1840, and annual social seasons formalized the attendance of events like polo matches, horse races, and opera shows.²⁹ Many hoped to assimilate and introduce aspects of British society into American life, and young, impressionable women were seen as productive mobilizers.^{30,31}

Regardless of the intentions of their families or any preconceived notions about their reputations, these young women were also attracted to an Anglo-American lifestyle. They remained hopeful of the social cachet that came with marrying abroad and into royalty.³² Although they often

²⁶Montgomery, "Hussies, Poachers and Pork Packers' Daughters," 23.

²⁷Bibby, "Making the American Aristocracy," 35.

²⁸Jane S. Gabin, *American Women in Gilded Age London: Expatriates Rediscovered* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 33.

²⁹"The Social Character of the Estate: The London Season in 1841," in *Survey of London: Volume 39, the Grosvenor Estate in Mayfair, Part 1 (General History)*, ed. F.H.W. Sheppard (London: London County Council, 1977), 89-93

³⁰Pamela Horn, *High Society: The English Social Elite, 1880-1914* (United Kingdom: Alan Sutton, 1992), 45.

³¹Gabin, *American Women in Gilded Age London*, 26-29.

³²Gabin, *American Women in Gilded Age London*, 27.

already came from great fortunes, these women were often referred to as "heiress hunters" in popular media.³³ As many of their families had decided for them, in agreeance with much public opinion, finding a young, high-status woman for a reputable American man would be a doomed effort. The understanding was that a woman who grew up with high dignity and luxury deserved to be with a man who would suit her extravagant needs. This perfect man was likelier to be found in the European aristocracy than an American gentleman.³⁴ To the benefit of most women, however, this lifestyle was becoming more accessible through the help of etiquette manuals, newspapers, and magazine articles. High society life shifted from being a very closed-off community to almost imitable.³⁵ Middle-class women learned how to style their clothing and hair and act well mannered, seeing a marriage abroad as a potential opportunity to take part in an elevated lifestyle.³⁶ Often, these expatriates furthered their reputations through careers as writers, musicians, and artists as they could create platforms on which to display their claims to respectability and material wealth. Middle-class women were essentially "faking it until they made it" as they strove to achieve these extravagant lifestyles. In the process, these women could reinvent themselves entirely if they chose. They returned to the States with great cachet for those seeking to social climb, while some opted to remain in England and continue to assimilate.³⁷

³³"For Every Heiress Hunter There's a Title Huntress, Says This Baron—and International Marriages Are the Happiest Anyway," *El Paso Herald*, September 28, 1913.

³⁴"For Every Heiress Hunter...," *El Paso Herald*.

³⁵Bibby, "Making the American Aristocracy," 15.

³⁶*Titled Americans: The Real Heiresses' Guide to Marrying an Aristocrat* (New York: Street & Smith, 1890), 265.

³⁷Beth Ann Fisher, "Fictions of Female Desire: Extravagant Women and Social Disorder in Gilded Age America" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 2001), 257-260.

3. Consuelo Vanderbilt: The Marriage of Convenience and Power

The concept of moving abroad was appealing to a large group of women whose aspiration was to find a man to uphold their family's legacy and wealth while also making for a loving companion. In many instances, however, some American socialites were instead forced into a marriage abroad. Many New York elites saw marriage into the European aristocracy as a solution to a dwindling social status. This belief justified Consuelo Vanderbilt's marriage to the 9th Duke of Marlborough. Her mother, Alva Vanderbilt, had long been a respected member of New York society and even became one of the leaders of the Four Hundred Club. However, her reputation quickly fell after her divorce from William K. Vanderbilt, bringing her to the brink of social ostracization. Alva Vanderbilt's divorce was quite a scandal in New York Society. Both parties had been engaging in public extramarital affairs for some time, yet Alva saw this as an opportunity for empowerment rather than ridicule. She publicly loathed the women who seemed to be chained to their unfortunate marriages and giving more of themselves than they ever received back, calling them more so "lapdogs than wives."³⁸ Ironically, her daughter Consuelo's marriage to the 9th Duke of Marlborough later emulated the image. Alva refused to join this seemingly low rank of codependent women, seeing her attempt at divorce as iconic for the feminist movement. She is quoted saying she "had been the first society woman to marry a Vanderbilt and also the first to divorce a Vanderbilt."³⁹ After a long, arduous court battle, Alva famously received her divorce from William K. Vanderbilt and initiated a new era of female independence in

³⁸Anderson Cooper, *Vanderbilt: The Rise and Fall of an American Dynasty* (New York: Harper Collins, 2021), 06:09:14.

³⁹Cooper, *Vanderbilt: The Rise and Fall of an American Dynasty*, 141.

New York society.⁴⁰

In her 1953 memoir, Consuelo Vanderbilt reflected on her mother, Alva's distinct personality, writing that "Her combative nature rejoiced in conquests. She loved to fight. A born dictator, she dominated events about her as thoroughly as she eventually dominated her husband and her children."⁴¹ Alva was quite the overbearing parent, and there were few matters in which Consuelo had direct control. Her mother believed she was destined for extravagantly greater things than simply settling for a typical upper-class life in New York City. Alva strictly managed every aspect of Consuelo's upbringing, education, appearance, and social life. Consuelo read and spoke fluent German and French by age eight and had daily private lessons in history, literature, Latin, music, and an hour of exercise in Central Park.⁴² Corporal punishment was used for any indiscretion, no matter how minor. Alva regularly used a riding-whip on her children for "bad behavior," often just meaning they went against her standards of formality and did as children would, something as simple as swimming in a lake for a few minutes longer than planned.⁴³ Physical discomfort was just a part of everyday life. Consuelo especially recalled her mother's order to wear a steel brace running from her forehead to her waist, ensuring her correct posture.⁴⁴ These unfortunate childhood memories remained with her for the rest of Consuelo's life, straining her relationship with her mother. Yet, nothing less should have been expected of a socialite in training, someone to be "hallmarked like

⁴⁰Cooper, *Vanderbilt*, 06:34:01.

⁴¹Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold: The American Duchess in Her Own Words* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012), 5.

⁴²Mary Cummings, "High Style in the Gilded Age: Consuelo Vanderbilt," Southampton History Museum, last modified January 8, 2021, <https://www.southamptonhistory.org/post/high-style-in-the-gilded-age-consuelo-vanderbilt>.

⁴³Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 7.

⁴⁴Cummings, "High Style in the Gilded Age."

precious silver."⁴⁵

Primarily due to her mother Alva's social ambitions and to relieve him of his financial strain, Consuelo married the 9th Duke of Marlborough in 1895. At the time, Consuelo was already engaged to be married to her American sweetheart, Winthrop Rutherford. He maintained a prominent status in New York society, but not nearly one high enough to repair the dysfunction behind Alva's social ostracization. She needed power and a return to the same strength before her divorce.

Regardless of Alva's obscene displays of wealth placated by exquisite jewels, flamboyant banquets, and even a gigantic Fifth Avenue mansion in the style of a French chateau, her desperate attempts for Mrs. Astor's recognition went unnoticed. Mrs. Astor continued to decline her countless invitations and house calls, and therefore, Alva was nonexistent in the Gilded Age New York Society. Still, Alva was nothing if not cunning and resourceful. Alva begged Consuelo relentlessly to call off the engagement, even threatening to murder Rutherford to get her way. Alva's frustration with Consuelo's continued reluctance led to her five-month-long "imprisonment" at their Newport mansion. Servants were instructed to stand watch over Consuelo at all hours of the day and destroy all her incoming correspondence with the outside world.⁴⁶ Eventually, Alva's psychological abuse prevailed, and a date was set for the Marlborough wedding. In true Alva fashion, every aspect of this wedding was leaked to the New York public. Swarms of onlookers flocked to St. Thomas Episcopal Church on Fifth Avenue. Minutes before her grand wedding to the Duke, Consuelo was seen sobbing to her father, continuing to weep throughout the ceremony. As she walked back out of the church and down the steps into her new life, spectators clamored around her, hoping to snatch an orange blossom or two from her bouquet, much how her free will was chaot-

ically plucked away.⁴⁷ Thankful that her custom Parisien tulle veil covered her tear-stained face, she realized that her mother had selfishly done the unimaginable and ended her independent womanhood.⁴⁸

The marriage produced two children, John and Ivor Spencer-Churchill, the ancestors of Princess Diana Spencer. The pair separated less than a decade after the wedding and officially divorced in 1921. Both were rumored to have been engaging in extramarital affairs for the majority of the marriage and even lived in separate homes. Alva's reputation was undoubtedly restored but at the cost of losing her daughter's respect. In reflection over the night of her wedding, Consuelo later wrote, "She [Alva] has attained the goal she has ensconced me in the niche she so early assigned for me, and she is now free to let ambition give way to a gentler passion."⁴⁹ In a similar sentiment, the public described Alva as a mother "who tried to indoctrinate her daughter with the notion that happiness was reached through 'practical usefulness' rather than romance."⁵⁰ A daughter to Alva was simply a means to an end, much how she also envisioned Consuelo's marriage.

4. The Role of Dowries in Transatlantic Marriages

Alva coerced her daughter into this marriage, assuming that English royal ties would solidify her place as an esteemed member of society.⁵¹ She believed European marriages were much more successful than American ones could ever be, as Europeans primarily relied on the guidance of their

⁴⁷Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 45.

⁴⁸"She is Now a Duchess: Miss Consuelo Vanderbilt's Marriage to the Duke of Marlborough," *The New York Times*, November 7, 1895.

⁴⁹Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 46.

⁵⁰"Vanderbilt Family Values," *New York Times*, February 19, 2006

⁵¹Amanda Mackenzie Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt: The Story of a Daughter and a Mother in the Gilded Age* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 125-162.

⁴⁵Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 7.

⁴⁶Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 120.

parents in finding a suitable partner and cultivating this relationship.⁵² The formulation of such conflict and its resolution in one's own favor was certainly a revered talent. Society was shaped by the ebb and flow of social relations, as astonishment continuously set new standards of behavior. Ward McAllister once claimed in his 1890 memoir, "Agitation of any kind is as beneficial in social circles as to the atmosphere we breathe."⁵³

Conversely, British aristocrats could also reap the benefits of such arrangements, as they were provided financial help from their wives' families. In most cases, the aristocrat already had all the resources for social and political success, including the title, land, and multiple heirs. All he may have lacked would be the funds for his estate upkeep, which is why "an American heiress would stand a good chance now of making her money count."⁵⁴ In return for a marriage that would boost an American woman's reputation, they offered large dowries to their future husbands, who may have struggled with industrialist debts. The Industrial Revolution in England presented a significant power shift from the ruling aristocracy to newly wealthy middle-class business owners. From 1873 until about 1880, England was immersed in the "Long Depression."⁵⁵ Industrialization, however promising it was, also entirely upended century-long industry practices. The nation saw significant losses in agriculture, trade, and labor. Paired with the steady migration of citizens from rural farms to urban cities, it seemed as though significant and unfortunate changes were imminent. Subsequently, the price of grain spiraled, further indebting those who had already been struggling, and it was mainly the upper classes who owned these stocks and had the most influence over these businesses who struggled.⁵⁶ The upper class quickly

lost their claims to land, and their large estates fell into disrepair as they became overburdened with outstanding debt.⁵⁷ These debts were doubly unmanageable, given that most aristocrats were not educated to work or have any profitable skills of their own.

Very few had a family business or a means of income to fall back on. For many, life was simply about waiting for a sizeable inheritance set up centuries back. Instead, being "in trade" or working manually for a livelihood was exclusively characteristic of the lower classes. It would have been wildly unrealistic to expect a British aristocrat to involve themselves with such a profession.⁵⁸ Therefore, multimillion-dollar dowries were extremely helpful in these economic situations. For example, as Consuelo Vanderbilt learned on her honeymoon with the Duke, her dowry of \$2.5 million in 1895 allowed for the total renovation of the decaying Bleinham Palace, which the Marlboroughs were financially incapable of restoring on their own.⁵⁹ It should also be noted that even such a dowry did not make much difference, as the Marlboroughs were still drowning in unpaid debts and false promises to pay.⁶⁰

However simple these arrangements may have seemed, the inheritance of the British aristocrat was still not guaranteed and required him to fulfill some conditions of his own. As mentioned, entering a New York family into society largely depended on the wife's cleverness and ambition. Conversely, British society was overwhelmingly patriarchal.⁶¹ To maintain wealth within the fam-

Packers' Daughters," 28.

⁵⁷National Bureau of Economic Research, *Debt Into Growth: How Sovereign Debt Accelerated the First Industrial Revolution*, Juame Ventura and Hans-Joachim Voth, Working Papers 21280, Cambridge, MA: June 2015, 5-15.

⁵⁸de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 6.

⁵⁹Melissa Ziobro, "The Almighty Dollar Will Buy You, You Bet/ A Superior Class of Coronet': Biographical Sketches of N.J.'s Gilded Age 'Dollar Princesses,'" Ph.D. diss., (Monmouth University, 2018), 234.

⁶⁰de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 61.

⁶¹Montgomery, "Hussies, Poachers and Pork-Packers'

⁵²Cooper, *Vanderbilt*, 06:19:32.

⁵³McAllister, *Society As I Have Found It*, 356.

⁵⁴"The Duke of Richmond with Vast Estates, and the Marquis of Bute, With His Thirty Million, Plums in the Matrimonial Market," *The San Francisco Call*, October 16, 1904.

⁵⁵de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 5-7.

⁵⁶Maureen Montgomery, "Hussies, Poachers and Pork-

ily, many aristocratic families followed the traditional rules of primogeniture, through which the eldest son inherited estates. As a requirement for inheritance, the son would be expected to find a suitable wife of equal status or wealth who would fit in with such a society.⁶² This would assume that the relationship would produce an heir to the dynasty who would protect the generational wealth and secure the reputation of the family dynasty for years to come. For reasons such as these, American women and their dowries and social influence were a lifeline for struggling British aristocrats. The relationship was mutually beneficial as both familial names received a second chance to live on in power.

5. The Struggle and Impact of the Transatlantic Woman

Both countries often ridiculed the women who ventured out, hoping for such a marriage for their decisions. In a developing American post-industrialist economy, the most extensive debate was over these young women bringing their hefty dowries abroad rather than contributing them to their home countries. They were seen as abandoning their homes for the glamour of life and status abroad, portraying an image that was seemingly "too good" for American citizenship. As they embarked on their new lives in England, these women often suffered the ostracization of the "in-between," as they were not seen as worthy of English citizenship yet but had seemingly already abandoned their American identity.⁶³ This social backlash was far from concealed, especially when aided by the U.S. Congress's 1907 Expatriation Legislation. Article I, Section 8, Clause 4 of the Constitution explicitly provides that "any American woman who marries a foreigner shall take the nationality of her husband."⁶⁴ The same woman

Daughters," 26.

⁶²de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 4.

⁶³Ziobro, "The Almighty Dollar," 232.

⁶⁴U.S., Congress, House, Expatriation Legislation, art. I, sec. 8, clause 4.1.6.3, introduced in House 1907.

may only regain her American citizenship after terminating an international marriage. Contrastingly, American men were not subject to this provision and maintained their original citizenship regardless of the nature of the marriage. The broader general explanation behind this law had been to offer a solution to the drastic influx of immigration in hopes of recreating U.S. national homogeneity. However, this was just a vague justification for a far more discriminatory position in the sense that the legislation was instead an attempt to reduce the number of Americans who had "compromised their citizenship status by maintaining or establishing foreign ties."⁶⁵ Of course, women seemed to be the main target of this movement, with the belief that they were the less moral gender. The American daughter who chose to marry abroad was immediately believed to be lesser than the illiterate white American man, seemingly justifying her lack of rights. She no longer possessed the morality required of an upstanding American citizen if she chose against the American man.

However, adapting to life abroad was not a simple endeavor. Most transatlantic transplants found themselves experiencing quite the culture shock between the glamor of New York City and the dreariness of England. Particularly, the daughters of the *nouveaux riches* were accustomed to the modern amenities of their newly built American home, fixed with indoor plumbing, running hot and cold water, and insulation. In addition to the constant luxuries of custom clothing and extravagant outings, little remained desired. Meanwhile, the estates they moved into with their English husbands were often centuries old with very little, if any, innovation. These homes were usually crumbling, freezing, and dark. Even the simple task of bathing was often an extensive affair, as it required servants to haul dozens of buckets of boiling water upstairs to the tub. Still, however stark the differences in lifestyles presented themselves, it offered yet another opportunity for the new brides to oc-

⁶⁵Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 57.

copy themselves. Therefore, the daughters of the nouveaux riches entrepreneurs decided to become entrepreneurs themselves by renovating the unfortunate estates of the families they married into. With much tenacity, they aimed to add modern and fashionable conveniences to their new homes.⁶⁶

All in all, about \$25 billion of dowries was added to the British economy by today's standards. It is also worth mentioning that these fervent home renovations employed a number of architects and construction workers, creating a significant number of jobs and contributing even more to this economy. Although their dowries were intended for this exact use, they were met with much criticism from the traditional nobility of Britain. Modernity was not exactly the epitome of British culture, as most agreed. Still, as a result of their earnest efforts to make their own lives more comfortable, English women continued to have noses turned up at them and their pseudo-aristocratic roots. Their presence was anything but welcomed within the social circles their parents had paid so much for.

From the British perspective, the clever and outgoing American woman was feared to replace the English woman in the marriage market. Americans, characterized internationally as lively and clever, seem to overshadow the typical timidity of an English woman. Accordingly, these transatlantic marriages were negatively referred to as an "American invasion," although some continued to marvel at their ability to be so well-accepted by British society.⁶⁷ These marriages continued for the sake of mutual gain. American wives continued to be seen as foreigners abroad, intruding into an unfamiliar society and one that was sometimes unenthusiastic about their arrival, further preventing their total assimilation into European customs. For some English, the constant strain of American women to enter a noble arrangement was far too obvious or even seemed desperate and often unde-

serving. Most English would have likely agreed with the sentiment that,

During the past four decades, titles have been granted with the most reckless profusion - in many cases for mere financial assistance, rendered not to the state, but to the personal treasury of some member of the reigning family.⁶⁸

Although most of these young women came from prosperous backgrounds and hoped to exude a classic and delicate innocence, their lifestyles still seemed incomparable to those in Great Britain.⁶⁹ London society was commonly known for its stringently proper, modest attitudes and strict adherence to traditions of daily life concerning eating, hosting, and public appearance. According to the English discourse of the time, the American nouveaux riches rarely emulated these British ideals. Instead, the general perception of American women had been that they "were so different and so far from the English system that the word 'class' was meaningless when applied to them. Their very openness and lack of shyness emphasized this."⁷⁰ The American style of dress was even far more colorful and luxurious in contrast to the dreariness of English fabrics. As with many American socialites, their exquisite dresses were custom-tailored and imported for each season, totaling almost \$30,000 annually.⁷¹ Such attention to detail was crucial for many husband-huntresses, as most of their efforts relied on the constant display of their wealth and cohesive appearances. To be somewhat desirable, "clothes were not simply a matter of covering their bodies decently and reasonably attractively, but a lethal weapon and a walking advertisement of status and of husband or father's wealth and success."⁷²

⁶⁸Titled Americans, 18.

⁶⁹Montgomery, "Hussies, Poachers and Pork-Packers' Daughters", 25-27.

⁷⁰de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 35.

⁷¹de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 54.

⁷²de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 50.

⁶⁶Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 58.

⁶⁷Montgomery, "Hussies, Poachers and Pork-Packers' Daughters," 25.

For some, the confident American personality was intriguing and proved to be a stark contrast to the typical British demeanor. Jennie Jerome recalled her first social season, recording in her memoir, "Generally speaking, there is no doubt that English people are dull-witted at a masked ball and do not understand or enter into the spirit of intrigue which is all-important on such occasions."⁷³ In another piece of original writing, Jennie compared the cultured American woman to her less sophisticated English counterpart. She deduced, "They are better read and have generally traveled before they make their appearance in the world. Whereas a whole family of English women are educated by a more or less incompetent governess, the American woman in the same condition of life will begin from her earliest age with the best professors... by the time she is eighteen she is able to assert her views on most things and her independence in all."^{74,75}

When faced with his options, the English aristocrat would more often than not choose the self-assured, quick-spirited, and independent American woman of proper upbringing over a lower-class English woman who may shame him with her reputation, or lack thereof.⁷⁶ On the other hand, while the concept of transatlantic marriage remained controversial among Americans, others showed their profound respect for the women who were able to do it successfully. The intricacies and reasoning behind the marriage were insignificant to the novelty of it. They were seen as women of a new age, as they helped bridge Anglo-American relations while solidifying their families' legacies back home.⁷⁷

Little held back the American woman regarding social aspiration, and New York society finally

⁷³Churchill, *The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill* (London, UK: Arnold, 1908), 51.

⁷⁴Montgomery, "Hussies, Poachers and Pork-Packers' Daughters," 26.

⁷⁵Jennie Churchill, "American Women in Europe," *Pall Mall Magazine*, 1903.

⁷⁶de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 34.

⁷⁷Bibby, "Making the American Aristocracy," 66-77.

accepted this. A 1905 *Vanity Fair* Article admitted the success of the ambitious women, recognizing their commitment to society by stating, "We are apt to accept without further inquiry, provided they come from a sufficient distance, people who are charmingly dressed, appropriately housed, and boundlessly hospitable... It has happened that members of that exclusive body, the 'Four Hundred,' have been dreadfully shocked to find some compatriot who is taboo on the other side of the water received with open arms in Mayfair and Belgravia."⁷⁸ The concept of marrying for status was almost comical in Britain and largely all across Europe, under the suspicion that Americans rarely understood what they were getting themselves into and might even have their understanding of international marriages wholly skewed.⁷⁹ It was understood that,

In England, as on the Continent, the American woman was looked upon as a strange and abnormal creature, with habits and manners something between a Red Indian and a Gaiety Woman. Anything of an outlandish nature might be expected of her... As a rule, people looked upon her as a disagreeable and even dangerous person, to be viewed with suspicion, if not avoided altogether.⁸⁰

Given the rising trends of marrying for financial or social benefit, the media certainly tried to capitalize. Analysis and opinion pieces offering their perspectives on the concept dominated public discourse. One such piece, *Titled Americans*, was published in 1890 in New York City. The book was a compiled list of all young women within favorable New York society who had successfully married abroad, often receiving a royal title. Each woman's life was summarized in a few

⁷⁸*Vanity Fair*, July 6, 1905, 16.

⁷⁹Montgomery, "Hussies, Poachers and Pork-Packers' Daughters," 24.

⁸⁰Churchill, *The Reminiscences*, 60.

short lines, spilling simple details of ancestry, current residence, and her new official title. The 1890 edition featured over a hundred names and grew through annual revision. Interestingly, however, as it seemed to be celebratory of these achievements, the piece also questioned the phenomenon of social mobility into European royalty, wondering what could be so attractive about such an arrangement. It was assumed that there may have been a few unclear stereotypes that significantly upped the appeal of the aristocracy. For one, the seriousness of industrialist debts may have seemed a minor flaw compared to the social cachet a title would bring. Many Americans would ignore the idea that they were essentially being used for their money, given that their fortunes supported them well enough.⁸¹ Although a European education or time spent abroad immersed in a different culture was the marking of a formidable upper-class woman, the perceptions of the aristocracy were certainly over-inflated. Titled Americans aimed to dispel some of these misconceptions to offer a return to reality. It was addressed that "There is, in reality, aristocracy in Russia...there is a certain group of families which cluster round the court... this social aristocracy contains many old families, but its real basis is mere official rank," or that "In Spain, titles abound to such an extent that they enjoy but little consideration, either at home or abroad."^{82,83} With Great Britain, although "English titles enjoy great consideration, both at home and abroad, than those conferred by any other State... there is not a single order or decoration in Europe which confers a title of any kind on its recipient," unless a prefix was given through hereditary rank or marriage.⁸⁴ Of about 300 million British citizens, only about three thousand bore titles. Accordingly, Great Britain was the most reasonable destination for the dollar princesses, as an English title brought global significance and ex-

clusivity, which not all members of society could achieve.⁸⁵

6. Jennie Jerome: The Pioneer of Transatlantic Marriages

One of the first women to ever earn the name of a "dollar princess" was Jennie Jerome of New York City. Rather, she is the brave soul credited with beginning the trend of rich American women marrying British aristocrats. She came from an extremely affluent family, born and bred in the Cobble Hill section of Brooklyn. Having made their nouveaux riches fortune on the stock market, the family was extremely well-known, as were their personal lives. In 1867, Jennie's mother learned of her husband's infidelity and chose to relocate her daughter to Paris to shape their etiquette and education in the esteemed manner of Europeans. While there, Jennie met her future husband, Lord Randolph Churchill, and was promptly married in 1874.⁸⁶ They were rather enthralled with one another from the beginning, with Lord Randolph proposing to Jennie only three days after their first meeting and without the traditional consent of the bride-to-be's parents. The Randolphins were also not too fond of the Jeromes, seeing as though Jennie's father was a bit of a flamboyant womanizer and an unconventional businessman, and her mother having been publicly accused of having Iroquois ancestry and therefore immediately belittled.⁸⁷ Although both sets of parents were skeptical of the sudden spark, they eventually allowed for the marriage, seeing as though Lord Randolph had a promising career in Parliament.⁸⁸ Likewise, the promise of the Jeromes' hefty dowry of 50,000 British pounds appeased the Lord's anxieties, and the marriage seemed to be a good fit.

⁸¹Titled Americans, 25.

⁸⁶Churchill, *The Reminiscences*, 3-15.

⁸⁷"Sir Winston and His Mother," International Churchill Society, last modified April 10, 2017, <https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/life/family-man/sir-winston-and-his-mother/>.

⁸⁸Churchill, *The Reminiscences*, 45.

⁸¹Titled Americans, 13

⁸²Titled Americans, 14.

⁸³Titled Americans, 17.

⁸⁴Titled Americans, 27.

The marriage did not stray far from the norm of an average happy relationship. There were some rumors of extramarital affairs on both ends, followed by heavy speculation about the Lord's cause of death, ultimately being syphilis contracted from one of his flings. Thrillingly, though, the new Lady Randolph Churchill entered London society with her vivacious attitude and unparalleled enthusiasm for political and philanthropic activism. She was widely known across England for her efforts in her husband's political campaigns for Parliament. A conservative radical of the Tory party, Lord Churchill's public image was not one of great stature. He had a rather controversial outlook on policy and struggled to fit into a modern and developing England. Famed for her eccentric and memorable personality, Lady Churchill swiftly refreshed her husband's reputation, often even taking the credit for his majority wins in the polls and successful legacy.⁸⁹ She was often remembered not just for her captivating beauty but also for her quick wit, intelligence, and memorability. These traits certainly helped her upon her entrance into the British aristocracy. She was met with some backlash early in her marriage concerning the birth of their first child, Winston Churchill. Rumors quickly stirred within British society over Winston's premature birth just seven months after the Churchill wedding. Regardless of the tabloids, the Jeromes lived wonderfully in London society.⁹⁰

Given her ability to transcribe her New York lifestyle to Great Britain, it is no wonder that *The New York Times* closely followed her life and achievements. One particular article titled "Working for Churchill," written by the newspaper in July 1885, reported on the upcoming Parliament

⁸⁹The Commercial Cable Company, "Working for Churchill: And American Woman Electioneering in England. How Lady Randolph Churchill is Helping Her Husband into Parliament—The Duke of Marlborough," *The New York Times*, July 3, 1885.

⁹⁰Angela Serratore, "How American Rich Kids Bought Their Way Into the British Elite," *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 13, 2013.

seat elections set for November 1885. Lady Randolph Churchill ran the campaign for her husband, Lord Randolph Churchill. The circumstances of this election were complicated in several regards. Firstly, Lord Randolph was a staunch Tory radical. He embraced a modern form of conservatism he named "Tory Democracy," which emphasized the preservation of traditional institutions and principles while promoting more enlightened political and social beliefs. However, Lord Randolph found his ideas difficult for the average person to grasp, especially in rural areas far removed from London's social sphere. The article named Woodstock, Oxfordshire, as "the sleepest place in England" before the campaign led by Lady Randolph. Believing that they would be little affected by the outcome of the election, the population of this little town was rather apathetic to any political efforts.⁹¹ Despite the overwhelming circumstances, Lady Randolph spearheaded the campaign to stir the community to support her husband.

Lady Randolph drove her horse and carriage decorated in ribbons in her husband's racing colors, pink and brown, cheerfully spreading news of the upcoming election and the promises of the conservative Tories. She campaigned in shops and hotels, greeting everyone with a memorable smile. Her liveliness and fervor quickly garnered the public's attention as she enforced quite an appealing reputation for her husband, putting forth the assumption that a man must be equally as energetic and brilliant as his wife. In the many years of politicking, there had been few "such devoted electioneering helpmeet(s)" as Lady Randolph. Her influence captured so much attention that she even inspired other women to voice their political support. As the piece mentions, a group of women traveled from Cambridge to campaign for the Liberal Party in opposition to the Tories. As the article continues, no one had a lively image comparable to Lady Randolph's.⁹²

⁹¹The Commercial Cable Company, "Working for Churchill."

⁹²The Commercial Cable Company, "Working for

Leading up to this point, Lord Randolph had been in disagreement with his brother and the future father-in-law of Consuelo Vanderbilt, George Spencer Churchill, the 8th Duke of Marlborough. They had been at each other's throats over their different political identities for some time, even publicly expressing their contempt. However, the article credits Lady Randolph with forging a new bond of amicability between the two brothers after a conversation with the Duke, even convincing him to remain impartial in the elections and inconsiderate of his liberal views.⁹³ This willingness to assist her husband in personal and public matters certainly cemented her social power, proving to be a great asset to him in their relationship. As the likeability of the pair skyrocketed, so did the Lord's votes. The day after this article was published, on July 4, 1895, Lord Randolph won the Woodstock majority vote with 532 votes, beating out Liberal Corrie Grant for a seat in Parliament.⁹⁴ As the article recalled, the liberal opposition knew Lady Randolph's efforts were "too much" for them to retaliate against effectively.⁹⁵ Certainly, this piece, among many others, was to Lady Randolph's benefit and many other American princesses, as articles like this one relayed the success stories of their ladies abroad. While these couples' images were established in Europe through their own political, social, and economic efforts, it could also be replicated in their home countries, further enhancing a global reputation.

Lady Churchill served as one of the most comprehensive sources in characterizing the public image of dollar princesses. Particularly having been the first to insert oneself into a foreign society for social status, she provided an inside account of sentiments supporting and against the as-

Churchill."

⁹³The Commercial Cable Company, "Working for Churchill."

⁹⁴"Lord Churchill Wins," *The New York Times*, July 4, 1885.

⁹⁵The Commercial Cable Company, "Working for Churchill."

simulation of American women into the British social scene. She presented the stereotypes posed for women like her, understanding the harsh reality that "her dollars were her only recommendation, and each was credited with the possession of them, otherwise, what was her *raison d'être*?"⁹⁶

7. Minnie Stevens: Strategic Marriages and Social Influence

While Jennie Jerome was already familiarized with the inner workings of high society through her upbringing, other "dollar princesses" and their families did not see that as a proper starting point for an aristocratic marriage. New York City socialite Minnie Stevens was the heiress to a large fortune left by her hotelier father. She spent much of her young adulthood in Europe, where she was rather picky with her suitors. Minnie's mother, Mrs. Marietta Paran Stevens, was largely influential in these decisions, often boasting about her daughter. She often exaggerated Minnie's status as the "high heiress" and even offered dowries more than double the amount the family could pay. Marietta procured the proposal of a French duke for her daughter with these fibs. Still, it ended disastrously when the truth about Arthur Paget, whose proposal she had rejected earlier. The marriage intended to solve the Captain's dire financial circumstances, as Stevens' family agreed to provide Paget with an annual allowance of \$20,000 on top of the settled £200,000 dowry. With this stipend, the pair could fully enter English society, holding lavish parties and creating memorable reputations. Throughout their marriage, American newspapers claimed Lady Paget had spent around \$10 million in her "pursuit of social distinction."⁹⁷ Many fawned over her mother's cleverness and Minnie's adaptability, claiming "she [Lady Paget] carried almost more social power in her right hand

⁹⁶Churchill, *The Reminiscences*, 60.

⁹⁷*The World's Work* 26, no. 153, 1913.

than any other untitled woman in London.”⁹⁸ She began with a completely fresh start but was able to find her niche in public life and continue with a decently happy and prosperous marriage. Lady Paget served as a great inspiration in New York society to other women looking to marry abroad, one of them being Consuelo Vanderbilt. Ironically, however, Minnie’s mother spent the rest of her life pinching pennies and desperately clinging to New York society status. Marietta attempted to overturn her late husband’s will to deem herself his sole inheritor, filed endless slews of minor lawsuits, and even managed to end her son’s engagement in hopes of additional income and maintaining the little wealth she had left. Every financial effort was made to secure Minnie’s status abroad for mutual notoriety, even to the extent of poverty.⁹⁹ Regardless, Marietta continued to revel in these extreme acts, believing that even this embarrassment kept her in the spotlight, as “it was a favorite jest of hers that the public picked out nothing but her faults.”¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, she later inspired Mrs. Lemeul Struthers in Edith Wharton’s 1920 novel, *The Age of Innocence*. Fittingly, Mrs. Paran Stevens was responsible for dissolving her son’s engagement with Wharton.¹⁰¹

8. Legacies of the Dollar Princesses

In a sense, the marriages of the “dollar princesses” became a means to accomplish their own political and social aspirations in an effort to create their own legacies apart from their husbands’ reputations. Many earned rather favor-

⁹⁸“Minnie Stevens Married,” *The New York Times*, July 4, 1885.

⁹⁹de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters*, 97.

¹⁰⁰“Mrs. Paran Stevens Dead; Passes Away at Her Fifth Avenue Home While Unconscious; Her Peculiarities and Ambition; No Woman in New York Society Was Better Known—Something of Her Busy Life—Lady Paget Her Heir,” *The New York Times*, April 4, 1895

¹⁰¹Rhoda Nathan, “Ward McAllister: Beau Nash of the ‘Age of Innocence,’” *College Literature* 14, no. 3 (1987): 277-284.

able reputations at home and abroad. Lady Randolph Churchill was fondly remembered as the Lord’s enthusiastic partner. Being the mother of future prime minister Winston Churchill also presented her with a certain cachet as she had the power to secure an heir to the political dynasty of the Churchills. Interestingly, Winston was meant to be the sole heir to the Duke of Marlborough until Consuelo and the Duke had their first son, freeing him to pursue a political career.¹⁰² She was memorialized as the Prime Minister’s greatest mentor and often thought of as more of a professional colleague than a mother. Winston Churchill recalled that he derived “a baffling adaptability to circumstances” from his mother, a necessary characteristic of many aspiring global princesses.¹⁰³ Popular media commended Lady Randolph for her spectacular charisma and zeal and her ability to completely transcend the confines of criticism about her modern arrangement, whether they were suspicions about greedy intentions, claims of infidelity, or simply foreignness and daring appearances.¹⁰⁴ Not only was she one of the first foreign women to make such great strides in Parliamentary politics, but she also became involved in her own philanthropic and political efforts. Following the death of her husband, Jennie commissioned her own newspaper, *The Anglo-Saxon Review*, which generally published advice columns, poetry, and short stories for women by women.

Lady Paget became quite the icon herself, attracting many young American women who wanted to follow in her footsteps. She set up public instruction programs and provided mentorship to women who wished for titles, for which she also earned considerable income. Lady Paget often sourced out aristocrats looking for help in their financial situations. Most notably, she was the matchmaker for Consuelo Vanderbilt and the Duke after she boasted about her marriage to the

¹⁰²Churchill, *The Reminiscences*, 45-74.

¹⁰³McCardle, “Sir Winston Churchill’s American Mother.”

¹⁰⁴Jardine, “The Dollar Princess.”

Captain to Alva.¹⁰⁵ However, her initial debut into London society was subpar as she was viewed as a shallow social climber. Minnie was also looked down upon because she was often unchaperoned, not coming off as a well-brought-up woman. Yet, her charm, commitment, and elegance reiterated her image, and she swiftly became a close friend of the royal family. As did Lady Randolph, Lady Paget became involved in the war efforts, equipping the Maine hospital ship during the Boer War, serving as a nurse during the First and Second Balkan Wars, and maintaining a Serbian hospital in cooperation with the American Red Cross. She quickly came to be seen as a saint by the Serbian people.¹⁰⁶ Her work during the First World War even earned her the praise of the Austro-Hungarian government, which was unusual as she was working for the Serbian opposition. Lady Paget was even granted royal permission to wear the Grand Cordon of the Order of St. Sava to recognize her efforts, a medal never before worn by a commoner, let alone a foreigner.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, she boosted her husband's reputation as minister of Belgrade through national efforts.¹⁰⁸

Consuelo Vanderbilt's marriage secured her family's reputation in New York City and England. She was adored by the English lower classes, a community where she found comfort throughout her troublesome marriage. Consuelo spent most of her time assisting less fortunate mothers and children in philanthropic projects. She also identified with an elite English social and intellectual group called The Souls, reminiscent of the Four Hundred Club in New York.¹⁰⁹ During World War I, she was the chairwoman of the Economic Relief Committee for American Women's War Re-

lief and continued to help fund hospitals in France during the Interwar years. Regarding her personal aspirations, she also became a very vocal advocate for women's suffrage and higher education movements.¹¹⁰ She even hosted suffragette meetings at Marble House, her family's massive estate in Newport, Rhode Island.¹¹¹ Following the separation from her husband, she was lucky enough to find her true love, French aviator Jacques Balsan. Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan continued her philanthropic activism and love for writing until her passing in 1964.¹¹²

9. The Decline of the "Dollar Princess" Era

The "dollar princesses" phenomenon certainly had its moment in the spotlight, even occupying much discourse in print media on both sides of the Atlantic. As one newspaper reflected,

Though the British peerage as of late years yielded many titled husbands to American heiresses there is no danger of the supply running short. With over 500 families entitled to representation in the House of Lords, it will be understood that John Bull's output of peers, making no allowance for new creations, is in a fair way to keep pace for some time to come with Uncle Sam's surplus of vastly rich and pretty women.¹¹³

These transitions were a new norm without a foreseeable end. They exploded at the tail-end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. It seemed to be a simple solution to the myriad of social and economic issues experienced on both sides of the Atlantic. However, as it often happens, all trends eventually meet their ends. Fewer and fewer women married abroad over the years, with the last of these marriages being around 1920. Although these arrangements had proven beneficial

¹⁰⁵Stuart, Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt, 102-103.

¹⁰⁶Joseph Adelman, *Famous Women: An Outline of Feminine Achievement Through the Ages with Life Stories of Five Hundred Noted Women* (New York: Ellis M. Lonow Company, 1926), 260.

¹⁰⁷"Serbia Decorates Lady Paget," *New York Times*, November 18, 1915.

¹⁰⁸Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 99-103.

¹⁰⁹Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 99-103.

¹¹⁰Stuart, Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt, 281-315.

¹¹¹Cooper, Vanderbilt, 07:14:55

¹¹²Stuart, Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt, 430-469

¹¹³*The Duke of Richmond with Vast Estates*, 1.

over the last five decades, they were no longer mutually beneficial, at least on the part of the Americans. With the passing of Mrs. Lina Astor in October of 1908, many of the imposed social expectations of New York City society also went away.¹¹⁴ Status remained an aspiration and focal point, yet not as stringently as before. Society life was slowly becoming more accepting, with a decreasing emphasis on the rather overbearing guidelines set forth by Mrs. Astor. Most notably, though, the prestige of being a Knickerbocker, or “old money,” had run its course. As the older generations passed, the once ostracized nouveaux riches inevitably began to take over. This rising class no longer had to abide by an arbitrary code that served to exclude them but could now operate as they wished to. As ideas of rather marrying for love over convenience seemed to flourish, the marriage of mutual benefit was effectively phased out.

The ambitious women mentioned operated within the limits of their time to work in their social spheres. Through their marriages, these women secured the wealth and status of their families. As a further result of their solidified status, their voracious courage and self-interested aspirations disrupted the spheres of philanthropy, political activism, and feminism, significantly aiding in memorializing their stories. Their voracious courage and self-interest disrupted the sphere they were brought up within, serving as prime examples of modern female revolutionaries. Jennie Jerome, Consuelo Vanderbilt, and Minnie Stevens operated efficiently within the aristocracies they married into, often using the constraints of tradition to leave behind legacies of determination, sacrifice, and success.

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