



INFORMAL AMBASSADORS:  
AMERICAN WOMEN, TRANSATLANTIC MARRIAGES,  
AND ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS, 1865-1945

by

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## Chronology

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- 1837-1901 Victorian Period, the reign of Queen Victoria
- 1849 Lord Randolph Henry-Spencer Churchill born in Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, England
- 1854 Birth of Jennie Jerome in Brooklyn, New York, the eldest daughter of financier Leonard Jerome and his wife, Clara Hall
- 1855 United States passed the Nationality Act which codified that American citizenship was based on a husband's nationality and not a woman's
- 1861-1865 American Civil War
- 1871 Birth of Charles Richard John Spencer-Churchill, the Ninth Duke of Marlborough
- 1874 Marriage of Jennie Jerome to Lord Randolph Churchill, the Seventh Duke of Marlborough, making her Lady Randolph Churchill
- 1874 Lady Churchill gave birth to her first son and future British prime minister, Winston Churchill
- 1877 Birth of Consuelo Vanderbilt in New York City, the only daughter of William Kissam Vanderbilt and Alva Smith Vanderbilt
- 1879 Birth of Nancy Witcher Langhorne in Danville, Virginia
- Birth of William Waldorf Astor in New York City, the son of William Waldorf Astor and Mary Dahlgren Paul
- 1880 Lady Churchill gave birth to her second son, John Strange Spencer-Churchill
- 1895-1899 Venezuelan Boundary Dispute
- 1895 Marriage of Consuelo Vanderbilt to Charles Richard John Spencer Churchill, the Ninth Duke of Marlborough (nicknamed "Sunny") making her the Duchess of Marlborough and Winston Churchill's cousin by marriage
- Death of Lord Randolph Churchill
- 1897 Nancy Langhorne married Bostonian Robert Gould Shaw
- 1898 Nancy Langhorne Shaw gave birth to her first son, Robert Gould Shaw III

- 1898 Spanish-American War
- 1899-1902 Boer War (South Africa)
- 1899-1905 Lady Churchill founded and edited the *Anglo-Saxon Review*
- 1899 In response to the Boer War, Lady Churchill organized the “American Amazons”
- 1900 Marriage of Lady Churchill to George Cornwallis-West
- 1901-1910 Edwardian Period, the reign of King Edward VII
- 1903 Nancy Langhorne and Robert Gould Shaw divorced
- 1906 Marriage of Nancy Langhorne to Waldorf Astor, making her Lady Waldorf Astor
- 1907 The United States passed the Expatriation Act, which declared that any American woman marrying a foreigner had to assume the nationality of her husband and relinquish her American citizenship.
- Consuelo separated from the Duke of Marlborough
- Lady Astor gave birth to her first child with Lord Astor, William Waldorf Astor, the 3rd Viscount Astor
- 1909 Lord Astor made an unsuccessful bid for election to the House of Commons as a Conservative from a Plymouth constituency but lost.
- Lady Astor gave birth to her first and only daughter, Nancy Phyllis Louise Astor
- 1910 Georgian Period, the reign of King George V
- Lord Astor won on his second try to the House of Commons.
- 1912 Lady Churchill and Cornwallis-West separated
- Lady Astor gave birth to Francis David Langhorne Astor
- 1914 Lady Churchill and Cornwallis-West divorced
- 1916 Lady Astor gave birth to Michael Langhorne Astor

- 1918 Marriage of Lady Churchill and Montague Phippen Porch, a member of the British Civil Service in Nigeria.
- Lady Astor gave birth to her youngest child, John Jacob Astor
- 1919 Lord Astor served in the House of Commons until his father's death, when he became a Lord and thereby became a member of the House of Lords.
- Lady Astor decided to run for the seat that Waldorf vacated and was elected. Constance Markiewicz had been elected to the House of Commons in 1918, but chose not to take her seat. Nancy Astor was the first woman to take a seat in Parliament and the only woman Member of Parliament (MP) until 1921.
- 1920 American women attain suffrage with the Nineteenth Amendment
- 1921 Consuelo Vanderbilt and the Duke of Marlborough divorced
- Consuelo married French Lt. Col. Jacques Balsan
- Lady Churchill died and was buried in the Churchill plot at St. Martin's Churchyard, Bladon, Oxfordshire, England.
- 1922 Lady Astor's seven-week speaking tour including the U.S., Canada, and England
- The United States passed the Cable Act, which stated that "any woman marrying an alien ineligible for citizenship shall cease to be an American citizen." This law served as a partial repeal of the Expatriation Act. However, an American woman who married an Asian still lost her American citizenship. If the woman later divorced or was widowed, she regained her U.S. citizenship. Any later efforts at "re-naturalization" became increasingly difficult after this legislation.
- 1926 The Vanderbilt-Marlborough marriage was annulled at the duke's request and with Consuelo's consent.
- 1928 Suffrage for British women was passed in 1928, giving women the same voting rights as men in Britain.
- 1931 In 1931, the United States amended the Cable Act to allow American women to retain their citizenship after marrying aliens ineligible for American citizenship.
- 1945 Lady Astor begrudgingly left Parliament at her husband's urging.
- 1952 After her husband's, death Lady Astor largely withdrew from public life.

1953 *The Glitter and the Gold*, Consuelo Balsan's insightful but not entirely candid autobiography was published being ghostwritten by Stuart Preston.

1956 Jacques Balsan died in 1956 at the age of 88.

1964 Death of Lady Astor at Grimsthorpe, in Lincolnshire, England. She was buried at Cliveden.

Consuelo Balsan died at Southampton, Long Island, New York. She was buried alongside her younger son, Lord Ivor Spencer-Churchill, in Saint Martin's Churchyard, Bladon, Oxfordshire, England churchyard near her former home, Blenheim Palace.

**Informal Ambassadors:  
American Women, Transatlantic Marriages, and Anglo-American Relations, 1865-1945**

**Introduction**

**An Extraordinary Galaxy of American Women**

There are no people in the world who are so slow to develop hostile feelings against a foreign country as the Americans and there are no people who, once estranged, are more difficult to win back.

—Winston Churchill<sup>1</sup>

Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Great Britain rushed to support the United States in its “war on terrorism,” with Prime Minister Tony Blair leading the charge. Although more than forty nations around the world pledged some level of cooperation, Britain stood alone in providing immediate military support for the conflict often described as the defining event of twenty-first century. In expressing his thanks to Prime Minister Blair and Great Britain, President George W. Bush announced, “The United States has no better friend than Great Britain.”<sup>2</sup>

The strong alliance between the United States and Great Britain came as no surprise the world in 2001. Yet it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for both Americans and Britons in the early decades of the nineteenth century to believe that such a friendship could exist. In the years following the American Revolution, the former colonists and Mother Country endured a tense and sometimes volatile relationship. But it was not until the decades following the War of 1812 that British-American relations reached its historic nadir. In the aftermath of the Treaty of Paris (1815), the United States entered a phase of extreme

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Price and Dean Walley, *Never Give In! The Challenging Words of Winston Churchill* (New York: Hallmark Editions, 1965), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Howard Temperley, *Britain and America Since Independence* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 223; Robin Harris, “The State of the Special Relationship,” *Policy Review* 113 (2002) [Accessed February 7, 2006.]

pride and nationalism, often called “The Era of Good Feelings.” But this period was anything but an age of “good feelings” between the United States and Great Britain as one of the hallmarks of the period included intense expressions of Anglophobia by Americans. Former President John Adams boldly declared in 1816, “Britain will never be our Friend, till We are her Master.”<sup>3</sup>

During the succeeding five decades, the United States and Great Britain clashed time and time again over various issues, often concerning their countries’ commercial interdependence. Robert Jenkinson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Liverpool and Tory Prime Minister, warned the House of Lords in 1820, “Of all the powers on earth, America is the one whose increasing population and immense territory furnish the best prospects for British produce and manufacture. Every man, therefore, who wishes prosperity to England, must wish prosperity to America.”<sup>4</sup> Despite such practical considerations, a clear feeling of animosity flowed between the two countries for many subsequent decades. People on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean openly pondered the possibility of war between the countries. Alexander Baring, later Lord Ashburton, harbored little warmth for the United States, once referring to the nation as that “fickle democracy.”<sup>5</sup> In 1842, he wrote to a fellow Briton that Americans made “troublesome neighbours” with whom “nothing [was] more easy than to get into war . . . any morning with a very good cause.”<sup>6</sup> More than a decade later, such sentiment still held in British Parliamentary circles. Prime Minister Henry John Temple, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Palmerston, wrote in a letter in 1857, “These Yankees are most disagreeable Fellows to have

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<sup>3</sup> Bradford Perkins, *The Creation of a Republican Empire, 1776-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 205.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 70.

<sup>6</sup> Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 70.

do with about any American question: They are on the Spot, strong, deeply interested in the matter, totally unscrupulous and dishonest and determined somehow or other to carry their Point.”<sup>7</sup>

And yet, in 2001, the United States proclaimed Great Britain its best friend. How do historians explain the dramatic change in Anglo-American relations between the mid-nineteenth century and present day? How did the United States and Great Britain achieve the “special relationship” of the twentieth century so frequently analyzed by contemporary historians? Perhaps tracing backwards the evolution of international rhetoric would help in identifying the period in which such a drastic change in relations led to the advent of the “special relationship.” In a 1994 survey, nearly half of British respondents described the United States as “very reliable,” and significantly ahead of any European ally. In the same year, 54 percent of Americans perceived the United Kingdom as a “very reliable ally.”<sup>8</sup> In a 1993 survey, Britons consistently named the United States “as the country that would be most trustworthy were Britain involved in a war.”<sup>9</sup> In the 1980s, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, in explaining the “special relationship” of Anglo-American relations, declared, “It is special. It just is. And that’s that.”<sup>10</sup> Between 1960 and 1962, more Britons believed that the United States ranked as their country’s best friend, than they did any other country.<sup>11</sup> Giving scholars little more to go on, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, in speaking to the British-American Parliamentary Group in 1952, simply stated, “I shall not bother you by doing what is done so often on occasions like this, of talking about all that we have in

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<sup>7</sup> Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 203.

<sup>8</sup> John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 36.

<sup>9</sup> Dumbrell. *A Special Relationship*, 35.

<sup>10</sup> Alex Danchev, *On Specialness: Essays in Anglo-American Relations* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), ix.

<sup>11</sup> Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, 36.

common: language, history, and all of that. We know all that. What I do wish to stress is one thing we have in common, one desperately important thing, and that is that we have a common fate.”<sup>12</sup>

For at least the second half of the twentieth century, political leaders and citizens of both nations described Anglo-American relations in a positive manner. Considering the fact that the United States and Great Britain fought two world wars as allies in the twentieth century, the major shift in Anglo-American relations likely occurred sometime after the mid-nineteenth century and before 1914. Diplomatic historians studying this period agree that that Anglo-American *rapprochement* occurred sometime between the end of the American Civil War and the beginning of World War I. The period began auspiciously with Queen Victoria’s letter of condolence to Mary Todd Lincoln, written “widow to widow,” upon the assassination of her husband in 1865.<sup>13</sup> Historian Kenneth Bourne argues that Anglo-American relations made major progress immediately after the Venezuelan crisis of 1896.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Samuel Flagg Bemis asserts that the “foundations for this revived Anglo-American unity were laid in 1896-1898.”<sup>15</sup> Charles S. Campbell points to the years following the Spanish-American War and the end of the century as the period of *rapprochement*.<sup>16</sup> Iestyn Adams contends that while small problems did emerge between the United States and Great Britain from time to time, “the opening five years of the twentieth century transformed the bond between Britain and her ‘brothers across the ocean’.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Danchev, *On Specialness*, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Perkins, *The Creation of a Republican Empire*, 229.

<sup>14</sup> Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 340.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Flagg Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States* (First edition, 1936; Fourth edition, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955), 446.

<sup>16</sup> Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900* (New York: Wiley, 1974), 204.

<sup>17</sup> Iestyn Adams, *Brothers Across the Ocean* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2005), 228.

While historians have tried to identify specifically a clear period or set of events that transformed Anglo-American relations, such a historic constraint would be difficult and even detrimental to the study of diplomatic history. Many events, developments, and people determine the relationships between nations. The resolution of a number of major diplomatic concerns, such as the *Alabama* claims, the Bering Sea fisheries dispute, and the “Irish” question, did much to calm Anglo-American relations in this period.<sup>18</sup> Most importantly, the ability of leaders on both sides of the Atlantic to smooth over rough patches led to the beginning of a new relationship between the United States and Great Britain in the twentieth century.

#### RELATIONSHIP OF RESEARCH TO LITERATURE AND PROJECT ORIGINALITY

While diplomatic historians have consistently emphasized a variety of events in explaining the Anglo-American *rapprochement*, they occasionally mention the numerous transatlantic marriages that took place during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>19</sup> While many books and articles have discussed the topic of transatlantic marriages, the subject typically receives perfunctory consideration as a side issue within the larger, and thus more significant, issues at hand. Nonetheless, these marriages united wealthy American heiresses and British aristocrats in significant numbers between 1865 and 1920. Howard Temperley notes that no fewer than sixty peers married American women

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<sup>18</sup> Bruce M. Russett, *Community and Contention: Britain and American in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1963), 5. Russett also discusses the significance of settling other issues such as the McKinley Tariff of 1890, the Canadian-Alaskan boundary dispute, the all-American Isthmian canal, the British Guiana and Venezuela boundary dispute, and Gladstone’s Home Rule Policy as important contributions to strengthening Anglo-American relations

<sup>19</sup> Hundred of marriages in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries united American heiresses with elite European and British men, generally of noble ranking. Unless specified, the term “transatlantic marriages” refers to the Anglo-American marriages between American women and British men during this period.

between 1870 and 1914.<sup>20</sup> According to Charles S. Campbell, “more than seventy Americans had married titled Britons by 1903; more than a hundred and thirty by 1914.”<sup>21</sup> Bradford Perkins’s numbers also support Campbell’s findings. In researching this project, the author has personally documented 588 marriages between American heiresses and members of the British peerage, barons, and landed gentry between the American Civil War and World War I. Despite any quantifiable argument among historians, a significant number of transatlantic marriages united British and American families at the turn of the twentieth century.

While numeric discrepancies may exist in calculating the precise number of Anglo-American marriages, a clear disagreement exists among historians as to the influence of these marriages on Anglo-American relations. Campbell argues that these marriages created “an extraordinary galaxy of American women married to British governmental leaders. One might almost stop with that [fact] in explaining the rise of friendly feelings between America and Britain.”<sup>22</sup> In another work, Campbell went even further in confirming the importance of these marriages by stating that “such trans-Atlantic unions doubtless had wide influence on policy.”<sup>23</sup> But not all diplomatic historians agree with Campbell’s assessment of these marriages. Bradford Perkins argues that while these marriages advanced contact between elite American and British social circles, “the political importance of these marriages was not

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<sup>20</sup> Temperley, *Britain and America Since Independence*, 82.

<sup>21</sup> Charles S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding, 1898-1903* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), 9. W. H. Dunlop argues that between 1880 and 1910, 817 American women married British and European titles. This number is significantly higher than any other number I have found in my research. This is not to say that Dunlop is wrong, but merely that no other historian has asserted such a figure. W. H. Dunlop, *Gilded City: Scandal and Sensation in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 2000), 37.

<sup>22</sup> Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement*, 203.

great, for in very few cases . . . did the husband gain a leading position.”<sup>24</sup> Supporting Perkins’s point, one British policymaker of the period wrote: “Politics are man’s work in war time. I should like to have the evidence of some experienced diplomatists on this point, whether women have not much more influence over politics in France than in America.”<sup>25</sup>

Thus, a clear debate exists as to the influence of transatlantic marriages on Anglo-American relations. Unfortunately, historians find difficulty in presenting irrefutable evidence demonstrating that these marriages helped to transform Anglo-American relations during this period. First, British aristocrats would not marry American women if they held steadfast anti-American attitudes. Second, rarely did such men record their thoughts or reflections about their personal lives. Thus, from a historical perspective, one cannot present a credible scholarly argument proving that transatlantic marriages transformed Anglophobes into Anglophiles.

Based on these marriages, however, historians can examine the activities of these women and their lives in Great Britain, public perceptions of these women and their marriages on both sides of the Atlantic, and consider the shift in international public opinion regarding such women and their marriages. Hence, this study erases the line between the alleged public space and private life of both men and women in considering their personal activities, public associations, political affiliations and decision-making as it concerns Anglo-American relations during the period at hand.

Despite any disagreements among historians regarding the significance of transatlantic marriages, both Britons and Americans have commented frequently on the

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<sup>24</sup> Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 153.

<sup>25</sup> Richard L. Rapson, *Britons View America: Travel Commentary, 1860-1935* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971), 111.

participants in the marriages. In the beginning decades of this marital trend, most Americans were “pleased when [they heard] that another American girl had entered the exclusive circle of the British aristocracy.”<sup>26</sup> American heiresses were often very rich, very beautiful, and very well-trained in elite social behaviors. Thus, in the words of one British subject at the turn of the century, “It must be very hard . . . for a bachelor from the other side, whatever prejudices and affections he brings across, to keep from trying to marry an American girl.”<sup>27</sup> For example, after Joseph Chamberlain’s marriage to Mary Endicott in 1888, she attended a Town Hall meeting with her husband in his home constituency of Birmingham. Following the meeting, Mary exited the building to the shouts of, “Three cheers for our American cousin!”<sup>28</sup> In many cases, Britons often responded approvingly regarding intermarriage with their “American cousins.”<sup>29</sup>

Unfortunately for the participants in transatlantic marriages, the public viewed these unions as simple an exchange of money for title— a loveless transaction of capital for class.<sup>30</sup> In the years following the Civil War, a number of American men made several fortunes well in excess of hundreds of millions of dollars. While these families had the wealth to earn elite status on an economic level, “old money” families resisted such an intrusion into their tight-knit circle. In many cases, the *nouveaux riche* left the United States for London in their search for social acceptance by seeking, and in many cases buying, Anglo-American marriages for their daughters to the dukes, earls, and other noblemen of Britain. The decision by these young women to renounce voluntarily their American democratic heritage and

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<sup>26</sup> Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement*, 153.

<sup>27</sup> Rapson, *Britons View America*, 118.

<sup>28</sup> Diana Whitehall Laing, *Mistress of Herself* (Barre, MA: Barre Publishers, 1965), 78.

<sup>29</sup> Christopher Hitchens, *Blood, Class, and Empire: The Enduring Anglo-American Relationship* (New York: Nation Books, 1990), 120.

<sup>30</sup> Hitchens. *Blood, Class, and Empire*, 121.

republican virtues for the title of “Lady” and a tiara, created a sour taste in the patriotic mouths of many American citizens. As Milton Plesur asked, “Was not Europe the home of monarchies, despotisms, colonialism, and destitute dukes searching for American heiresses—in short, everything that the United States abhorred?”<sup>31</sup> To earn social acceptance in elite American circles via the stamp of British aristocratic approval was nothing short of anathema for the majority of Americans. From the democratic perspective of the United States, a titled American was not an American at all.

In the same period during which much of the United States met with great economic growth, the landed wealth of the British aristocracy began to decline quickly and significantly. British aristocrats felt, not surprisingly, that Americans literally buying their way into London’s high society threatened centuries of landed wealth and political dominance of Britain.<sup>32</sup> There remained a tendency in British society to regard the “Big Spenders” from the United States as uncouth.<sup>33</sup> And yet many people stood to gain financially from these semi-arranged marriages: the British aristocrats whose marriages to wealthy American heiresses stood to improve their financial situation mightily, and the marital brokers, in the United States and Great Britain, who arranged introductions between the two parties. Given these circumstances, it is little wonder that the public perception of Anglo-American marriages shifted over time from approval to aversion.

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<sup>31</sup> Milton Plesur, “Looking Outward: American Attitudes Toward Foreign Affairs in the Years from Hayes to Harrison” (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1954), 30.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew Josephson, *The Robber Barons: The Great American Capitalists, 1861-1901* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World., 1934), 340.

<sup>33</sup> Cornelius A. Van Minner, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt and His Contemporaries: Foreign Perceptions of an American President* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 21-22.

## DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

This study of transatlantic marriages and their influence on Anglo-American relations reflects current trends in diplomatic history and examines its intersection with women's history. In order to merge two seemingly divergent fields of historical study efficiently, one must consider a number of subfields of diplomatic history in order to address the various elements of the project at hand.<sup>34</sup> Clearly, the history of Anglo-American relations serves as a critical aspect of this study. Historians have written myriad books analyzing Anglo-American relations from the end of the American Revolution until the present day. As early as 1914, historical works concerning Anglo-American relations began examining the history of this special relationship. Even at this early date, William Archibald Dunning noted the importance of "political and cultural conditions" as these factors led toward "a complete understanding and sympathy" between the British and American people.<sup>35</sup> In each following decade, at least one major work concerning Anglo-American relations appeared for the rest of the twentieth century. After World War I, the relationship between the United States and Great Britain acted as a significant development in scholars' minds.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> This chapter examined various subfields of diplomatic history within the context of transatlantic marriages. The specifics of women's history as it intersects with the history of diplomacy and diplomats will be discussed in detail in chapter two.

<sup>35</sup> William Archibald Dunning. *The British Empire and the United States* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), 355.

<sup>36</sup> For major works concerning Anglo-American relations, see J. G. Cook, *Anglophobia: An Analysis of Anti-British Prejudice in the United States* (Boston: The Four Seas Company, 1919); Lionel Gelber, *The Rise of Anglo-American Friendship: A Study in World Politics, 1898-1906* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938); Crane Brinton, *The United States and Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945); Bradford Perkins, *The First Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1795-1805* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955); Charles S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding, 1898-1903* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957); Bruce M. Russett, *Community and Contention: Britain and American in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1963); Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914* (New York: Atheneum, 1968); R. H. Heindel, *The American Impact on Great Britain, 1898-1914: A Study of the United States in World History* (New York: Octagon, 1968); Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations during Reconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969); Paolo E. Coletta, ed., *Threshold to American Internationalism: Essays on the Foreign Policies of William McKinley* (New York: Exposition Press, Inc., 1970); Charles S.

In the past decade, diplomatic history has witnessed a new interest in “transatlantic history”—the history of the United States as it connects with its neighbors across the Atlantic. Anglo-American histories obviously fall into this category but generally stress newer methods of history including an emphasis on cultural exchanges, cultural commonalities, and cultural identity. Generally speaking, these works examine the interdependence of economies across the Atlantic Ocean and the importance of a shared history, language, and legal system between the United States and Great Britain.<sup>37</sup>

The growth of transatlantic history is closely related to cultural diplomacy. Much like transatlantic history, cultural diplomacy emphasizes the cultural commonalties between various cultures although not limited geographically to nations on opposite sides of the Atlantic. Cultural diplomacy analyzes the differences in cultures and how these differences can help or hinder relations between countries. Cultural diplomacy can also serve as a powerful lens through which to examine such aspects of diplomatic relations as “social affinities, comparative analysis, cultural conceptions, psychological influences, local

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Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900* (New York: Wiley, 1974); Wilbur Devereux Jones, *The American Problem in British Diplomacy, 1841-1861* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974); Herbert George Nicholas, *The United States and Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Donald Cameron Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place, 1900-1975: A Study of the Anglo-American Relationship and World Politics in the Context of British and American Foreign Policy-Making in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); David Dimbleby and David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1988); Christopher Hitchens, *Blood, Class, and Empire: The Enduring Anglo-American Relationship* (New York: Nation Books, 1990).

<sup>37</sup> An impressive dissertation by Brook D. Miller considers transatlantic history through the perspectives of “Anglo-American political, economic, and psycho-social relations.” Brook D. Miller, “Our American Cousin: Anglo-American Cultural Politics and British National Identities” (Ph.D. diss. Indiana University, 2003). See also Alex Danchev, *On Specialness: Essays in Anglo-American Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Ritchie Owendale, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault. *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2000); Howard Temperley, *Britain and America Since Independence* (New York Palgrave, 2002); Iestyn Adams, *Brothers Across the Ocean: British Foreign Policy and the Origins of the Anglo-American “Special Relationship” 1900-1905* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005).

traditions, and unspoken assumptions.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, as Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht argues, “culture affects nations and global systems as much as, if not more than, power and economic interests.”<sup>39</sup> This particular approach to diplomatic history is particularly valuable in assessing the idea of a special cultural connection between the United States and Great Britain as well as challenging stereotypes of typical American and British traits and behavior.

Informal diplomacy also plays an important role in this particular study of Anglo-American marriages. Catherine Forslund defines informal diplomacy as “any exchange between citizens or groups of citizens from two or more nations outside the boundaries of the official governmental institutional apparatus (ambassadors, ministers, secretaries, et al.).”<sup>40</sup> The leading persons representing the United States to Great Britain in any period are the diplomats and ambassadors dispatched to London. But in an increasingly globalized world, where people of all countries frequently come into contact with one another, these informal interactions help to shape conceptions of other nations and peoples. Hundreds of American women married British aristocrats, political leaders, and military officers during this period. In many cases, these women acted as the only Americans that many Britons ever personally met. As a result, these women served as informal ambassadors for the United States, living their lives abroad and acting as personal advertisements for what Americans believed and

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<sup>38</sup> Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, “Introduction: On the Division of Knowledge and the Community of Thought: Culture and International History,” in *Culture and International History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 4. See also Morrell Heald and Lawrence S. Kaplan, *Culture and Diplomacy: The American Experience* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977); Emily S. Rosenberg, “Turning to Culture,” in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible: American Journalism as Cultural Diplomacy in Postwar Germany, 1945-1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2002); Thomas A. Breslin, *Beyond Pain: The Role of Pleasure and Culture in the Making of Foreign Affairs* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, “Introduction: On the Division of Knowledge and the Community of Thought: Culture and International History,” in *Culture and International History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 6.

<sup>40</sup> Catherine Forslund, *Anna Chennault: Informal Diplomacy and Asian Relations* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Books, 2002), xiv. Similar to Forslund’s description of informal diplomacy is the term “unofficial diplomacy.” See Maureen R. Berman and Joseph E. Johnson, “The Growing Role of Unofficial Diplomacy,” in *Unofficial Diplomats* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

what the United States represented. Whether American women made a negative or positive impression, Britons formed personal opinions and implemented public decisions toward the United States in this period largely based on these American women. Clearly, this role carried immense influence for those willing to embrace such a position.

In shaping individual personal opinions, American women helped to mold a wider body of public opinion over time. Public opinion has long been an important factor in studying diplomatic relations between two countries. Public opinion, according to Thomas A. Bailey, shapes basic foreign policy. In his words, “[S]prouting from the fertile soil of experience, they represent the needs, interests, and hopes of people.”<sup>41</sup> In this period, Americans held a variety of opinions about the British. On the one hand, many Americans proudly considered themselves to be Anglophobes, detesting the former Mother Country and everything that it represented. On the other hand, many Americans would have described themselves as Anglophiles, or people who cherished their shared heritage with Great Britain and valued the “special relationship” that Americans had with their British cousins across the pond.<sup>42</sup> While several historians have characterized the late nineteenth century as an era either of extreme Anglophilia or Anglophobia, these two sentiments actually existed side by side.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, two very different groups held these attitudes. Generally speaking, lower- to middle-class workers, immigrants, and specifically Irish- and German-Americans held anti-British attitudes while upper-middle class to wealthy American of British descent,

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<sup>41</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955; ninth edition, 1974), 1. See also Melvin Small, “Public Opinion,” in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Robert Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900* (Arlington Heights, IL: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1975), 4.

<sup>42</sup> Defined by Webster’s dictionary in 1919, the word “Anglophobia” was simply defined by Webster to be “dislike of England,” while an “Anglomaniac” was defined by the same source as one “who has a mania for what is English.” J. G. Cook, *Anglophobia: An Analysis of Anti-British Prejudice in the United States* (Boston: The Four Seas Company, 1919), 15.

<sup>43</sup> One such work that argues for the power of Anglophobia in this period is Edward Crapol’s *America for Americans: Economic Nationalism and Anglophobia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1973).

not surprisingly, held pro-British opinions. These public opinions, determined by socioeconomic and ethnic categorizations, influenced American politics as the Anglophobes generally voted Democratic (largely due to the Irish- and Germans-American constituents) while Anglophiles typically voted Republican. And yet, no openly pro-British politician in the United States could have been elected in the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> Even during this period, public opinion on a foreign issue strongly influenced American domestic politics and foreign relations.

Based on the immigration and ethnic influences determining personal perspectives regarding Anglophilia/Anglophobia during this period, historians must consider the link between race and diplomacy. Historian Michael H. Hunt has long argued for the importance of studying race in diplomatic relations. Specific to this study, the conception of Anglo-Saxons and an Anglo-Saxondom history is an important piece of information in understanding why these marriages became so politically charged for both Americans and Britons. Even though Anglophobia served as a “powerful emotional force in American political life” in the late nineteenth century, it corresponded with public discussions concerning the shared destiny of England and America, as the two countries forever united by their Anglo-Saxon heritage. Their shared love for liberty, belief in a common ethnic history, “keen sense of moral purpose, and talent for government” demonstrated, at least to many people at the turn of the twentieth century, that the United States and Great Britain would one day rule and civilize the world through their superior intellect and culture.<sup>45</sup>

Another term that referred to the racial supremacy of Anglo-Saxons was the “English-speaking” people of the world, a direct reference to Britons and Americans. Theodore

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<sup>44</sup> Robert J. Moore Jr., “Social Darwinism, Social Imperialism and the Rapprochement: Theodore Roosevelt and the English-Speaking Peoples, 1886-1901” (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 2003), 4.

<sup>45</sup> Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U. S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 78.

Roosevelt, a major proponent for the pre-eminence of Anglo-Saxon people, often used this term in preference to Anglo-Saxons. In viewing the English-speaking people as the most advanced race, he described them as “bold and hardy, cool and intelligent.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, not only joined by race, these two nations enjoyed a shared language, which simplified personal interactions and diplomatic exchanges. American women considering transatlantic marriages sometimes chose to marry an Englishman over a French count, for example, because of the shared language of the two countries. Even if she left her country of birth for the rest of her life, at least she would not have to learn a foreign language in order to converse with her husband.

This study uses a variety of subfields of diplomatic history, but readers should note that this project examines foreign relations—not foreign policy. The difference, while subtle, is important. To study foreign relations means to examine the specific associations, contacts, connections and interactions between two or more countries. By contrast, foreign policy focuses more exclusively on the strategies, principles, and procedures involved in pursuing a course of action with one or more nations. Clearly, these two elements of diplomacy influence one another. As Thomas G. Paterson explains, “[H]istorians of *American* foreign relations try to study the combination of factors that has produced an *American* foreign policy, an *American* participation in the world.”<sup>47</sup> In analyzing transatlantic marriages, this study examines relations between Great Britain and the United States within a given period and how these women, acting as informal ambassadors for the United States, changed, altered, or affected the way Britons and Americans saw one another. Thus, foreign policy, in

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<sup>46</sup> Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 127.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, “Defining and Doing the History of American Foreign Relations: A Primer,” in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed., Michael Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 37.

terms of tracking a specific line of dialogue between formal British and American diplomats, functions as a limited consideration for this project.

In many ways, transatlantic marriages constitute a very old method, and perhaps the oldest method, of diplomacy. For centuries before Anglo-American marriages became the nuptial trend of choice in the late nineteenth century, feuding kingdoms had practiced international marriages for the benefit of their territories. Numerous kings and queens from rival nations married their sons and daughters to one another in order to achieve a cease-fire, as an act of good faith in a treaty, to gain more territory, or protect their own kingdom from invasion. Cynthia Enloe has gone so far as to argue that “[E]mpires rose and fell according to which marriage schemes succeeded and which failed.”<sup>48</sup> One of the most famous strategic European nuptials united seventeen-year-old Ferdinand, King of Sicily and heir to the throne of Aragon, with eighteen-year-old Isabella, the heiress of Castile in 1469. This union sealed the eventual alliance of medieval Spain by uniting the five principal divisions of Aragon, Castile, Granada, Navarre, and Portugal through a dynastic marriage. But not everyone hailed the union; specifically, Louis XI of France viewed the marriage as a threat to his country due to the alliance between the houses of Castile and Aragon.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, such marriages held the power to form alliances between two countries as well as to create potential problems for other countries that could potentially lose territory or a valuable ally to marital unions with other nations. In the 1840s, Great Britain expressed serious concerns about the marriages of Queen Isabella and her sister, the Infanta, to the sons of the French king for fear that an alliance between France and Spain could bring a united

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<sup>48</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 93.

<sup>49</sup> J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain: 1469-1716* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 5-7, 12, 125.

war against England.<sup>50</sup> During the reign of Queen Victoria, all of her sons and daughters married, not of their own accord, the daughters and sons of necessary European allies. Their first-born, Victoria, wed a Prussian prince as her father desired a more tolerant Anglo-German relationship. Edward VII, commonly known as Bertie, married Alexandra, Princess of Denmark, thus establishing a strong Danish-British connection as Edward became King of England in 1901. The remaining seven children's marriages established unions with notable powers such as Russia in the mid-nineteenth century. While Queen Victoria and Albert enjoyed a marriage based on true love, they did not allow their children to do the same, instead utilizing the unions for the benefit of the British Empire.<sup>51</sup>

For the Anglo-American marriages examined in this study, the unions illustrate the oldest form of diplomacy unfolding in the modern world. These marriages held great potential for British-American relations at the turn of the twentieth century. Likewise, Germany, France, Italy, and even Ireland watched these marriages closely. Clearly, many European nations worried that Anglo-American marriages might alter the power balance between England and continental Europe. In the United States, immigrants such as Irish- and German-Americans issued critical statements and public opinions for these marriages as their own dislike for Britain brought concern that their new country had grown too close with the evil British Empire. The potential of close relations between the United States and Great Britain could eventually spell disaster for the other countries, and in the United States, for immigrants, who stood by to wonder what such a large number of marriages, especially to powerful British policy-makers, might mean for the transatlantic world.

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<sup>50</sup> Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 58.

<sup>51</sup> Jerrold M. Packard, *Victoria's Daughters* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

## SOURCES FOR RESEARCH AND METHOD OF APPROACH

As has been stated earlier, several scholars have noted but given little serious consideration to the practice of transatlantic marriages. To date, few scholars have considered such unions worthy of serious research. Most historians have viewed these marriages as superficial unions which did not qualify as real diplomatic history. Many people on both sides of the Atlantic during the period under review felt the same way. As an example of the dismissive tone taken by the general public at the turn of the twentieth century, one newspaper wrote of one of these weddings: “Her waist, 20 inches; her inheritance, \$20 million.”<sup>52</sup> For the large majority of publications critiquing these marriages, American heiresses functioned as nothing more than nineteenth century versions of Paris Hilton—silly, little rich girls who were famous for simply being rich—and who had discarded their American identity for nothing more than a bankrupt duke who was much more interested in courting her father, his lawyer, and his personal banker, than her exclusively.

And yet, commentary on transatlantic marriages and on the women specifically, can be found in near countless studies of diplomatic history, contemporary newspapers and periodicals, and biographies of leading men of the period. On the one hand, it seems that there is an endless supply of information regarding Anglo-American marriages. On the other hand, such an endless supply of information makes a historian’s task quite challenging. In many ways, these unions are so prevalent through fiction and non-fiction works that these

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<sup>52</sup> *New York Times*, 6 November 1896. This quotation reappeared recently in a book review of Amanda Mackenzie Stuart’s *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt: The Story of a Daughter and a Mother in the Gilded Age* (2006) as evidence of the continuing interest in these marriages over a century later. Yet, the book is a narrative of events rather than an analysis of diplomatic history international relations. *Vogue*, December 2005, 265.

women are often seen only through two numbers: the size of her waist and the size of her dowry.

As this is a transatlantic history project, the research has been collected from a variety of sources on both sides of the Atlantic. A number of archives in the United States and Great Britain were consulted as were manuscript collections concerning a number of major characters, who were generally located in London, Washington D. C., and New York City. The letters between the United States and Great Britain proved an invaluable source as many women expressed intense feelings of homesickness and longed desperately to return home. Alternatively, some American women found great happiness in Great Britain. In these letters, American heiresses often expressed personal opinions regarding British families, British homes, and British life in general to other American women living in England.<sup>53</sup> Finally, the diaries of transatlantic marriages participants provided critical insight into how these people viewed themselves, their marriages, and the new countrymen and women with whom they shared the majority of their lives abroad. Archival documents served as the key link between this study and to a traditional approach of diplomatic history.

Numerous American and British newspapers presented a vast array of opinions concerning transatlantic marriages from both British and American observers. This source offered valuable information as to the attitudes of those Anglo-Americans who did not travel abroad in order to construct their own opinions of their transatlantic neighbor, thus serving as “the most important source of information,” as “attitudes on foreign events [are most] likely to be the newspaper.” Various magazine and periodicals of the period also offered a helpful

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<sup>53</sup> Two sources were of great benefit in placing correspondence, American women writing home and letters between major players in Anglo-American relations, in a broader context within this period. Mary Schriber, *Writing Home: American Women Abroad, 1830-1920* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997). Dino Ejercito Buenviaje, “Correspondence and Community: Elite Friendship and the Anglo-American Rapprochement, 1895-1910” (Master’s thesis, California State University-Fullerton, 2003).

perspective on contemporary commentary on how Americans and Britons viewed these marriages. Some magazines even published an updated list of transatlantic marriages on an annual basis. Illustrating such interest, the November 1903 *McCall's* magazine provided a list of American women married to aristocrats, published under the title of "Galaxy of American Noblewomen."<sup>54</sup>

Finally, a huge number of secondary sources offered indispensable stories, quotations, and perspectives for constructing a comprehensive view of transatlantic marriages. Published books, articles, dissertations, and theses provided the overall context in which to place transatlantic marriages in diplomatic and women's history. These sources included biographies of leading men and women involved in Anglo-American marriages, several autobiographies written by the participants themselves, and numerous books which present a collective history of transatlantic marriages. Yet these works are somewhat limited in scope. Overall, these autobiographies, biographies, and monographs utilize a narrative format. They do not place these women, or their marriages, in a broader context. No argument or case can be formulated placing transatlantic marriages in the larger milieu of American or British perceptions, foreign relations, diplomatic history, or women's history. Nevertheless, all of these sources have been crucial to this project's research in developing a comprehensive picture of these women, their marriages, and how and where they intersect with scholarly history.

This study contributes significantly to the study of transatlantic marriages based on the unique approach taken by intersecting diplomatic history with transatlantic marriages. All of the biographies, autobiographies, and narratives concerning Anglo-American marriages to date have been published by trade presses for a general audience. Not one of these studies has

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<sup>54</sup> *McCall's*, November 1903, 191.

been published by an academic press for scholars of history; thus, this study makes a completely original contribution to the academic community, and specifically diplomatic historians.<sup>55</sup> Considering the recent resurgence of interest in Anglo-American/Anglo-Saxon history, a growing body of work concerning transatlantic history, and the consideration of women in diplomatic history, this project is quite timely.

In structuring an approach to this topic and outlining the chapter format for this study, I originally found that discussing transatlantic marriages in such an expansive context resulted in constant generalizations about this cohort of American women with such phrases as, “Generally speaking, women in these marriages . . .” or “On the main, transatlantic marriages . . .” Such an anonymous discussion of faceless women did not address the specific relationships created because of transatlantic marriages or the specific results in Anglo-American relations. Thus, the succeeding chapters fall into two groups: chapters that discuss the overall trends and patterns of transatlantic marriages and chapters that identify and analyze the specific efforts, activities, friendships, and networks of three individual American women whose lives were changed because of their transatlantic marriages—women who changed lives through the same unions.

Chapter two considers the intersection of women, society, and diplomatic service by discussing the role gender in selecting persons acceptable to serve as diplomats in early American history. Although the State Department did not allow women to participate on an official level in diplomatic service until well into the twentieth century, American diplomacy

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<sup>55</sup> Maureen Montgomery’s *Gilded Prostitution* is something of an exception to the academic press rule. Her book is strictly a social history of transatlantic marriages and does not address these unions within the context of diplomatic history or women’s history. This is the lone publication of transatlantic marriages by an academic press. Maureen E. Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1989). All of the other books concerning transatlantic marriages, as well as biographies and autobiographies of these women, have been published by trade presses.

could not have functioned without their presence and efforts on behalf of their husbands.

Chapter three discusses the major factors that transpired following the American Civil War making transatlantic marriages popular and desirable for American women, British men, and Anglo-American families on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

The next three chapters present the individual women selected for specialized consideration and who represent the overall transatlantic marriages pattern for American women who married British men in this period. Rather than a simple narrative of transatlantic marriages, this study considers “husbands and wives at the precarious intersection of power, love, and marriage.”<sup>56</sup> These marriages span the timeframe of Anglo-American marriages and present the varied ways American women chose to deal with their husbands and new families, an unfamiliar culture and people, success or failure of their marriages, adaptation or resistance to English life, and personal decision to discard or maintain an American identity in Britain. While all of the marriages ended differently, all three women chose to be buried in Great Britain.

To begin, when Jennie Jerome married Lord Randolph Churchill, her marriage in 1874 marked the beginning of the “age of trans-Atlantic marriages in high places,” as she acted as a marital market pioneer.<sup>57</sup> Through her marriage, her husband’s political career, personal relationships with influential Britons, and eventually her son’s political career, Lady Churchill used her position in England to advance British-American unity and worked steadfastly to improve Anglo-American relations. Both in her private and public life, Lady Churchill found a way to retain her American heritage while taking a leading role in London’s political and social circles.

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<sup>56</sup> Kati Marton, *Hidden Power: Presidential Marriages that Shaped Our History* (New York: Anchor Books, A Division of Random House, Inc., 2001), 4.

<sup>57</sup> Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding*, 9.

Some twenty years after the wedding of Lord and Lady Churchill, another American woman entered into a transatlantic marriage, but not by choice. Consuelo Vanderbilt, the great-granddaughter of Cornelius “Commodore” Vanderbilt, married the 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough in November 1896. The marriage epitomized the socioeconomic exchange of dollars for dukes that these marriages so often symbolized. Up until this point, most transatlantic marriages met with fanfare on both sides of the Atlantic. Shortly after this miserable union between two people who never loved one another, Anglo-American public opinion turned decidedly against such marriages. Although Consuelo’s marriage ended in divorce, her life in Britain afterward demonstrates the power that American women held in influencing transatlantic ideals between American and British peoples.

Finally, the most famous, and in some circles, infamous, American woman to enter an Anglo-American marriage was Nancy Langhorne Shaw Astor. Her marriage in 1906 to William Waldorf Astor coincided with the steady decline in transatlantic marriages even as she became the most famous American woman in British history. As the first woman to take a seat in the British Parliament in 1919, she used her political connections—both public and private—with leading men and women in the United States and Great Britain. More than any other woman on either side of the Atlantic before her, Lady Astor challenged discrimination about women in politics, confronted head-on stereotypes about Americans, and—for better or for worse—influenced British-American relations during a crucial time in Anglo-American history.

Chapter eight analyzes the perceived “American invasion” of Great Britain and the various reasons that public opinion turned away from Anglo-American relations at the turn of the century. Both Britons and Americans expressed strong attitudes condemning these

marriages, each for their own particular reasons. While Anglo-American marriages still occurred after 1900, as in the case of Lady Astor, the number declined significantly in the wake of intense scorn. The final chapter considers where these marriages have appeared in popular culture (musicals, plays, movies, and various books such as romance novels), how images of transatlantic marriages emerge on either side of the Atlantic, and what messages these modes of media deliver about Britons and Americans to the other side. This chapter also presents all conclusions concerning Anglo-American marriages.

Transatlantic marriages occurred alongside major events in British-American foreign relations: the Venezuela boundary dispute, the 1896 U. S. presidential election, the Spanish-American War, the Boer War, and World War I. The apex of transatlantic marriages in the 1890s and sudden decline in public opinion coincided with the Anglo-American *rapprochement*. Ironically, the shift in public opinion against these marriages occurred at the same time that Anglo-American relations improved markedly. Consequently, these marriages must be considered within the context of international history in which they occurred.

Last, readers should be aware that the chapters on the three specific American women who married British aristocrats do not offer comprehensive biographical studies of them. A number of biographies, autobiographies, and standard monographs are available for those interested in reading about the entire lives of these women. Instead, this project focuses on their lives as they pertain to Anglo-American relations and transatlantic history.

These women surprised their families—both British and American—and often themselves—as they exhibited an extraordinary degree of agency in a period that clearly placed women outside the boundaries of politics and diplomacy. Without the formal title of diplomat or membership in Parliament, these women exerted an incredible amount of

influence in the male-dominated arena of foreign affairs and international politics. These women served as informal ambassadors who worked to improve relations at the turn of the twentieth century and served an important role in terms of influencing foreign relations. Furthermore, these women demonstrated a keen ability to de-masculinize the traditionally male world of diplomacy. Their positions as the wives of leading members of the British aristocracy provided them with unprecedented access to the eyes and ears of individuals at the highest level in Great Britain, the very decision-makers who formulated and implemented foreign policy with their home country. These women deserve recognition for the crucial roles they played at a critical time of international relations. During the period under consideration, the United States and Great Britain began to view one another less as adversaries and more as allies. Through their transatlantic marriages, these women skillfully and successfully blurred the lines of public politics and private lives in a period that did not afford women the right to vote. Without formal educations in politics or foreign policy, without the title or staff provided to a diplomat or ambassador, these women created an unprecedented degree of agency within a world that would have undeniably recoiled at the idea of a female diplomat or politician.

Both collectively and individually, these women functioned as informal ambassadors to Great Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By intersecting, overlapping, and fusing diplomatic history with women's studies, this project presents the argument that not only could women act as ambassadors, even during a period in which they could not apply for State Department employment, but also that they influenced Anglo-American relations to a degree never before considered by historians. This project does not seek to bemoan more formal or traditional studies of diplomatic history. Rather, in the words

of Emily Rosenberg, this study “linger[s] at the intersections, walking the borders to analyze from the outside in” the roles, efforts, and activities of American women who married into the highest social and political circles in Great Britain where they lived their lives abroad as informal ambassadors.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Emily S. Rosenberg, “Walking the Borders,” in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 31.

## Chapter Two

### The Historic Role of Wives in Diplomatic Circles: Gender and Diplomacy

Ambassador: A man, just a little below God.<sup>1</sup>  
*The Alphabet of a Diplomat*

The picture of diplomatic history is, quite often, painted with a masculine brush. To cite a frequent feminist quotation, “the history of diplomacy is very much a ‘his-story.’”<sup>2</sup> Generally speaking, diplomats are men, appointed by men, to deal with men, and to sign their name on official documents next to the names of other men. Rarely are the female faces in diplomatic circles brought to the forefront by examining the world of diplomacy. The above passage is very telling, not simply because of its humorous depiction of an ambassador, but because the author naturally assumed that an ambassador is always a man. What designation *would* a female ambassador hold? An ambassadorette? Even the title sounds awkward.

Instead of seeking out the few female diplomats who exist in history, what if historians simply refocused the lens through which scholars traditionally view diplomacy? Perhaps historians should analyze, as Emily Rosenberg has proposed, “power systems from various perspectives situated on the periphery.”<sup>3</sup> This shift in perspective may not be as drastic as some historians might initially anticipate. Again, as Rosenberg suggests, “[A] peripheral view comes less from where we stand than from the critical questions we frame.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, in that vein of thought, this section seeks to observe the wives of diplomats as the

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<sup>1</sup> L. DeHegermann-Lindencrone. *The Sunny Side of Diplomatic Life, 1875-1912* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1914), ix.

<sup>2</sup> Katie Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia: The Lives and Times of Diplomatic Women* (New York: Perennial, 1999), xxiii.

<sup>3</sup> Emily S. Rosenberg, “Walking the Borders,” *Diplomatic History* 14 (1990): 568.

<sup>4</sup> Rosenberg, “Walking the Borders,” 568.

prime actors in diplomatic history, moving them from the periphery of diplomacy to its center.

Before historians make a connection between the public appearances and private dinners given by American women involved in Anglo-American marriages and diplomatic history, one must consider the place of women within diplomatic service. Because men and women are different beings entirely, from their very biological composition, and have very different expectations placed upon them within the realm of diplomatic service, it seems logical that they, in response, fulfill very different roles as representatives of their countries while abroad. This chapter discusses conceptions of gender central to the nature of diplomatic service, provides a short history of the American Foreign Service, and examines the expectations placed on wives of diplomats in their “proper” roles as representatives of the United States.

#### GENDER AND DIPLOMATIC SERVICE

While this study focuses on three specific women, an analysis of the word “gender” and its categorization for an analysis of foreign relations is necessary. As Joan Scott asserts, “gender is . . . used to designate social relations between the sexes.”<sup>5</sup> This perspective of gender proves valuable for an analysis of the American diplomatic service by exploring the various ways American diplomatic wives have fulfilled valuable roles as the “other half” of the diplomat’s (i.e., the male ambassador’s) post. While the husband-ambassador executes the official business aspects of diplomatic service—meeting with other diplomats, attending summits, participating in negotiations—the wives of diplomats carry out the social duties of

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<sup>5</sup> Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), 1054.

informal diplomacy—organizing dinners, supervising the legation’s staff and/or servants, calling on the wives of other diplomats, and socializing on an unofficial level with local contacts at the current post. Thus, *sex* differences determined what role a husband and wife would assume as a diplomatic team, while a *gendered* categorization determined their respective tasks; in Scott’s words, “gender becomes a way of denoting ‘cultural constructions’—the entirely social creation of ideas about appropriate roles for women and men. It is a way of referring to the exclusively social origins of the subjective identities of men and women.”<sup>6</sup>

By investigating the daily duties of the wives of diplomats, this chapter makes an effort to “locate those exceptional, often slighted, women who influenced foreign policy.”<sup>7</sup> Compared with other professions, rarely have wives played such intimate roles in their husbands’ work . . . and remained so overlooked.<sup>8</sup> In many ways, as Catherine Allgor argues, “The diplomat’s work is more like the classic stereotype of women’s work—subtle, diffuse, contingent, dependent on the intuitive reading of character . . . Such realities of diplomatic life make the study of gender in this context particularly profitable.”<sup>9</sup>

This study does not unduly force invisible women to the forefront of diplomacy. Rather such a search for “exceptional women” in diplomacy history may be better supplanted by seeking out women in diplomatic circles “doing ‘women’s work,’ at home and abroad.”<sup>10</sup> For affluent socioeconomic classes, women traditionally work as persons unofficially classified as “domestic engineers.” During the period at hand, the notion of “separate

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<sup>6</sup> Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” 1056.

<sup>7</sup> Emily S. Rosenberg, “Gender,” *The Journal of American History*, 77 (1990), 116.

<sup>8</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 53.

<sup>9</sup> Catherine Allgor, “‘A Republican in a Monarchy’: Louisa Catherine Adams in Russia,” *Diplomatic History*, 21 (1997), 41.

<sup>10</sup> Rosenberg, “Gender,” 117.

spheres” proved firmly intact for elite women. Men worked for a salary outside of the house while women labored within the home without receiving remuneration. Popular thought affirmed that men retained stronger mental capabilities and strength of character in order to handle the business of fields such as politics, economics, and diplomacy; in the same manner, the status quo determined that women maintained superior moral values, which made them ideal decision makers regarding issues concerning the family and children, maintaining social interaction with personal and professional contacts, and managing the overall household.

These statements, not meant to assign blame or censure men or women for contemporary ideas that largely determined the roles of husbands and wives, suggest that the same gendered boundaries that typically governed domestic practices in the United States also existed in American diplomatic service overseas. On the contrary, however, the State Department generally viewed husbands and wives as a team in representing the United States abroad. A “two-for-one” mentality existed in assigning men as diplomats to international posts, as the State Department expected that their wives would happily follow their husbands abroad and fill their role as happy help-meet, accommodating spouse, and patriotic American. Few people in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would have ever considered a wife’s desire to support her husband and his career as he provided for her and the family. The possibility that she might want to pursue her own personal or career goals, either at the new post or by remaining in the United States, simply fell outside the scope of marriage in that day and age. Once a woman married, her classification as an individual shifted from single to married. As a result, her title became wife; her occupation, her marriage.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Maureen E. Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870-1914*, (London: Routledge, 1989), 56. While she concentrates on the twentieth century evolution of American

## A SHORT HISTORY OF AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC SERVICE

Simply stated, “diplomacy is a process of communications between governments.”<sup>12</sup> In order to carry out such communiqués, governments choose individuals, present them with the title of “ambassador,” and entrust them with the equivalent authority of a chief of state, representing “in their persons the President.”<sup>13</sup> In the case of the United States, the highest ranking officer held the title of “minister” in the earliest years of American diplomatic service, but the elevated position of “ambassador” came into use in 1893 as evidence of the growing American diplomatic service.<sup>14</sup> The Department of State abandoned the title of minister also out of feeling that such a title was “too monarchical.”<sup>15</sup>

The United States government charged ambassadors in the first century of American diplomatic service with a number of duties and responsibilities. As the instrument of American foreign policy, an ambassador served as “the eyes, ears, and nose of his government.”<sup>16</sup> As much of the early years of diplomatic service centered on economic relations, ambassadors’ reports home often revolved around trade relations and ways to increase the fiscal exchange of goods between two nations. In many cases, diplomats acted more as bankers and financial planners than ambassadors as the term pertains to present-day expectations. As much of the nineteenth century focused on domestic issues in lieu of

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marriages, Kristin Celello’s analysis is valuable as it probes the idea that marriage functioned as a woman’s vocation. Kristin Mary Celello, “Marking Marriage Work: Marital Success and Failure in the United States, 1920-1980,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2004). See also Stephanie Coontz, *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families, 1600-1900* (New York: Verso Books, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Glenn Hastedt, *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Relations* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 128.

<sup>13</sup> J. Rives Childs, *American Foreign Service* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1948), 18.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (First published, 1955; ninth edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), 10.

<sup>15</sup> John E. Findling, *Dictionary of American Diplomatic History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 104.

<sup>16</sup> Robert L. Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900* (Arlington Heights, IL: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1975), 6; Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 10.

foreign affairs, “diplomacy as a profession had relatively little appeal for the country’s ablest talents.”<sup>17</sup>

One would logically assume that, given such power and clout in representing the United States at such an elevated position, ambassadors and diplomats underwent a strenuous examination and met exceedingly high standards of education and experience prior to attaining such a post. In the first century of the American diplomatic service, however, diplomats ranked more often as amateurs with a few exceptions of professionals prior to the twentieth century. A large majority of individuals received ambassador posts as a result of monetary contributions or personal connections to the presidential administration in power as “the qualifications that nominees brought to the office were distinctly secondary in importance to their political loyalty.”<sup>18</sup> In other cases, powerful politicians bribed their way into a diplomatic post in an effort to increase their own stature or at the bidding of socially ambitious wives. From the very beginning, diplomatic posts held prestige not only for the ambassador but his wife as well.<sup>19</sup>

During the first presidential administration, George Washington felt little need to dispatch American diplomats to many countries. Only six countries received American diplomats during Washington’s administration: France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Prussia, and Spain. The United States did not send a minister to Russia until 1809, to Sweden and Norway until 1814, and to Austria until 1838.<sup>20</sup> The United States State

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<sup>17</sup> Andrew L. Steigman, *The Foreign Service of the United States: First Line of Defense* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 16. It should be noted that in the twenty-three chapters of Beckles Willson book examining some forty American ambassadors to Britain over three centuries, not one woman served in an official capacity as an ambassador. Beckles Willson, *America’s Ambassadors to England, 1785-1929: A Narrative of Anglo-American Diplomatic Relations* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1929).

<sup>18</sup> Steigman, *The Foreign Service of the United States*, 127.

<sup>19</sup> Childs, *American Foreign Service*, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Graham H. Stuart, *American Diplomatic and Consular Practice* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952), 84.

Department grew very slowly in the early decades of its existence. Many Americans considered it “sheer nonsense” to sustain a significant diplomatic corps overseas.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps one of the reasons the diplomatic service grew so slowly initially was that the profession was “ill-trained, ill-paid, ill-housed, ill-coordinated, and undermanned.”<sup>22</sup> The American people often saw diplomats as little more than professional practitioners of etiquette over multi-course dinners. The *New York Times* sarcastically inquired whether American diplomats carried out any duties outside of hosting parties and displaying clothes.<sup>23</sup> Many Americans felt the whole “striped-pants brigade” served as an unnecessary hold-over from obsolete monarchies.<sup>24</sup> The irony of American diplomatic service stemmed from the fact that while the government functioned as a democratic republic, the same description did not apply to its international representatives. Most diplomats in this period were products of Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, and tended to “regard the foreign service as their own private club.”<sup>25</sup>

And yet, in many ways, the wealthy, sophisticated, and well-educated men of the American Ivy Leagues were the only people who could have performed under the circumstances of the State Department as it existed during the nineteenth century. Only the sons of wealthy Americans knew the proper procedure of a seven-course meal in Paris. Likewise, a private income was an absolute requirement for holding an ambassadorial post. Diplomats earned incredibly low salaries, as Congress deemed their positions to be superficial. Yet, American ambassadors were expected to entertain on a level equal to, if not

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<sup>21</sup> Milton Plesur, “Looking Outward: American Attitudes Toward Foreign Affairs in the Years from Hayes to Harrison,” (Ph.D. diss, University of Rochester, 1954), 21.

<sup>22</sup> Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> *New York Times*, April 1, 1885; quoted in Plesur, “Looking Outward,” 19.

<sup>24</sup> Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 11.

<sup>25</sup> Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 13.

exceeding, the diplomatic embassies of other countries within the same city. When John Quincy Adams served as minister to Russia (1809-1814), he earned \$9,000 a year, a salary surpassed only by the president, who made \$25,000 annually. But the costs of entertaining and competing with other embassies at such prestigious European courts were high. The Swedish ambassador had \$30,000 for expenses per year while the French ambassador had \$35,000 at his diplomatic disposal.<sup>26</sup> The same financial concerns affected not only American ministers but clerks as well. The average annual expenditures of a diplomatic secretary in the mid-nineteenth century ranged between \$5,000 and \$12,000 for living expenses alone; yet the person in this position could earn no more than \$3,000 a year.<sup>27</sup> In London, for example, the average social commitments during this period mandated personal expenditures totaling *three times* the ambassador's income and stipends.<sup>28</sup> Thus, if a person needed etiquette training, he did not meet the standards of a diplomat; if he did not have the necessary funds, he could not serve as an ambassador. The absence of either knowledge or wealth eliminated any supposed outsiders from entering the elite circles of diplomatic service.

While such staggering expenses may seem preposterous to the average American, one should note that these diplomats lived under the constant spotlight of international evaluation and foreign public opinion. The inability of American ambassadors to successfully entertain diplomats from other countries would reflect poorly on the status of the American post and the United States as a whole. A diplomat must represent the culture and society of the United States at its best. As American "diplomacy is the process by which policy is carried out," the

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<sup>26</sup> Allgor, "A Republican in a Monarchy," 29.

<sup>27</sup> Childs, *American Foreign Service*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 14.

United States found advantage in appointing privately wealthy and personally sophisticated individuals to represent the democratic republic.<sup>29</sup>

For all of these reasons, repeated scandals rocked the foreign service of the United States during the nineteenth century, reaching a nadir under President Ulysses S. Grant. The nephew of one congressman shamed the United States with his public drunkenness, his fighting, and his purchase of dancing girls for personal entertainment after his appointment as consul general to Egypt. When Grant appointed General Dan Sickles, a former fellow officer of the Civil War, as minister to Spain, Sickles entered into an adulterous relationship with the former Spanish queen.<sup>30</sup> Such incidents demonstrated the need for professionalization among the diplomatic corps and the implementation of a merit system in selection of foreign officers.

Between 1888 and 1906, many U. S. presidents and secretaries of state openly supported the idea of a merit system for the diplomatic service. While this backing largely reflected the civil service reforms of the Progressive Era, the movement toward professionalization grew out of necessity. The need for experienced, competent representatives abroad resulted from the increasing pressures within American foreign relations. Thus, the Progressives called for a three-pronged approach to cleaning up the shameful diplomatic service. First, they introduced the idea of entrance into the diplomatic corps by examination; second, they supported promotion by merit through evaluation; and

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<sup>29</sup> Childs, *American Foreign Service*, 20, 64.

<sup>30</sup> Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 379.

third, they called for an end to job tenure.<sup>31</sup> This transformation, as Henry E. Mattox has described, marked the twilight of amateur diplomacy.<sup>32</sup>

The change in diplomatic service reflected an overall shift in American diplomatic procedure in the 1890s. Rather than taking a passive approach to foreign relations and waiting for events to occur and then reacting, American diplomats began taking a more assertive approach. Instead of responding to incidents, American foreign service officials began formulating policy and executing it at overseas posts, a process that occurred in tandem with “more deliberateness and consistency.”<sup>33</sup>

Serious changes did not take place within the diplomatic service until after World War I. Following his visit to Europe in 1919, Representative John Jacob Rogers of Massachusetts returned to the United States determined to bring major changes to the diplomatic service. His first task was to unify the two separate spheres of foreign service. Until this point, diplomatic service consisted of two distinct, and inherently unequal, categories: first, the diplomatic officers, who served at embassies or legations in foreign capitals, and second, the consular officers, who worked at consulates at significant seaports or other major commercial locations. Diplomatic officers, who generally fit the stereotype of the Ivy League, trust-fund diplomat, generally treated consular officials with condescension. The salaries and treatment of consular officers reflected their second-class status. Even after a lifetime of service to the State Department, the highest rank a consular officer could hold

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<sup>31</sup> Warren Frederick Ilchman, *Professional Diplomacy in the United States, 1779-1939: A Study in Administrative History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 45, 79, 82.

<sup>32</sup> Henry E. Mattox, *The Twilight of Amateur Diplomacy: The American Foreign Service and Its Senior Officers in the 1890s* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1989).

<sup>33</sup> Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New*, 32, 39.

was consul general, well below the salaries and prestige earned by those in the diplomatic branches.<sup>34</sup>

Rogers's efforts to unify the two branches and address wider issues within the diplomatic service began in 1919. Five years later, the Rogers Act of May 24, 1924, made a number of radical changes in the diplomatic service, earning the representative the designation of the "Father of Modern American Foreign Service."<sup>35</sup> First, the bill unified the two former divisions into the Foreign Service of the United States and provided the official title of Foreign Service Officer to members of both branches. It also provided an open, but competitive, examination process by which applicants competed for positions within the service; the creation of a school in the State Department where new appointees received training from specialists in the field; and, finally, a promotion system based strictly on merit. Unfortunately, many former diplomats found ways to continue the division between the two former branches. In any case, better salaries and increased housing and entertainment allowances fully established the diplomatic service as a professionalized department within the United States government. Thus, the status of the diplomatic service as the exclusive preserve of sons and sons-in-law of wealthy American families came to an end.<sup>36</sup>

The structure of the United States diplomatic service had long mimicked the organization of the British Foreign Service. As in Britain, a small group of select men had served as its foreign policymaking-elite for centuries. Another similarity was a considerable division in foreign policy decision-making: the prime ministers and their private secretaries versus foreign secretaries and their advisers within the Foreign Office and Diplomatic

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<sup>34</sup> Childs, *American Foreign Service*, 10, 11; Steigman, *The Foreign Service of the United States*, 20. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Childs, *American Foreign Service*, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Stuart, *American Diplomatic and Consular Practice*, 60; Steigman, *The Foreign Service of the United States*, 21; Childs, *American Foreign Service*, 10, 11.

Services.<sup>37</sup> This gap in communication and procedure caused numerous problems for British foreign policy as it often pitted the foreign secretary against the prime minister. While foreign policy logically fell under the prerogative and expertise of the foreign secretary, many disagreements arose as the overall practice of foreign relations fell under the direction of the prime minister.<sup>38</sup>

As one analyzes the diplomatic practices of the British political leadership, a major difference from American government leaders becomes apparent: the reliance British leaders had on their wives throughout their careers, an alliance that British husbands have spoken about with much candor in personal letters and diaries. Before he became prime minister in 1885, Lord Salisbury openly acknowledged the importance a wife would play in his political life. Writing candidly in his diary, he reasoned: “I have come to the conclusion that I shall probably do Parliament well if I marry, and that I shall certainly [make] nothing of it if I do not.”<sup>39</sup> Georgina Alderson, whom he married in 1857, proved quite an asset to his political career. She organized her calendar around his activities and responsibilities. She monitored his exercise and sleep schedule closely and entertained guests in their home while he worked at the House of Commons. She often sat in the Ladies’ Gallery, waiting for her husband to finish his tasks, a commitment that often resulted in their walk home together at dawn.<sup>40</sup>

The wives of politicians in general and of prime ministers specifically “played a part which was very much an extension of the social role they would have fulfilled in England.”<sup>41</sup> Consequently, a successful marriage with the right woman could greatly benefit a politician.

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<sup>37</sup> B. J. C. McKercher, ed., “‘The Deep and Latent Distrust’: The British Official Mind and the United States, 1919-1929,” in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 209, 210.

<sup>38</sup> Gordon A. Craig, ed., “The British Foreign Office from Grey to Austen Chamberlain,” in *The Diplomats: 1919-1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 15, 16, 25.

<sup>39</sup> Kirsty McLeod, *The Wives of Downing Street* (St. James’s Place, London: Collins, 1976), 14.

<sup>40</sup> McLeod, *The Wives of Downing Street*, 14-15.

<sup>41</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 62.

Selecting a woman intimately familiar with the game of politics could aid a politician in his career, as in the case of Viscount Henry Palmerston's wife, Emily Lamb. Having grown up in political circles, she became Palmerston's confidante, and he often shared with her private details of the political wranglings of the House of Commons. Utilizing the practice of the *salon*, a significant social weapon employed by both Liberal and Conservative political wives in Britain through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Emily entertained men and women in her drawing-room. Acting as her husband's unofficial political manager and confidante, Emily held as much inside knowledge and as many valuable personal contacts as any other politician of the period. Henry Asquith, prime minister from 1908 to 1916, described Emily's efforts as making her "an active and most efficient co-partner in Palmerston's fortunes."<sup>42</sup> While ambassador to Paris in the 1930s, Lord Tyrell observed of diplomatic wives, "A woman with the right personal gifts who married a diplomat . . . [is] invaluable to the public service and one can think of many Ambassadors and Minister in the past, who have owed a great part . . . of the success of their best work to their wives."<sup>43</sup>

British politicians have long recognized the power of a talented and witty hostess-wife. But in the same manner that they aided their husbands, British political wives could also act as a detriment to the careers of their husbands. If she lacked familiarity with the intrigues of politics, if she chose not to entertain often in her home, or she found no enjoyment socializing with other politicians and their wives, her husband's career reflected this perceived reluctance on her part. When future Prime Minister Arthur Balfour was reportedly considering marriage to Margot Tennant, Queen Victoria expressed her disappointment with her home secretary's choice, and pronounced Margot "unfit for a

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<sup>42</sup> McLeod, *The Wives of Downing Street*, 15, 17.

<sup>43</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 65.

Cabinet Minister's wife."<sup>44</sup> While she did not outline her objections to Margot and did not provide any suggestions to Balfour, she clearly deemed a certain category of British woman as ideal for the wife of a politician. Thus, the selection of a wife has long been an important one for British government officials.

British political marriages hold great significance for this study of American diplomatic history. Unlike their English sisters across the Atlantic, the wives of American politicians had few options for exerting influence on their husbands' careers. In contrast, the wives of American diplomats overseas had ample opportunities to aid in their husband's career and to shape the manner in which people perceived Americans and the United States as she represented her country abroad just as much as her husband. This level of influence on the part of American diplomatic wives runs parallel to the role and duties of political wives in England during this period. Thus, the consideration of Anglo-American marriages, and specifically the activities and contacts that an American woman gained through her marriage to a British politician opened the door for these women to serve as informal ambassadors to Britain—entertaining in the same manner as an American diplomat and making valuable personal and professional contacts, in a way similar to these of British political wives.

#### WOMEN DIPLOMATS, DIPLOMATIC WOMEN

Although women have exerted extraordinary influence over diplomatic careers on an informal level, they long met with opposition to their formal employment in diplomatic circles. The Rogers Act addressed the second-class citizen status of former consul officers but failed to deal with the issue of women in the Foreign Service. Women worked as clerks

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<sup>44</sup> McLeod, *The Wives of Downing Street*, 153.

at the State Department, but until the 1920s they never received overseas posts. Even as the State Department experienced tremendous growth, the department considered women ineligible for overseas assignments. In 1789, the State Department employed only six individuals, but by the 1970s, it numbered a workforce of more than 40,000.<sup>45</sup> The overall growth of the department did not coincide with an equal increase in female employees. In 1874, only five women, less than 10 percent of total employees, worked at the State Department. The number of women employees grew to seventeen by 1909, roughly 20 percent of the total State Department workforce. More than thirty-five years passed between the hiring of the first full-time female employee and the appointment of a woman to a professional position within the department.<sup>46</sup>

Women often faced a difficult decision when seeking employment within the “old boy” network of diplomacy in the early decades of the twentieth century. If a woman approached her job while suppressing her femininity and tried to fit in with the men with whom she worked every day, she received criticism for behavior unbecoming to a woman. If she approached her job with her womanly status in mind, she met with ridicule for not being assertive enough or lacking self-confidence. On the one hand, if a woman worked a standard 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. shift, her colleagues denounced her for not taking her job seriously enough to work overtime. On the other hand, if she worked long hours, co-workers disparaged her for neglecting her family. In one case, a superior sneered to a female employee, “You must be a terrible wife and mother because you are here all the time.”<sup>47</sup> In either case, women found

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<sup>45</sup> Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 9.

<sup>46</sup> Joan Hoff-Wilson, “Conclusion: Of Mice and Men,” *Women and American Foreign Policy: Lobbyists, Critics, and Insiders* (First published, 1987; Second edition, Wilmington: DE: Scholarly Resource Books, 1992), 174.

<sup>47</sup> Nancy E. McGlen and Meredith Reid Sarkees, *Women in Foreign Policy: The Insiders* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 45.

working for the State Department exceedingly difficult. Many quit in frustration based on their treatment, evidence that many male State Department employees pointed to in arguing that women simply could not handle the pressure and did not have the tenacity necessary for diplomatic service.<sup>48</sup> Notably, Secretary of State Cordell Hull reported to the president that in 1934, the department had dismissed a total of forty persons—thirty-seven of them women.<sup>49</sup>

Although women applied for Foreign Service positions as early as 1862, they achieved no success until the 1920s, when women expressed growing interest in overseas posts.<sup>50</sup> In January 1925, following the Rogers Act, the State Department gave the first examination for entrance into the Foreign Service. Out of the nearly two hundred people who took the exam, only eight were women.<sup>51</sup> Between 1926 and 1929, the State Department appointed four women to the Foreign Service, a mere 5 percent of the women who took the entrance exam. In the following twelve years, the Foreign Service added no women to its ranks.

In many interviews, the State Department interviewees judged women based on their appearance or perceived emotionalism, an assessment not used to evaluate male applicants. In 1916, Under Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew observed that while one female candidate “was a perfect fund of information and answered every question perfectly . . . [which] showed that she had simply absorbed her knowledge and had no imagination or flexibility of any kind.”<sup>52</sup> In another interview in the same year, State Department officer Wilbur J. Carr

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<sup>48</sup> Hoff-Wilson, “Conclusion: Of Mice and Men,” 184.

<sup>49</sup> Jewell Fenzi, *Married to the Foreign Service: An Oral History of the American Diplomatic Spouse* (New York: Macmillan, 1994), 20.

<sup>50</sup> Homer Calkin, *Women in American Foreign Affairs* (Washington: Department of State, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 53, 69.

<sup>51</sup> Calkin, *Women in American Foreign Affairs*, 88.

<sup>52</sup> Calkin, *Women in American Foreign Affairs*, 88.

remarked of one woman candidate: “Another girl today. Frightened badly. The thumping of her jugular vein was so terrible that I took out my watch and counted 120 per minute!”<sup>53</sup>

Apparently, ample preparation and nervousness both served as grounds for dismissing female applicants. For a woman who managed to pass the examination phase, any perceived weakness in her interview proved sufficient for finding her application wanting. As Elizabeth Harper concludes, “[I]t is no harder for an exceptional woman to enter [the Foreign Service] than for an exceptional man, but it is harder for an average woman than for an average man.”<sup>54</sup>

Clearly, State Department officials rarely deemed women acceptable for Foreign Service duties. Although one consul general conceded that women had fulfilled the duties of clerkships “with great success,” he also feared that “if they should be appointed to the classified Service . . . I am very much afraid that the inconvenience and embarrassment resulting therefrom would be considerable.”<sup>55</sup> The theory remained that women would quit upon marriage, or after having children, or that they would meet with “foreign cultural prejudices against women as government representatives.”<sup>56</sup> Regardless of the specific rationalization, men in the Foreign Service viewed women as a waste of time and resources.

Such discrimination against women employees in the Foreign Service continued well into the twentieth century. Eleanor Lansing Dulles, sister of U. S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and CIA head Allen Dulles, described her experience in the State Department as being treated “like a very bright child.”<sup>57</sup> Given her years in the department, she advised

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<sup>53</sup> Calkin, *Women in American Foreign Affairs*, 89.

<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth J. Harper, “The Role of Women in International Diplomacy: A Case Study.” The Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy. Fourteenth Session. Department of State Library, 1972, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Calkin, *Women in American Foreign Affairs*, 72.

<sup>56</sup> McGlen and Sarkees, *Women in Foreign Policy*, 63.

<sup>57</sup> Eleanor Lansing Dulles, *Eleanor Lansing Dulles, Chances of a Lifetime: A Memoir* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), 229. Dulles worked in the State Department from 1942 to 1962.

women not to enter the Foreign Service with any ambition of earning an ambassadorship.

According to Dulles, her male colleagues genuinely feared that women “might get to a rank and position where they would make dangerous intuitive, even emotional, decisions.”<sup>58</sup>

Again, gendered conceptions about women and their capabilities hindered their advancement at the State Department. Like Dulles, Jeane Kirkpatrick, the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, constantly felt out-of-place at top-level foreign policy meetings. Upon seeing a mouse at a meeting in the Situation Room in 1985, she said, “That mouse is no more surprising a creature to be in the Situation Room than I am.”<sup>59</sup>

And yet, for all the resistance against women entering the Foreign Service in an official capacity, their husbands had long relied upon them to perform some of the most important duties of informal diplomacy. As the wives of diplomats dispatched to overseas posts, they not only had to take care of their husband and children in a foreign country but also had to fulfill the social side of diplomacy—after all, men took care of the business side of foreign relations while women’s “naturally” social personalities allegedly made such tasks as organizing dinners and tea parties effortless. The irony of such gendered assumptions about men, women, and diplomacy is that while the State Department expected wives to carry out such responsibilities as part of their marriage, the Department continued to view women as inherently incapable of successfully serving as formal diplomats overseas.<sup>60</sup>

“Women’s traditional, unpaid work,” Katherine Hughes maintains, “was and is necessary to the practice of diplomacy abroad and because of this that work was co-opted by

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<sup>58</sup> Dulles, *Eleanor Lansing Dulles, Chances of a Lifetime*, 239.

<sup>59</sup> John Dumbrell, *The Making of US Foreign Policy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1990) 172.

<sup>60</sup> I owe a great deal of my central argument to fellow graduate student, Ashley Laumen, and a Modern Europe seminar (“The Empire Experience”) we took together two years ago under the direction of Sara Sohmer. Her research concerning the wives of American diplomats helped to shape my initial ideas about diplomats, their wives, and the power of American women as representatives overseas. Ashley Laumen, “Women on the Spot: American Diplomatic Wives of the Twentieth Century,” Texas Christian University, Seminar Paper, Fall 2004.

the institution.”<sup>61</sup> The fact that after the Foreign Service reluctantly allowed women to serve as officers at overseas posts, but forced women to immediately resign after they married, supports her argument. Thus, in the eyes of the State Department, a woman could be a professional diplomat, or she could be married, but not both. Such a ruling clearly supported the conception that when a woman married, her marriage and family functioned as her sole occupation.<sup>62</sup>

On the other hand, the Foreign Service encouraged men to marry. Not only did marriage make them more stable, dependable employees, but if a man sought assignment overseas, his wife became an unofficial asset to his career. This “two for the price of one” mentality aided men in their diplomatic careers while marriage ended women’s careers in the same field.<sup>63</sup> A woman’s work inside the home—tending to details in the private sphere—made it possible for her husband to pursue the official side of diplomacy outside of the home.<sup>64</sup> The conceptions of man/woman, public/private, formal diplomacy/informal diplomacy being diametrically opposed to one another remained fixtures of the collective mind at the State Department well into the twentieth century.

And yet, entertaining remained a vital aspect of diplomacy. Rarely does archival information reveal the efforts of diplomatic wives behind the scenes (after all, they are working *behind the scenes*), occasionally diplomats remark that their spouses could be “exceedingly useful on the social end.”<sup>65</sup> Diplomacy and hostessing, by the turn of the twentieth century, had become closely connected. By hosting engagements such as dinners

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<sup>61</sup> Katherine Lee Hughes, “Wives of Public Men,” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995), 9.

<sup>62</sup> The State Department apparently recognized the intimate nature of marriage and the power of a wife beginning in the 1930s when it decreed that any foreign service officer who married a foreign (non-American) woman had to submit his resignation. Jewel Fenzi, *Married to the Foreign Service*, 34.

<sup>63</sup> Fenzi, *Married to the Foreign Service*, 25.

<sup>64</sup> Hughes, “Wives of Public Men,” 22.

<sup>65</sup> Molly Wood, “‘Commanding Beauty’ and ‘Gentle Charm’: American Women and Gender in the Early Twentieth Century Foreign Service,” *Diplomatic History*, forthcoming.

in one's own home, wives of diplomats immediately placed important associates in her domain, thus giving her the home field advantage, so to speak. Socialization and important conversations took place under the watchful eye of women who knew how to make people feel welcome and comfortable, thus facilitating unofficial conversations about official business, as "off-the-record conversations are the stuff of diplomacy."<sup>66</sup> Men viewed women as simply going about "women's work," since these exchanges took place in the home. But anyone who has given a seven-course dinner for more than a hundred people at an overseas embassy knows the complexity involved in choosing sophisticated cuisine and seating etiquette when it involves royalty and the delicate egos of diplomats. Part of a woman's allure was making such minutiae look effortless. "The domestic duties of foreign-service wives," as Cynthia Enloe explains, "include creating an atmosphere where men from different states can get to know one another 'man to man.'"<sup>67</sup> To see the diplomat's wife as simply flitting around mindlessly, making sure everyone had enough tea and crumpets, is an oversight on the part of the historian. Her very presence reflected on her husband as she acted as his eyes and ears at such functions. And at the end of the night, she was often the one person he could use as a "safe sounding-board, one of the few people on whom [he could] try out ideas."<sup>68</sup> Just as a diplomat functioned as the eyes and ears of his government, his wife served in a comparable capacity for her spouse. A wife's social and domestic skills proved crucial in successfully acting as a diplomatic wife, assisting her husband's career, and representing the United States overseas.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (First published, 1989; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 98.

<sup>67</sup> Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, 97.

<sup>68</sup> Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, 97.

<sup>69</sup> Molly M. Wood, "Diplomatic Wives: The Politics of Domesticity and the 'Social Game' in the U.S. Foreign Service, 1905-1941," *Journal of Women's History* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2005), 145.

Diplomats' wives did not only give dinners, although according to *The Alphabet of a Diplomat* dinners served as the "surest road to success," they also attended the parties of diplomatic wives, various ceremonies, "ribbon-cuttings," and any number of community gatherings and celebrations.<sup>70</sup> Diplomats' wives always acted not only as a reflection of her husband but also of the United States. If a wife appeared happy, genuine, and gracious, the United States appeared in the same positive light. If, however, she seemed annoyed, blasé, or unrefined, her attitude and demeanor reflected poorly on herself, her husband, his career, his superior, the embassy, and the country as a whole. Diplomatic wives represented much more than simply themselves every time they made a public appearance or hosted a private soirée.

A diplomat's wife clearly had to meet a high standard if she hoped to achieve success in her marriage and her husband's career. But describing in detail the ideal diplomatic wife proved difficult. Everyone could agree that "just the right sort [of wife] can make all the difference to her husband's position . . . [,] so one who is inefficient, disagreeable, disloyal, or even merely stupid, can be a millstone around his neck."<sup>71</sup> Like Louisa Adams, wife of John Quincy Adams, a diplomatic wife had to "possess a genuine love of, and interest in, people," always entertained her guests brilliantly, and had to make everyone feel at ease in her home.<sup>72</sup> She needed to combine a "commanding beauty" in order to gain access to men, with a "gentle charm," so as to appear both feminine and non-threatening.<sup>73</sup> Finally, in order to supplement her husband's career financially, she should ideally come from a wealthy family as well. After meeting such a wife in 1905, Secretary of War William Howard Taft

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<sup>70</sup> DeHegermann-Lindencrone, *The Sunny Side of Diplomatic Life*, ix. Hughes, *Wives of Public Men*, 38.

<sup>71</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, xxvii.

<sup>72</sup> Allgor, "'A Republican in a Monarchy'" 26.

<sup>73</sup> Wood, "'Commanding Beauty' and 'Gentle Charm'" forthcoming.

remarked to his fellow service officers, “that none of us statesmen were proof against a pretty woman.”<sup>74</sup>

In an effort to enhance her “commanding beauty,” a woman’s dress symbolized her standing in the diplomatic community as well as her husband’s. Women had to keep a number of factors in mind: following the fashion, dressing for the occasion, being careful not to outshine the hostess, but making every effort to appear both beautiful and benevolent. As many diplomatic events involved appearances at the royal court, “the seemingly frivolous issue of dress comprised a consequential element of strategy.”<sup>75</sup> For many diplomats’ wives, proper dress, in addition to entertaining, stretched an already tight budget even further. Louisa Adams, concerned that Russia’s empress mother had already seen her ball gown, declined an invitation to her birthday ball, recalling that the empress mother had remarked disdainfully on a woman who had worn the same gown to various functions several times. Not having another gown to wear, Louisa took tea instead at the home of a friend. When the empress mother found out, she warned Louisa that she should not refuse any upcoming invitations in the future, lest she be “omited [sic] on future occasions.”<sup>76</sup> Not having the best or enough gowns could hinder a woman’s ability to socialize—and thus hamper her husband’s career.

Only etiquette, described by *The Alphabet of a Diplomat* as “The Ten Commandments,” surpassed the importance of dress.<sup>77</sup> Presentation at court, an event imbued with rules of etiquette, served as a passport for a diplomat and his wife to the social world at whatever post they currently held. Diplomatic society considered the attendance of

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<sup>74</sup> Wood, “‘Commanding Beauty’ and ‘Gentle Charm’” forthcoming.

<sup>75</sup> Allgor, “‘A Republican in a Monarchy’” 36.

<sup>76</sup> Allgor, “‘A Republican in a Monarchy’” 36.

<sup>77</sup> Allgor, “‘A Republican in a Monarchy’” 26; DeHegermann-Lindencrone, *The Sunny Side of Diplomatic Life*, ix.

any diplomat or diplomat's wife at a formal public engagement *prior* to their presentation at the royal court a serious breach of protocol, particularly at the all-important post of London. Thus, the correct dress, behavior, use of titles, and proper curtsy held great symbolism. Presentation at court marked the climax of the public life for a diplomat's wife. Described by one diplomat's wife, the event had become an ordeal filled with anxiety: "My presentation is thought of such consequence . . . How I dress, how I behave, how I curtsy, so commented upon, so discussed, that I feel as if I was going to be hung."<sup>78</sup> Any violation of centuries of customs could mean the end of a woman's ability to interact with society and her facility to function as a diplomatic wife.

Diplomats' wives from around the world felt this intense pressure to live up to such high expectations. While her husband served as the British ambassador to Vienna, Virginia Crowe described the stress in this way: "You are the person who is seen to be 'Mrs Britain', so you are always on show."<sup>79</sup> Never for a moment could a wife let her guard down. The rules of etiquette permeated a wife's every decision, conversation, and movement. While her husband worked as a diplomat to Australia, American wife Anne Clark humorously described her anxiety at being "the only people here who are not career diplomats. I find myself overwhelmed by the conventions, like who goes first—even to the bathroom."<sup>80</sup>

One especially stressful element of traditional diplomatic etiquette involved the practice of "calling cards," a process typically carried out by the wives. Having cards printed before leaving for a post was unofficially recommended to the wives as the State Department did not reimburse such an expense despite the suggested practice of calling cards.

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<sup>78</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 133, 142.

<sup>79</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 114.

<sup>80</sup> Anne Clark, *Australian Adventure: Letters from an Ambassador's Wife* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 18.

Furthermore, the State Department advised wives to have their cards printed in script instead of block letters, as the government required the diplomat's cards to be printed in script, "and it will look very much better if your cards match your husbands."<sup>81</sup> "Calling" required knowledge of many unwritten rules. As Katie Hickman says,

it was not considered correct to leave cards when a hostess was found at home; when a married woman called upon another married woman but found her out [not at home], she always left three cards: one of her own (for the wife), and two of her husband's (one for both the husband and the wife). If the hostess was either unmarried or widowed, only one of her husband's cards would be left. A bachelor, or a married man calling without his wife on a married couple would leave two of his cards. However, a lady never left her card for a man, and a married man never left his wife's card.<sup>82</sup>

If the caller wished to send a specific message, s/he would write in pencil on the bottom-right hand corner. Using French, the language of diplomacy, typical messages included

p.p.	<i>pour presenter</i>	to introduce (often used by a head of mission when enclosing the card of a member of his staff)
p.r.	<i>pour remercier</i>	to thank
p.f.f.n.	<i>pour féliciter fête nationale</i>	to congratulate you on your National Day
p.f.n.a.	<i>pour féliciter nouvel an</i>	to congratulate you on the New Year
p.c.	<i>pour condoléances</i>	to send condolences
p.p.c.	<i>pour prendre congé</i>	to take leave (usually sent when leaving the posting) <sup>83</sup>

Receiving cards also followed rules of etiquette. If a caller delivered a card personally, the receiver turned down the top left-hand corner. Protocol required that those who received cards reciprocate the gesture within twenty-four hours.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Fyfe Boyce, *The Diplomat's Wife* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1956), 33.

<sup>82</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 181.

<sup>83</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 181.

Diplomat's wives often found themselves consumed with the practice of "calling." In the late nineteenth century, a strict system dictated the process of such visits.

On their afternoons "at home" most ladies received visits between three and five o'clock. Monday was the day allocated for the wives of justices of the Supreme Court, and the wives of army generals and navy admirals. Tuesday was the day allocated for prominent families, especially senators' wives, living in the West End. Wednesday was the day for cabinet wives and the wife of the Speaker of the House. Thursday was the day reserved for diplomatic calls, while Friday and Saturday were 'a mixed bag' of all the rest, "sometimes announced by the newspaper and sometimes by invitation."<sup>84</sup>

As the wife of British diplomat Harold Nicolson, Victoria Sackville estimated she made roughly three hundred calls during the winter season, from New Year's Day until Lent, which averaged to five or more calls a day excluding Sundays.<sup>85</sup>

Why does etiquette surrounding "calling cards" matter to a history of diplomacy and women? First, because women carried out this process, which frequently involved calling on strategic contacts necessary for diplomatic business to progress. As defined by *The Alphabet of a Diplomat*, such visits served as "the most important duty of a diplomat (and his wife)."<sup>86</sup> Second, the etiquette of the procedure matters because it acted as a bar that separated those women who aspired to marry diplomats from the women whose wealth (and in the case of Great Britain, aristocracy) and upbringing had made them familiar observers and participants in such sophisticated social procedures from birth. Wealth provided the means by which to enter the tight-knit world of diplomacy; conduct concerning calling cards, court dress, and complex dinner rituals identified those women suitable for service as diplomatic wives.

Following World War I, and especially after World War II, the incredible growth of diplomatic service demanded that the Foreign Service allow men (and by default, women)

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<sup>84</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 180.

<sup>85</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 180.

<sup>86</sup> DeHegermann-Lindencrone, *The Sunny Side of Diplomatic Life*, ix.

outside elite social and political circles to join their ranks. This meant that husbands often required political, diplomatic, and often language training while, until the 1930s, wives had to fend for themselves. Formal books and pamphlets did not appear for either American or British wives until after World War II. In 1946, Marcus Cheke's book for the wives of British diplomats explained various rules of etiquette to middle-class women now charged with the duty of developing "those social relationships which it is their [duty] to cultivate."<sup>87</sup> In many cases, these non-aristocratic women did not "know a fish knife from a finger bowl."<sup>88</sup>

In 1956, a book written by Richard Fyfe Boyce, a former American diplomat, discussed issues of interest to the wives of diplomats. Chapters included "Your New Career," "Be a Representative American," "Social Gradations Abroad," and "Our British Cousins."<sup>89</sup> Though many middle-class American women could have benefited from such insight and advice, the State Department did not officially distribute such a book until 1961. The tome advised women on being a good housekeeper, gracious hostess, and active in the community. Although these duties did not receive a stipend and rarely received acknowledgment, diplomatic wives remained "subject to favorable (or unfavorable) mentions on their husbands' performance evaluations."<sup>90</sup>

Perhaps the reason that the informal side of diplomacy in general, and wives in particular, has received so little coverage by historians is that their efforts at entertaining and so on are exceedingly difficult to quantify.<sup>91</sup> But such an investigation can challenge scholars' assumptions about diplomacy, women, and marriage overall. Utilizing this

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<sup>87</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 63-64.

<sup>88</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 63.

<sup>89</sup> Boyce, *The Diplomat's Wife*, 1956.

<sup>90</sup> Steigman, *The Foreign Service of the United States*, 201.

<sup>91</sup> Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia*, 184.

perspective, the line separating public and private spheres suddenly appears hazy at best, as Linda Kerber and other historians have argued such boundaries limited the understanding of women in history.<sup>92</sup> Under this microscope, the personal becomes political, thus infusing a host of relationships once viewed as “private or merely social . . . with power, usually unequal power backed up by public authority.”<sup>93</sup>

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Based on the connections established between diplomatic and women’s history, this discussion now turns to an examination of the overall trend of transatlantic marriages and four specific women involved in such unions. These women had all of the necessary tools needed to succeed both as diplomats and as diplomatic wives in this period: elite background, extreme wealth, social connections, superb beauty, exquisite etiquette, knowledge of a foreign language. Based on the demands and duties placed on diplomats and their wives over the past two centuries, historians can clearly view Anglo-American marriages as both politically charged and diplomatically significant unions. Utilizing a biographical approach, this method “gives historians a tool by which to challenge some of the common assumptions about women’s behavior, motivations, and activities . . . .”<sup>94</sup> Representing their country of birth to their new nation by marriage, these women walked the fine line between their American and British loyalties. Like so many diplomats and wives before them, they lived their lives under an international spotlight. People on both sides of

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<sup>92</sup> Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 9-39; Molly Marie Wood, "A Diplomat's Wife in Mexico: Creating Professional, Political and National Identities in the Early Twentieth Century," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 25, no. 3 (Winter 2005), 106; Molly Marie Wood, "An American Diplomat's Wife in Mexico: Gender, Politics, and Foreign Affairs Activism, 1907-1927," (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 1998), 15.

<sup>93</sup> Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, 195.

<sup>94</sup> Wood, "An American Diplomat's Wife in Mexico," 15.

the Atlantic monitored their every action, association and friendship. For better or for worse, scholars can see their lives as informal ambassadors as part of the larger picture of Anglo-American history.

## Chapter Three

### Courting Transatlantic Marriages

“Before the century is out, these clever and pretty women from New York will pull the strings in half the chanceries in Europe.”

—British Prime Minister  
Lord Palmerston<sup>1</sup>

Historians, when selecting an area of research, typically investigate a specific topic and assemble as much evidence as possible pertaining to the subject. Once they have exhausted the sources of research, they like to make broad conclusions based on the material they have studied. Britons and Americans mimicked these same steps in assessing transatlantic marriages during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and made broad assumptions about the populace on the other side of the Atlantic. Based on the behavior and their interactions with American women who had married British aristocrats, Britons came to a number of conclusions about Americans in general. Likewise, Americans believed they understood all British people based on the occasional visits by British lords and dukes to the United States. Thus, transatlantic marriages provide a valuable lens through which historians can analyze stereotypes, ideas, and conceptions held by Anglo-Americans during this period. The high-profile marriages uniting British men and American women had many repercussions for relations between the United States and Great Britain. Whether these marriages proved successful or unsuccessful, whether these women represented the United States and American women in a positive or negative light, such unions held serious influence for Anglo-American relations through the individual and collective efforts of its participants.

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<sup>1</sup> Gail MacColl and Carol McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1989), 2

Although many people and numerous books would have readers believe that Anglo-American marriages simply sprang up overnight and later died out as quickly as the trend began, such is not the case. A number of factors, within the United States and Great Britain, occurred during the mid to late nineteenth century that allowed an Anglo-American marital market to flourish. Many Britons viewed these unions as nothing more than socially hungry “Dollar Princesses,” and their mothers, pursuing British titles and social acceptance at any cost. From an American perspective, bankrupt dukes stole American girls away from their democratic republic to restore financially British estates and castles with no concern for tender feminine hearts. In either case, love played a limited role. Arriving in New York for her son’s wedding to May Goelet, the Dowager Duchess of Roxburghe explained: “Why, money isn’t everything to an Englishman. There are other considerations when he marries, for instance, fondness for the girl.”<sup>2</sup> Such extreme perspectives exaggerate the motivations of the participating parties. Certainly, economic incentives existed for both British and American persons involved in these marriages, but to reduce the complexities of Anglo-American marriages down to mere dollar (or pound) signs overlooks the many layers of historical dynamics at work through these unions.

Rather than analyzing Anglo-American marriages from strictly a British or American viewpoint, readers should reconsider transatlantic marriages as the interaction of several countries—including France—although Great Britain and the United States remain the central players. Scholars of American history have long resisted placing the United States in a multinational context and viewing the United States as one nation among many. As Jessica Gienow-Hecht has suggested, “the history of American culture—including high culture—must be resituated in the context of diplomatic history, transatlantic exchange, and

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<sup>2</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 332.

international relations.”<sup>3</sup> This shift in historical viewpoint creates a major problem for scholars of American social history, specifically those studying the nineteenth century. As the United States searched for its own unique culture and social identity during this period, many affluent Americans often found themselves torn between Anglophobic and Anglophilic views of European “high culture.” Although proud of their democratic country, many wealthy Americans often found it difficult to avoid replicating a European, or even British, cultural identity on American soil in expressing an appreciation for art, music, architecture, fashion, and etiquette. Consequently, the cultural interactions, and sometimes collisions, of the United States and Great Britain played a central role in Anglo-American marriages.

#### ECONOMIC MOTIVATIONS FOR ANGLO-AMERICAN MARRIAGES

While culture functioned as a means both to divide and unite British aristocrats and American heiresses in their marriages’, economics served as the principal factor in courting transatlantic marriages. Significant changes in the economies of the United States and Great Britain allowed for the economic incentives previously mentioned. By the mid-nineteenth century, Great Britain entered a period of acute economic decline, which had serious implications not only for the landed elite and aristocratic classes but also for the political leadership of the country. This relative collapse of the British economy coincided with a substantial expansion of the economy of the United States.<sup>4</sup> As a result of these changes,

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<sup>3</sup> Jessica Gienow-Hecht, “The Forgotten Victorians or Why Historians Hate American 19<sup>th</sup> Century Culture.” Paper presented at the German Association for American Studies annual meeting, Wittenberg, Germany, April 5, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 46.

both Great Britain and the United States looked to one another in the wake of a slow but steady changing of the economic guard on the world stage.

By 1860, two major developments acted as catalysts in changing the economy of the United States. First, the growth of an industrial economy quickly replaced the agrarian economy of the country. Second, the American Civil War, as Walter LaFeber asserts, “marked the transference of power from planters to industrialists and financiers. . . .”<sup>5</sup> Four years of warfare on American soil allowed the relocation of political leadership and economic power from the South to the North, specifically to New York. A corresponding shift occurred in the American Congress. With the secession of thirteen Southern states, many congressmen opposed to the governmental aid of corporate business no longer prevented Republican centralization from replacing Jacksonian Democracy.<sup>6</sup>

The era of a close alliance between big business and government assistance began in earnest after the Civil War. In 1860, the United States had only 30,000 miles of railroad. By 1913, more than 259,000 miles of railroads connected people and markets across the country. In 1866, Standard Oil produced 1 million barrels of oil, but in the succeeding three decades increased their production twenty fold. The production of U.S. steel jumped from 1.1 million tons in 1880 to 4.3 million in one decade. Textile exports to China rose 120 percent between 1887 and 1897.<sup>7</sup> The gross national product tripled between 1865 and 1898. Even the South participated in such economic growth. Between 1870 and 1891, cotton production in the South doubled from 4.3 million to 9 million bales. In its first six months of production in 1871, one Birmingham, Alabama, plant produced more than 300,000 tons of steel. In the two

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<sup>5</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913*, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, Volume II (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4.

<sup>7</sup> LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity*, 4, 23, 24, 31, 37.

decades preceding the twentieth century, the population of the United States more than doubled, and the available labor force mirrored this growth. As a result, most company profits averaged more than 20 percent. During this same period, American imports decreased from 14 percent, in 1869, to 5.9 percent, in 1909. For all of these reasons, American exports began consistently exceeding imports by the end of the nineteenth century. Between 1860 and 1897, exports tripled to over one billion dollars, thus ending three hundred years of an American trade deficit. More importantly, agricultural goods comprised only two-thirds of all exports by 1900, down from nearly 85 percent in 1880. On the eve of the First World War, the United States accounted for one-third of the world's industrial production. Not only had the United States made the transition from an agrarian society to an urban, industrial country, it had also replaced Great Britain as the "workshop of the world."<sup>8</sup>

While technology, electricity, and a large work force all played key roles in the Second Industrial Revolution (1871-1914), the critical factor in American economic expansion in this period depended on foreign investment. Between 1865 and 1914, private investment in American entrepreneurship exploded to reach between 18 and 20 percent, doubling the amount in the 1850s. In the 1880s, foreign investment in the United States totaled more than \$3 billions, with British investment alone totaling \$1.5 billion.<sup>9</sup> In 1895, a State Department official concluded that based on "business reasons' alone, we ought to cultivate friendly relations with Great Britain."<sup>10</sup> The irony of this investment ensues from

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<sup>8</sup> David M. Pletcher, "1861-1898: Economic Growth and Diplomatic Adjustment," in *Economics and World Power: An Assessment of American Diplomacy Since 1789* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 120; LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity*, 23, 26; William H. Becker, "1899-1920: America Adjusts to World Power," in *Economics and World Power: An Assessment of American Diplomacy Since 1789*, ed., William H. Becker and Samuel F. Wells, Jr. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 175, 178.

<sup>9</sup> LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> LaFeber, *The New Empire*, 314.

the fact that many of the American men who made millions of dollars, largely based on British investment, later turned to British social circles when looking for suitable men for their daughters to marry. The British claim that Americans were buying their way into the British aristocracy originated with the investment of British pounds producing American dollars and consequently the “Dollar Princesses.”

Such an incredible explosion for the economy of the United States resulted in great personal wealth for a number of individual Americans. By 1865, Philip Armour benefited from an annual income of \$2 million from meat-processing. Other major businessmen included Andrew Carnegie, Cyrus McCormick, J. P. Morgan, and E. H. Harriman, all “architects of the Second Industrial Revolution.”<sup>11</sup> In the 1840s, fewer than twenty Americans held a net worth of \$1 million; by the 1860s, several hundred people could lay claim to millionaire status, and several had already reached multi-millionaire status.<sup>12</sup> So many individuals had earned such incredible fortunes during the Gilded Age that the title of millionaire did not hold the same impressive status in 1890 that it had in 1860. Commenting on the increase in American millionaires, society leader Ward McAllister proclaimed in the 1870s that “a fortune of only a million is respectable poverty.”<sup>13</sup>

As a growing number of men became “captains of industry,” a large amount of their income made its way to Great Britain through transatlantic marriages and dowry contracts. For centuries, fathers had provided their daughters with dowries, large and small, as compensation to their betrothed for the financial burden of a wife. Depending on the socioeconomic class and status of the family, and especially the father, dowries varied

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<sup>11</sup> LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity*, 21.

<sup>12</sup> LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity*, 1, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Vanderbilt II, *Fortune's Children: The Fall of the House of Vanderbilt* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), 94.

greatly in assets and wealth. In the case of Anglo-American marriages, such dowries were generally quite significant, hence the stereotype of bankrupt British dukes pursuing American heiresses based on their fathers' wealth. These "fortune-hunters viewed daughters and granddaughters of robbers barons, not unlike the way great capitalists looked upon their own enterprises," as Frederic Copel Jaher argues, "as investment of time, energy and skill that would, if properly handled, yield maximum profits."<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, Gustavus Myers estimated in 1909 approximately five hundred American women had married titled foreigners. According to his calculations, the dowries attached to these transatlantic marriages resulted in a net loss of an estimated \$220,000,000 to the United States economy.<sup>15</sup> The comprehensive effect of more than five hundred Anglo-American marriages on the United States economy remains debatable.

For all the fortunes exiting the United States during this period, Great Britain did not enjoy a concomitant upsurge. On the contrary, the economy of Great Britain entered a period of significant decline, a development related to economic instability across Europe and the increasing industrial power of the United States. Until the 1870s, landownership in Britain equated to political, economic, and social power. As David Cannadine explains, "Land was wealth . . . [L]and was status . . . [A]nd land was power: over the locality, the country, and the nation."<sup>16</sup> Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, land value continued to increase consistently as the quantity of landowners increased slightly.<sup>17</sup> The "great depression" in

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<sup>14</sup> Frederick Copel Jaher, "The Gilded Elite: American Multimillionaires, 1865 to the Present," in *Wealth and the Wealthy in the Modern World*, W. D. Rubinstein (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 200.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Josephson, *The Robber Barons: The Great American Capitalists, 1861-1901* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1934), 340; Gustavus Myers, *History of the Great American Fortunes*, Volume I (Chicago: Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1909), 274.

<sup>16</sup> David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 16.

<sup>17</sup> Walter L. Arnstein, ed., "The Survival of the Victorian Aristocracy," in *The Rich, the Wellborn and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 228.

Great Britain between 1873 and 1896 marked a drastic change in the incomes of aristocratic landowners across the country. General deflation resulted in a dramatic decrease in agricultural production and the overall value of land.<sup>18</sup> As an example, the annual revenue from the Duke of Manchester's estates plummeted from £95,000 to a deficit of £2,000.<sup>19</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century, agriculture accounted for approximately one-third of the national income of Britain. Over the next century, while agricultural production increased in absolute terms, it decreased on a proportional level. By 1900, only 10 percent of the national economy derived from agriculture.<sup>20</sup>

Part of this downturn stemmed from an increase in American competition and the production of competitively priced food stuffs, but it also came from the "massive influx of cheap foreign goods from North and South American" combined with the growing significance of the "highly concentrated industrial economy."<sup>21</sup> As a result, wheat prices in England decreased by 50 percent between 1870 and 1895 while the total acreage of grain production dwindled by two-thirds in the same period. As agricultural prices plummeted, peasants revolted not only in Britain but in continental Europe as well. Rent rolls, the fees paid by tenants to farm land owned by aristocrats, plunged by an astounding 30 to 50 percent.<sup>22</sup> Landownership no longer functioned as the safest or most secure means of wealth; thus, the fundamental source of aristocratic political power no longer existed.<sup>23</sup> As Charles George Milnes Gaskell surmised, "economically and politically, the patricians were no longer

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<sup>18</sup> Arnstein, "The Survival of the Victorian Aristocracy," 228.

<sup>19</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 125.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Napier, "The British Aristocracy, Capital and Income, and Nineteenth-Century Company Accounting," University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton, United Kingdom. <http://les.man.ac.uk/ipa97/papers/napier75.html>. Accessed 29 May 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, 26.

<sup>22</sup> Arnstein, "The Survival of the Victorian Aristocracy," 228.

<sup>23</sup> Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, 27.

the lords of the earth.”<sup>24</sup> Some aristocrats found their financial situation so unstable that many began selling their property or renting out their estates.<sup>25</sup> For many British aristocrats, their most valuable asset they had to sell was their title. And more than a few Americans in this period were interested in purchasing such an asset.

The downturn in the British economy resulted in radical changes in personal wealth and political control of the country. Of the British millionaires who died between 1858 and 1879, four-fifths of them had been landowners. Among the same class, between 1880 and 1899, only a third of the deceased owned land, and the number continued to drop after 1900. Before 1895, aristocrats held the majority of British cabinet positions, but after 1895, aristocrats rarely served as cabinet officials.<sup>26</sup> Fearing that the British aristocracy might die out, the British Parliament created a number of new peerages. Between 1901 and 1920, a total of 159 peerages were created in Britain. Yet a new type of peer emerged. Of the new peerages, businessmen accounted for sixty-six of these. Roughly half described themselves as industrialists, and thirty-four worked as professionals (mostly lawyers), while only twenty-two peerages went to men of landed background.<sup>27</sup> Before 1885, only 10 percent of the peerage had connections to commerce and industry, whereas after 1885 that number increased threefold.<sup>28</sup> Even the profile of the typical British peer had changed.

These radical changes in the British peerage and landed gentry meant that the profile of British political leadership underwent an equally thorough transformation as well.

Although political families, family connections, and a powerful family name still helped

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<sup>24</sup> Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, 90.

<sup>25</sup> Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, 26-27.

<sup>26</sup> Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*, 171.

<sup>27</sup> Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, 171.

<sup>28</sup> R. E. Pumphrey, “The Introduction of Industrialists into the British Peerage: A Study in the Adaptation of a Social Institution,” *American Historical Review* 65, no. 1 (October 1959), 8.

individual peers to enter local and national politics, new faces and new backgrounds entered the House of Commons for the first time in British history.<sup>29</sup> Such changes allowed people like Joseph Chamberlain, a manufacturer and mayor of Birmingham, to enter the House of Commons as a Liberal statesman. Although his entry into once closed circles marked a significant turning point in British politics, Chamberlain's commoner standing often prevented his full immersion into elite aristocratic circles. Commenting on Chamberlain's demeanor to Lady Elcho, Arthur Balfour remarked, "Joe, though we all love him dearly, somehow does not absolutely or completely mix, does not form a chemical combination with us."<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, Chamberlain's presence opened the doors for other non-aristocratic faces to penetrate the halls of Parliament and set the stage for one significant American woman who entered British politics as a result of her transatlantic marriage.

#### AMERICAN AND BRITISH SOCIETIES CONVERGE

The incredible growth in American industry and the economy overall resulted in fresh faces and names appearing as members of a new generation of American wealth as the city of New York became the home of new money.<sup>31</sup> These *nouveaux riche* families—the Vanderbilts serve as a prime example—in the United States held the wealth to earn elite status on an economic level but not on a social level as “old money” families—the Astors, the DuPonts, the Rothschilds—resisted the intrusion into their tight-knit circle. The biggest difference between old money families and the *nouveaux riche* was the fact that people like

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<sup>29</sup> W. L. Guttsman, “The Changing Social Structure of the British Political Elite, 1886-1915,” *British Journal of Sociology*, 2, (1951), 132.

<sup>30</sup> Arnstein, “The Survival of the Victorian Aristocracy,” 228.

<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Eliot, *Heiresses and Coronet: The Story of Lovely Ladies and Noble Men* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959), 27. Eliot also published her book in Britain as *They All Married Well* (London: Cassel, 1960).

the Vanderbilts had worked for their fortunes. Old money families enjoyed their position as members of the leisure class as their wealth stemmed from real estate or some other means of revenue that did not require their daily labors in order to retain a stable income. Thus, the old money families resented the apparent assumption of newly rich Americans that such fortunes automatically bought their way into the established social circles of Boston, Charleston, Philadelphia,—and especially New York City. The upper classes of these cities functioned on a regional level while the elite social circles of New York City dictated the standards of houses, wealth, and entertainment for all socially affluent Americans. Succinctly stated, “what happened in New York mattered.”<sup>32</sup>

The flood of new American fortunes tested the exclusivity of society as it existed in New York City under the leadership of two individuals, Ward McAllister and Caroline Astor, better known as *the* Mrs. Astor. Originally from Savannah, Georgia, McAllister worked as an attorney in California before traveling widely across Europe. Upon his return to the United States, he married a wealthy American woman named Sarah Gibbons. Combining his social connections with his wife’s fortune, he became a member of New York society. Caroline Schmerhorn married William Backhouse Astor, Jr., in 1853, although she went by Mrs. Astor throughout her life. Together McAllister and “Mrs. Astor” set out to draw a clear line around the old money and socially acceptable members of New York City in an effort to differentiate themselves from the *nouveaux riche*. Establishing an elite association they called “The Four Hundred,” allegedly based on the number of people who could fit into Mrs.

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<sup>32</sup> Eric Homberger, *Mrs. Astor’s New York: Money and Power in a Gilded Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 1. See also Mayo Williamson Hazeltine, “Studies of New York Society,” *The Nineteenth Century* 31 (1892), 762-777; Virginia Tatnall Peacock, *Famous American Belles of the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1901), Chapter 20; Elizabeth Duer, “New York Society a Generation Ago,” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* 105 (1902), 109-114; Ferdinand Lundberg, *America’s 60 Families* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1946).

Astor's ballroom, McAllister and Mrs. Astor identified those New Yorkers considered socially fit to represent an American aristocracy.<sup>33</sup> "[T]here are only about four hundred people in fashionable New York society. If you go outside that number," McAllister reasoned, "you strike people who are either not at ease in a ballroom or else make other people not at ease."<sup>34</sup> The "Four Hundred" attended fashionable dinners and exclusive balls that the *nouveaux riche* could only hope to attend one day. "The first object to be aimed at is to make your dinners so charming and agreeable that invitations to them are eagerly sought for," McAllister once explained, "and to let all feel that it is a great privilege to dine at your house, where they are sure there will be only those whom they wish to meet."<sup>35</sup> Thus, society functioned on lines of acceptance, connections, and exclusivity. For the newly rich Americans, their *nouveaux riche* label kept them on the outside of the highest social circles. While families such as the Vanderbilts had the money to earn an elite categorization based strictly on economics, "old money" families such as the Astors resisted any newcomers into their "New York 400" club out of fear that additional members would diminish their elite social status.<sup>36</sup>

While entry into elite social circles clearly relied on the fortunes of established families, a division separated the prescribed duties of men and women within society. While men attended to the business decisions regarding their wealth and income, women handled the day-to-day dealings of maintaining their social standing with other socially affluent

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<sup>33</sup> Homberger, *Mrs. Astor's New York*, 4.

<sup>34</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry An English Lord*, 14.

<sup>35</sup> Ward McAllister, *Society As I Have Found It* (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890), 255.

<sup>36</sup> Another identifier of elite American society was the *Social Register*, a publication that printed the family names, addresses, birth, marriage, and death announcements of this "American aristocracy." This newsletter served as public recognition of those deemed worthy of social notoriety. Before 1914, the cities covered by the *Social Register* included Atlanta, Augusta, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Charleston, Chicago, Minneapolis, New York, "North Carolina," Oakland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Providence, Richmond, San Francisco, Savannah, St. Louis, St. Paul, and Washington. "Social Register," <http://www.socialregisteronline.com>. [Accessed May, 29, 2006.]

women. The planning of lengthy dinners, the planning of annual balls, and the process of calling cards all relied on the efforts and attention of women.<sup>37</sup> Part of their job as society women involved their playing the role of hostess at these massive functions. Their knowledge of etiquette, notably a European or British definition of protocol, served as a means of evaluation by their societal peers. A woman's performance and the success of various social engagements determined her standing in American society and reflected on her husband's standing in the same group. Notably, this peer evaluation process of society follows closely the method of marriage and assessment in diplomatic service overseas.

Through her activities in society, a woman held an official job both inside and outside the home. During this period in history, a proper woman only appeared in public newspapers three times in her life: the birth announcement, the wedding announcement, and her death announcement. Otherwise, a woman tended all but anonymously to her duties as a wife and mother with the assistance of various servants and nannies. But through her role in society, a woman could exert a tremendous amount of influence under the guise of maintaining her husband's good name and family's social standing. Years after Alva Vanderbilt had fought her way into New York society, she reflected, "I know of no profession, art or trade, that women are working at today . . . as taxing on mental resources as being a leader of society."<sup>38</sup> Recognizing the necessary role of women in society, the "Four Hundred" identified single women as individual members of society. Of the couples and people listed as members of the "Four Hundred," over sixty women names appeared independently. While this inclusion may not appear as significant at first glance, the identification of women as individual

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<sup>37</sup> For details regarding calling cards, see Chapter Two.

<sup>38</sup> Vanderbilt, *Fortune's Children*, 120.

members of society recognized their pseudo-occupation within the demanding and complicated world of society.<sup>39</sup>

One behavior practiced by all members of the American social elite, old money and new, was the custom of conspicuous consumption. Building massive houses in fashionable neighborhoods in New York and immense estates in Newport, Rhode Island, the new summer vacationing location for elite Americans, served as one method that allowed wealthy persons to present their affluence for public screening. To work their way into elite circles, many *nouveaux riche* families purchased expensive paintings and sculptures, not simply to decorate their elaborate homes, but also to demonstrate that they appreciated fine art and understood the value of such objects as did the old money families of New York. Many *nouveaux riche* persons also attended the theater and operas typically patronized by old money families to at least act as though they frequented the same places. Several *nouveaux riche* families also spent their summers in Newport to locate themselves in proximity to those members of the “Four Hundred.” As Ward McAllister once explained, “If you want to be fashionable, be always in the company of fashionable people.”<sup>40</sup> The practices of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure offered *nouveaux riche* families some hope that they could eventually feign or buy their way into the tight-knit circles of New York City.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to Newport, wealthy Americans visited other leisure destinations during this period. An increasing number of elite and aspiring elite from the United States traveled

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<sup>39</sup> Dixon Wecter, *The Saga of American Society: A Record of Social Aspiration 1607-1937* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1937), 216-23. See also Richard Conniff, *The Natural History of the Rich: A Field Guide* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002); Joseph Epstein, *Snobbery: The American Version* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> McAllister, *Society as I Have Found It*, 245.

<sup>41</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: The Modern Library, Inc., 1934), 35-67, 68-101.

throughout Europe, and especially Great Britain, during this period. Not only did the social circles of Europe offer some level of social currency when one returned to United States, but the advent of accessible transportation to Europe made such journeys safe and feasible. Beginning in the 1870s, consistent annual improvements in steamship service allowed a steadily increasing number of Americans to visit Europe for pleasure and to test their abilities to navigate the socially complex world of elite European circles. Vessels typically used to ship industrial products, such as the Cunard Line, expanded their passenger capacity in this period due to the increasing demand by Americans to travel abroad. Other companies—such as the English White Star Line, the French Line, the Hamburg American Line, and the Holland American Line—followed suit, thereby providing Americans with several choices in transatlantic travel. Competition between the companies decreased the prices significantly in the final decades of the nineteenth century. In 1860, the price of a first-class passage between the United States and Great Britain was roughly £17 (\$76.50) but had dropped to £9 in 1883, a little over \$40. Prices rose slightly in the 1890s, but one could still purchase a round-trip ticket for around \$63—the same price as a bicycle in the same period. For those interested in traveling as a steerage passenger, the price was generally one-half of the first-class ticket. For everyone, the trip lasted a short ten days.<sup>42</sup> According to the Hon. Maud Paucefote, “year by year America creeps nearer and nearer to England by means of the accelerated speed of steamers . . .”<sup>43</sup>

Such advancements in transatlantic travel allowed socially ambitious Americans shunned by Mrs. Astor and the “New York 400” to try their hand in European social circles.

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<sup>42</sup> Mark and Whitney Rennella, “Planned Serendipity: American Travelers and the Transatlantic Voyage in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Journal of Social History* 38 (2004), 367-68. See also Christopher Mulvey, *Transatlantic Manners: Social Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Travel Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>43</sup> Hon. Maud Paucefote, “Washington DC,” *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 53 (1903), 175.

Not only did a voyage to England provide an opportunity to recover from American ostracism, but it also gave the chance to participate in dinners and balls in European cities such as Paris and London. If a family, or more typically mothers and daughters, could gain valuable invitations to parties given in major cities in Europe, such success abroad might result in social acceptance at home. A number of Americans found that while their *nouveau riche* status at home prevented them from entering the social circles in New York, quite the opposite proved true abroad. At first, most Americans spent weeks and even months in Paris, long considered the ultimate city in Europe to enjoy fine food and elaborate parties. But with the onset of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, the European city of American choice shifted away from continental Europe to London.

When Americans began spending their leisure time in London, they found themselves awed by the grand tradition of the London Season. This centuries-old custom lasted ten weeks, corresponding with the schedule of Parliament. Some families began moving from their country estates into the city as early as January, depending on the hunting season, but May 1<sup>st</sup> marked the official beginning of the London Season each year. In the following approximately ten weeks, gentlemen and ladies participated in nearly endless dances, concerts, court balls, dinners, private balls, breakfasts, public parties, and sporting events.

The London Season originated at the turn of the seventeenth century and functioned primarily as a marriage market for the aristocratic families of Great Britain. Brought up separately from girls by nannies and nursemaids, boys received a formal education at boarding schools while girls learned from in-house tutors. Rarely did boys and girls interact with one another until after their presentation at Court. No acceptable young lady could spend even half an hour with a young man absent of supervision without seriously damaging

her reputation, and thus her chances at a successful marriage one day. Proper young *ladies*—to refer to a woman meant that she was experienced sexually—were accompanied by their maids during the day and by chaperones in the evening. The annual Season provided the first opportunity for gentlemen and ladies to mingle under permissible circumstances and evaluate acceptable and available individuals as potential spouses. At its core, the Season provided the time and venue for families to introduce their daughters for marriage through formal entertaining.<sup>44</sup>

A young woman's presentation at the Royal Court marked the first step in formally participating in the London Season. Her presentation to the monarch and to society as well required the acquisition of an impressive wardrobe. One Season typically required an inventory exceeding three hundred items—an investment that could cost more than twenty thousand dollars.<sup>45</sup> A young lady needed approximately fifty gowns (anywhere from \$800-\$2,500 each), several cloaks, fans, jeweled combs and hairnets, in addition to jewels including diamonds and pearls. Beyond her physical appearance, her training for the proper deportment and learning to curtsy often took months. A young lady's presentation required sponsorship by a female relation who had previously survived the same exercise. When presented before the king and queen, all eyes fixed on the young lady for her moment of public evaluation by royalty and by all of London society. This event marked her official entrance into the adult world. In a matter of moments, her presentation symbolized her

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<sup>44</sup> Philippa Pullar, *Gilded Butterflies: The Rise and Fall of the London Season* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), 9, 87, 119, 121, 170.

<sup>45</sup> This figure is equivalent to more than \$500,000 in today's dollars. MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry and English Lord*, 71.

passage from the schoolroom to the ballroom. Needless to say, being presented at court held the potential for great success or a terrible failure.<sup>46</sup>

Generally speaking, a young lady officially entered society via Court presentation at the age of eighteen, while the gentlemen officially participated in the Season after finishing their education at Oxford or Cambridge. On average, bachelors active in the London Season might be older than the ladies by anywhere from four to ten years. For the gentleman and ladies involved, a typical day started with a horseback ride through Hyde Park. Ladies trained from an early age in order to ride gracefully through Rotten Row or the Ladies' Mile, shaking hands with friends, and dismounting with ease, thereby demonstrating not only that her family had a country estate but that she had received ample equestrian lessons throughout her life. Breakfast followed the morning ride, after which women tended to household errands or calling on very close friends, reserving the afternoons for a formal calls on necessary acquaintances. After lunch, men spent the afternoon at Parliament or at a men's club. Ladies used the afternoon to make their calls, never staying more than thirty minutes at one house. Everyone dined together in the evening at six or seven o'clock with an opera or other activity afterwards. At no time did a gentleman leave his lady alone from the beginning to the end of the performance. Balls and dances started at ten p.m. and could last until three in the morning. Balls generally began with a waltz, followed by a quadrille, and then one or two other styles of dances; thus, all participants had to be well-versed in the art of dancing. A mutual acquaintance could introduce a gentleman to a lady for a single dance, but he could not presume to pursue a lady afterward. Servants assisted guests in their

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<sup>46</sup> Pullar, *Gilded Butterflies*, 121, 134. Louis Thomas Stanley, *The London Season* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956), 75. Gentlemen also participated in a presentation ceremony to Court called a Levée, which took place at St. James's Palace, but it was considerable smaller and less stressful than the ladies' presentation at Buckingham Palace. Daniel Pool, *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: From Fox Hunting to Whist—the Facts of Daily Life in 19<sup>th</sup> Century England* (New York: Touchstone, 1993), 71.

respective dressing rooms, and the hostess supplied a full set of toiletries for any emergencies.<sup>47</sup>

Following her presentation at court, a young lady would likely attend some twenty-five breakfasts, thirty dinners, fifty balls, and sixty parties in a single London Season. In addition to these various engagements, each month of the Season included one major event. The Derby, a horserace for the masses, occurred in May or June, with Ascot following as the climax of the Season. The Henley Regatta took place in July along with the cricket contests between rivals such as Eton and Harrow, or Oxford and Cambridge. Parliament adjourned on August 12<sup>th</sup>, coinciding with the beginning of grouse season and a return to the country. The mass exodus from London in mid-August came as suddenly as the influx of wives, carriages, footmen, and servants some months earlier, “because everyone knows: better dead than seen alive in London in August.”<sup>48</sup>

A young lady had two or three seasons to marry. If not married by the end of this time, society considered her a failure. London elites regarded any woman who reached the age of thirty unmarried as a hopeless spinster. But one nearly fool-proof way to enjoy a triumphant Season in London was to catch the eye of the Prince of Wales, Edward VII, better known as Bertie. American women practiced this particular method of social entry in London, as Edward considered American ladies with a special regard. If a young American could strike Edward’s fancy with an especially lovely dress or through a charming conversation, he might ask her to dance. A single dance with the Prince of Wales earned an American lady passage into London society. As a result, she received invitations to the best

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<sup>47</sup> Michelle Jean Hoppe, “The London Season,” <http://literary-liasons.com/article024.html>. [Accessed April 24, 2006.]

<sup>48</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 25. Hoppe, “The London Season,” <http://literary-liasons.com/article024.html>. [Accessed April 24, 2006.]

dances and dinners and met all the best people in London to make the most of her Season. When Edward gave American heiresses his royal seal of approval, they became fashionable in London society.<sup>49</sup>

While Edward would one day become King of England, he did little to prove his seriousness or dedication to the job prior to formally accepting his crown. His parents, Queen Victoria and Albert, had set a royal tone of sobriety, simplicity, and stoicism, and Bertie found his parents' attitude toward the London Season and social life in general boring. The royal couple took their roles as dutiful monarchs so seriously that they found it difficult to delegate any royal duties to their son. Reacting to this air of solemnity, absence of responsibility and a wide availability of wine, women, and song, Edward earned a reputation in Britain as an imperial playboy. He loved to socialize, to dance, to enjoy fine food and the company of beautiful and charming women. When enchanting American ladies began appearing in London after 1870, Edward developed a genuine admiration for them. According to the future king, "American girls are livelier, better educated, and less hampered by etiquette. They are not as squeamish," he explained, "as their English sisters and they are better able to take care of themselves."<sup>50</sup>

Adding to Edward's fun-loving personality was his loyalty to those he took into his circle. Few men of the Bertie's standing remained faithful to friends the way Edward did throughout his life. Once Edward deemed a gentleman or a lady as worthy of his time and affection, they remained close henceforth. While his parents rarely attended such Season affairs such as Ascot, Edward made it a point to regularly attend such events and become

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<sup>49</sup> Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII: A Biography* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927). Helmut E. Gerber, "The Nineties: Beginning, End, or Transition?" in *Edwardians and Late Victorians*, ed., Richard Ellmann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

<sup>50</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry and English Lord*, 82.

acquainted with the members of the aristocracy, House of Commons, House of Lords, and their wives. Edward met a number of American ladies at such engagements and remained on close terms with them throughout his life. Lady Randolph Churchill and Lady Mary Curzon serve as two examples of such steadfastness. On the other hand, Edward maintained a small inner circle of intimate associates, so much so that this tight circle of friends earned the nickname of the “Marlborough House Set,” because they so often spent time at the Prince’s London residence. As a consequence, Edward’s acceptance of American heiresses into his private circle resulted in wide recognition of American heiresses as suitable for the highest political and social circles of London.<sup>51</sup>

#### AMERICAN WOMEN, BRITISH MEN, AND MARITAL EXPECTATIONS

Who were these Grandes Dames who charmed Edward’s heart, stimulated his wit, and gained admission into the most elite and privileged circles in the world—“women that could tell a good story,” and according to Bertie, “were born card players”?<sup>52</sup> American heiresses arrived in Great Britain in three waves. The “Buccaneers” made up the first group of American women who married into the British aristocracy, roughly dating from 1860-1880. Their success in Britain proved that participation in the social elite overseas, and London specifically, could be more easily achieved than penetrating Mrs. Astor’s cold heart in New York. Thus, these women demonstrated that there was “no need to flail again the cliffs of New York indifference or slink home to remain a big fish in a small Midwestern

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<sup>51</sup> See also Anita Leslie, *Edwardians in Love* (New York: Arrow Books, 1974). Susan Tweedsmuir, *The Edwardian Lady* (London: The Camelot Press Ltd., 1966).

<sup>52</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 86. The term “Grand Dames” comes from Richard Kenin, *Return to Albion: Americans in England, 1760-1940* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1979), chapter six.

pond.”<sup>53</sup> Next, between 1880 and 1900, “self-made girls” entered London, succeeding overseas by relying on “their own doings, built by each on her own charms, her own merits, her own unceasing efforts . . . transform[ing] herself from American nobody to English aristocrat. . . .” While her father worked constantly at increasing his fortune, the self-made girl worked constantly at improving her mind, her wardrobe, and her standing in society. As a reflection of her nationality, she believed that “being American . . . anything could be accomplished by an act of will and plenty of effort.”<sup>54</sup> The final phase of American women in Britain, the American aristocrats, began around 1900 and continued until World War I. This type of American woman “would marry a nobleman not on a whim, not because she needed the social boost, but because it was her *right*.”<sup>55</sup> By this point, the United States, behind the leadership of people like Mrs. Astor and Ward McAllister, had created an American version of the British nobility. The daughters of this new generation of American heiresses arrived in England confident in their own identity, culture, wealth, and determined to enter the British aristocracy, not to boost their family status at home, but rather as equals of the men they married.

Regardless of their categorizations, these young heiresses frequently hailed from New York City, or another significant metropolitan area in the Northeast, but many American heiresses who married British aristocrats came from as far away as Florida, Texas, and California. Approximately half of the women who married European titles in this period lived in New York City, illustrating the fact that the financial capital of the United States had found its place on Wall Street. Roughly 10 percent of transatlantic wives came from Boston and Philadelphia, while a small number of these women lived in the South. The significance

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<sup>53</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 64.

<sup>54</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 67.

<sup>55</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 138.

of geography for transatlantic marriages demonstrates basis of wealth in places like Boston and Philadelphia remained secure in its patrician inheritance while the “newly risen rich” found their fortunes in New York City. “Parvenu elites . . . depended on publicity and costly display to elevate themselves,” Frederic Copel Jaher contends, “upon imported or imitated European titles, artifacts and styles to substitute for their own lack of rooted credentials and conventions.”<sup>56</sup> A number of American ladies from Louisiana participated in transatlantic marriages in this period, but they were more likely to marry a man of French nobility instead of English title based on the cultural connection shared between French descendants in Louisiana. Many young ladies from wealthy Louisiana families also spoke French fluently and could easily integrate into elite circles in France with relative ease. While many of the *nouveaux riche* families in New England held an Anglophilic longing for Old England, many leading families in Louisiana held a similar passion for their French colonial heritage.

Many of the American heiresses who married British aristocrats in this period came from *nouveaux riche* families who sought the approval and acceptance of the old money families in the United States. The new generation of American money imitated what they saw as the behavior, leisure, and family traditions of the Rothchilds and the DuPonts. For their daughters, this training meant hiring the very best nannies, tutors, and cultural educators. Almost from the crib, affluent parents shaped, trained, and molded their daughters to represent the family as equivalent, if not surpassing, the daughters of old American money in sophistication. Many newly rich Americans hired German or French tutors so that their daughters could learn a foreign language from a native speaker. These families frequently hired former professors and dons from the best schools in England as private tutors for their daughters’ educations. For their daughters’ cultural training, they hired accomplished

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<sup>56</sup> Jaher, “The Gilded Elite,” 200.

European musicians for private lessons suitable for an aspiring classical pianist. These families spared no expense in providing the very best in education and personal growth for their daughters. But the goal was not to raise daughters to become scientists, professors, or accomplished musicians. Rather, the goal focused on the production of young ladies who could win over the social elite in America and travel to Europe, specifically England, to prove to the United States and the world that American ladies lacked for nothing in becoming all that a woman could be and all for which a husband could hope.

Years of educational, language, and musical training paid off for the cohort of American ladies entering British circles in this period. By 1888, one English periodical asserted, “It is a well-established fact, that there is no more fascinating creature to be found anywhere than a thoroughly well-born and well-bred American lady.”<sup>57</sup> Another journal in 1896 described American women as “the most finished product of the democratic principle . . . .”<sup>58</sup> But for all their preparation and proper upbringing, American women did not become robotic personae of sophistication and culture. Instead, they retained a liveliness in personality and an ability to charm anyone, men and women, with their frankness and candor. “Compared to the European women,” Richard Rapson explains, “the Americans were freer . . . [and were] more self-reliant.”<sup>59</sup> In many ways, American ladies seemed completely different from their British sisters and offered European, and specifically British, men something different and fresh in their presence at dinners, dances, and eventually, marriage. According to financier Chauncey M. Depew, “The American girl comes along, prettier than her English sister, full of dash, and snap and go, and she is a revelation to the

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<sup>57</sup> Emily A. Acland, “A Lady’s American Notes,” *The Nineteenth Century*, 23 (1888), 412.

<sup>58</sup> C. de Thierry, “American Women from a Colonial Point of View,” *Contemporary Review* 70 (1896), 522.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Rapson, *Britons View America: Travel Commentary, 1860-1935* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971), 112.

Englishman.”<sup>60</sup> Comparing American heiresses to English and French women, Rudyard Kipling insisted that, “the girls of America are above and beyond them all. They are clever; they can talk. Yea, it is said that they can think.”<sup>61</sup> While a number of American influences began appearing during this period, with American products and trade expanding at with such speed, journalist William T. Stead responded by writing that “among the influences which are Americanizing the world, the American girl is one of the most conspicuous, and the most charming.”<sup>62</sup>

For all that American ladies had to offer in terms of their impressive intellects and sophisticated social graces, public opinion continued its fixation on the monetary factor in Anglo-American marriages. When the *New York Times* announced the engagement of Miss May Goelet to the Duke of Roxburghe in 1903, the article stressed that “The present fortune of Miss Goelet is estimated at about \$20,000,000.”<sup>63</sup> While newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic hunted for even the most minute details of these young women’s lives—from their shoe sizes to the shape of their noses—Americans and Britons remained obsessed with the amount of money transferred as a result of such union. Clearly, both sides stood to gain from these marriages since they typically functioned as an informal contractual agreement that addressed the needs and desires of both parties: “high status and low income on the one side; high income and low status on the other.”<sup>64</sup> Most often, the fathers of American heiresses hoped that their daughters’ marriage would bring increased connections in England and result in an increase in business. For the mothers of American heiresses, these “pushy mamas”

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<sup>60</sup> Ruth Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses: Sagas of Upward Nobility, 1870-1914* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1980), 47.

<sup>61</sup> Rapson, *Britons View America*, 118.

<sup>62</sup> William T. Stead, *The Americanization of the World, or the Trend of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Horace Markley, 1902), 318.

<sup>63</sup> *New York Times*, September 3, 1903, pg. 7.

<sup>64</sup> Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, 391.

sought increased social standing in the United States.<sup>65</sup> But for an actual woman who married a British aristocrat, some confusion remains as to whether or not she viewed herself as a pawn in complex exchange of money for title or if she considered herself the central figure in deciding whether or not an Anglo-American marriage would take place. From a British perspective, the American woman “is set on getting the best she can for her money, or her father’s money . . . .”<sup>66</sup> In either case, an American heiress would not receive any of her father’s fortune if she did not marry. Thus, her decision to marry resulted in access to wealth. She might as well marry someone with a title, and enjoy the benefits provided to a British Lady, instead of marrying an American man without a title.

Despite the allure of London parties and a British title, American women left their homes, their families, and their country to live in another country by virtue of transatlantic marriages. While New York City received immigrants in this period, many New York heiresses left the United States never to return. Historians often discuss immigration in the sense of Europeans leaving their homes to journey to the United States. In marrying a member of the British aristocracy, American women underwent a process of reverse immigration, which proceeded along two courses: first, the process of cultural assimilation, or outward signs of how the immigrant adapts to the dominant culture with Britain; and, second, the process of cultural identity, or the immigrant’s views of their own fluid and changing ethnicity.<sup>67</sup> In both cases, the failure or success of her cultural transition, and very likely the failure or success of her transatlantic marriage, depended on the experience of the

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<sup>65</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry and English Lord*, 26.

<sup>66</sup> H. B. Marriott-Watson, “The American Woman: An Analysis,” *The Nineteenth Century and After* 56 (1904), 439. See also Charlotte Perkins Stetson, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relations Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1898).

<sup>67</sup> Jenel Virden, *Good-bye, Piccadilly: British War Brides in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 2.

specific American woman in the context of her union. The more successfully she adapted to British high culture, the more the British accepted her—because of or in spite of her American heritage. In many cases, Britons expected these American women to take on a completely new identity. Following her marriage, she was always addressed as “Duchess Grosvenor,” or “Lady Baring.” Formal society in London did not permit the use of first names. If an American woman’s activities appeared in British papers, the articles sometimes referred to her as “Lady Whitaker, formerly Miss Fitzgerald,” highlighting the fact that with her transatlantic marriage, she left behind her family, her country, and her previous identity.

The list of American heiresses who married British titles during this period reads like a “Who’s Who” list in American political circles. Some of the more prominent political marriages included the daughter of President Ulysses S. Grant, the daughter of Grant’s secretary of state, Hamilton Fish, and the daughter of Vice President Theodore Frelinghuysen—all wed into the British aristocracy.<sup>68</sup> Both of the daughters of the United States ambassador to England, John Lothrop Motley, married Britons.<sup>69</sup> Mary Endicott, the daughter of William C. Endicott, who served as President Grover Cleveland’s secretary of war, married Joseph Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary, in 1888. Notably, her engagement to Chamberlain in February of that year was not announced immediately because their engagement fell during a re-election bid by President Cleveland. His administration feared that an engagement announcement of a cabinet minister’s daughter to a

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<sup>68</sup> Ellen Grant, President Grant’s daughter, married Algernon C. F. Sartoris of Rushden and a Member of Parliament, in 1874. Edith Fish, daughter of Hamilton Fish, married Hugh Northcote in 1883. Hamilton Fish served as President Ulysses S. Grant’s secretary of state from 1869 to 1877. Fish was Grant’s longest serving Cabinet member. Theodore Frelinghuysen, secretary of state under President Chester Arthur, served from 1881-1885. His daughter, Alice, married into the baronets in 1885. Frelinghuysen was nominated in 1870 by President Grant as the United States minister to England to succeed John Lothrop Motley but declined the appointment.

<sup>69</sup> Mary married Algernon T. B. Sheridan of Frampton Court in 1871, and Susan married Lt. Col. Herbert St. John-Mildmay in 1884.

British government official might result in Cleveland losing the Irish-American vote in the fall.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, William Whitney, Cleveland's secretary of the navy, supported the marriages of both of his daughters to Britons.<sup>71</sup> Sir Michael Herbert, ambassador to the United States in 1902, married Leila Wilson, the daughter of an American millionaire. After his first American wife's death in 1906, George Nathaniel Curzon, the former Viceroy of India, married Grace Hinds, daughter of J. Monroe Hinds, the United States minister to Brazil.<sup>72</sup>

In 1876, Sir William Harcourt, the leader of the Liberal party, married Elizabeth Motley, daughter of an American historian. Caroline Starr Balestier married the author Rudyard Kipling in 1892. Sir Michael Herbert, ambassador to the United States in 1902, married Leila Wilson, the daughter of yet another American millionaire. This union also made Herbert the brother-in-law of Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt and a close social contact of John Jacob Astor. The comprehensive effect of such a number of prominent Anglo-American marriages was the creation of an elite network of leading families on both sides of the Atlantic. Many Britons felt that "so close has the union between ourselves and the United States become that Americans are hardly looked upon as foreigners at all, so many people having American relatives."<sup>73</sup>

As an American heiress arrived in Great Britain as the wife of a leading British man, her new British countrymen and women constantly scrutinized her behavior, speech, and mannerisms as a reflection of her American nationality. Some American-born, British-wed

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<sup>70</sup> Diana Whitehill Laing, *Mistress of Herself* (Barre, MA: Barre Publishers, 1965), 47.

<sup>71</sup> Pauline Whitney married into the British peerage in 1895 as did her step-sister, Adelaide, in 1906.

<sup>72</sup> Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900* (New York: Wiley, 1974), 203.

<sup>73</sup> Richard W. Davis, "'We Are All Americans Now!' Anglo-American Marriages in the Later Nineteenth Century," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 135, no. 2 (June 1991), 142. According to Ruth Brandon, most noble European families had one or more American women as relatives when World War I started. Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses*, 1.

women considered their national identity as both negotiable and contestable given the circumstances at any given moment by rejecting or affirming their American or British identities in everyday interactions by contesting various cultural practices. Other transatlantic wives felt that their marriages required a complete metamorphosis in becoming a traditional British wife, thus shedding all aspects of her personality that identified her as an American. These women did not consider maintaining both identities simultaneously a possibility, or a wise course of action.<sup>74</sup> In fact many of these Anglo-American wives became highly sensitive and aware of their American identity and nationality only after they had left the United States. American heiresses could never assume to fully assimilate themselves into British culture and circles, always being identified as the American wife of . . . or the American mother of . . . even decades after having left the United States permanently. They would have benefited from the advice given by George I to his sons: “Never forget that you are foreigners . . . and never let them remember it.”<sup>75</sup>

In efforts to integrate themselves as Britons and adapt to their new surroundings, American heiresses became high-profile hostesses in British political and social circles. As part of their duties as wives, specifically as the wife of a British duke, lord, or Member of Parliament, American ladies played an important role while acknowledging their subordinate status. “But in this historical moment, a small group of Anglo-American women . . . learned how to create and manage a domestic environment in which the business of influencing others was the major occupation,” Susan Harris explains, as her “public image was rooted in her domestic, and secondary, relations, suddenly became the woman who could control other

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<sup>74</sup> For more on national identities from a sociological standpoint, see Katharine W. Jones, *Accent on Privilege: English Identities and Anglophilia in the U.S.* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

<sup>75</sup> Gyles Brandreth, *Philip & Elizabeth: Portrait of a Marriage* (London: Arrow Books, 2004), 56.

lives and public values.”<sup>76</sup> Her wealth provided enough time and means that she could devote her days and energy to hosting parties and dinners to entertain leading men and women of the day, thus making her a leading woman as well. A successful host, much like a clever diplomatic wife, made people feel comfortable in her home, spoke with her guests, listened to visitors, acted as a confidante. Not influencing opinions directly but rather creating the situation and atmosphere for conversation and personal exchange of ideas and concerns, the physical space of a hostess’s home functioned as an important element of her power. She influenced those around her by “putting other people in contact with each other and so directed the conversation,” Harris continues. “In this, her power lay not in her direction to any particular individual but rather in her ability to bring people together so that they could enact the agenda that she set.”<sup>77</sup> For the American-born, British-wed women now living permanently in Great Britain, the agenda focused on the amelioration of Anglo-American relations.

In efforts to bring about a close relationship between the United States and Great Britain, many wives acted not only as hostesses but as philanthropic activists, using their volunteer efforts for this cause. Now formally ladies in British aristocratic circles, American women played the role of Lady Bountiful, a woman known for her charity, generosity, and volunteerism. They frequently volunteered in the community in which she lived, but in establishing her own volunteer activities, the cause often focused on Anglo-American relations in some capacity. Through her volunteer efforts, a woman could exercise some

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<sup>76</sup> Susan K. Harris, *The Cultural Work of the Late Nineteenth-Century Hostess: Annie Adams Fields and Mary Gladstone Drew* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), viii.

<sup>77</sup> Harris, *The Cultural Work of the Late Nineteenth-Century Hostess*, 5. For more on women exerting influence through the home as a domestic, and thus non-threatening setting, see Catherine Allgor’s *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000).

degree of power outside the traditionally masculine worlds of government and commerce. In creating a public role for themselves, both individually and collectively, American women placed Anglo-American relations, and the need for the United States and Great Britain to see one another as allies instead of adversaries, at the forefront of public consciousness on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>78</sup>

In becoming the ideal British wife, an American woman needed to have a great deal of wealth, serve as a talented hostess, and use her leisure time for volunteer work—all in an effort to endear herself not only to her husband, but also to his family, and to all Britons. But who were these men who chose to marry outside their country when selecting a wife? Much like their future spouses, aristocratic males in Britain enjoyed a privileged upbringing and the best in educational experiences. These men grew up in fine country homes where they received their primary education through private tutors before obtaining their secondary education at places like Eton, Harrow, Rugby, and Winchester, elite boarding schools largely reserved for the sons of leading British families. These young men generally pursued their college educations at Oxford or Cambridge, the two oldest universities in United Kingdom, thus becoming “Oxbridge Men.” The significance of their educational experiences rests on the fact that from the age of thirteen, elite British men matured personally and intellectually in the absence of their families, individuals outside their socio-economic class, and women. While family could visit them at school on approved weekends and during various events like the annual boat races, these boys became men with the guidance of dons and professors at their schools. This personal and proximal distance from their families resulted in what Americans considered a distant relationship among basically all members of elite British

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<sup>78</sup> Kathleen McCarthy, *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy, and Power* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991), ix, 1.

families. The British government informally charged Oxford and Cambridge with the production of socially and academically acceptable men to perform the duties of the British professional elite. “Part of this education consisted of the formation of an elite *esprit de corps*,” Paul Deslandes maintains, “that encouraged a sense not only of a masculine community but of superiority.”<sup>79</sup> Finally, their formative years occurred in the absence of women, thereby enforcing the “separate sphere” conviction that men and women pursued their various duties and responsibilities in distinctly separate physical spaces—men in the halls of Parliament and women in the halls of their London homes or country estates. Any effort, direct or indirect, on the part of American women to violate this separation of public and private domains met with immediate and harsh rebuke from not only their husbands but from Britons in general. British men saw such behavior as *women* not knowing their place in society while British women viewed this conduct as indicative of an *American* identity.

Once an “Oxbridge Man” completed his education, he embarked on a career as a member of the British professional elite. Predictably, he joined the government as local or national politician, civil servant, colonial bureaucrat, a lawyer, or perhaps he entered the military as an officer. But such an occupation frequently existed in addition to a hereditary title and an annual allowance based on his family’s income from the landed estate. Yet, as previously discussed, British estates produced significantly decreasing agricultural profits for the sons of British aristocracy in this period. By elite British living standards, a bachelor who earned £500 a year had an adequate salary while his peers deemed an income exceeding £1,000 annually as that of a wealthy man.<sup>80</sup> Even so such earnings could not allow him to marry, maintain a city and country home, employ servants, and start a family. A first-born

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<sup>79</sup> Paul R. Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men: British Masculinity and the Undergraduate Experience, 1850-1920* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>80</sup> Ralph Nevill, *The World of Fashion, 1837-1922* (London: Methuen & Company, Ltd., 1923), 23.

son, thanks to the practice of primogeniture, could depend on inheriting his father's title, the family estate, and land one day, thus guaranteeing him a relatively secure income. But younger sons, and especially daughters, could anticipate little, if any, financial support from their families, which created a fair amount of sibling rivalry.<sup>81</sup> When rumors began to circulate that Jennie Jerome would marry Randolph Churchill, her sister Leonie confided in her diary: "Last night at the circus, someone told me that Jennie would marry the second son of the Duke of Marlborough—a Good Thing tho' he *is* a younger son."<sup>82</sup> Hence, if a wife brought her own fortune, or at least a stable income, into the marriage, she appeared as a financially attractive spouse for a member of the British peerage. Since the agricultural decline across Europe affected the sons *and* daughters of British aristocrats, young British ladies could in no way bring a significant amount of money into the marriage. Once again, Anglo-American marriages seemed to address a number of issues at hand for eligible bachelors and bachelorettes in the United States and Great Britain.

But not all British men married for money alone. George Nathaniel Curzon, the future Viceroy of India, contemplated his need for financial stability and desire for love for many years before marrying an American girl. In 1889, during a long visit with family friends Henry and Margaret White, Curzon spoke candidly to Mrs. White about his apparent conflicting wishes. She wrote in her diary, "George Curzon came & spent the night—long talk about his marrying—says he must have money and won't marry unless he loves." She observed, "Difficult combination—"<sup>83</sup> Curzon eventually married Mary Leiter in 1895, a true Anglo-American love match. This union was a distinct exception. More often than not,

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<sup>81</sup> Pool, *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew*, 90-92.

<sup>82</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 38.

<sup>83</sup> Henry White Manuscript Collection, Margaret S. R. (Mrs. Henry) White Diary, July 28, 1888-September 29, 1889, January 11, 1889, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

numerous members of the British elite proved successful in their martial quest “for money if not necessarily for happiness.”<sup>84</sup>

In addition to love and money, another consideration for American heiresses in seeking out British aristocrats as husbands was the man’s rank within the peerage. A duke ranked the highest among the British peers, as only twenty-seven of these existed at any one time. As a New York newspaper explained in 1886, “Dukes are the loftiest kind of nobleman in England. . . . Of these [twenty-seven] there are only two available for matrimonial purposes. These are the Dukes of Manchester and Roxburghe. The Duke of Hamilton is already spoken for, the Duke of Norfolk is an old widower, and the Duke of Leinster only eleven years old.”<sup>85</sup> If a woman managed to catch a duke, she earned the title of duchess and both of them were addressed formally as “Your Grace.” But the complexity of titles and following proper etiquette in addressing a member of the nobility could produce entertaining exchanges. When hosting a luncheon on one occasion, Consuelo Vanderbilt, now Lady Marlborough, invited a member of the clergy. Prior to eating, he addressed her husband by saying, “May I say grace, Your Grace?”<sup>86</sup>

A marquess fell far below a duke within the British hierarchy and was always addressed as “Lord,” while his wife received the title of Lady. Following in descending order of the peerage were earls, viscounts, and barons; all of their wives were ladies. For all of these peers, the titles passed on to their children. Even farther below these men were baronets and knights, who earned the title of “Sir,” and their wives of “Lady.” Their children, however, received no titles. While a great gap existed between a duke and a knight,

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<sup>84</sup> Paul A. Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910,” *Journal of American History* 88 (2002), 1327.

<sup>85</sup> Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses*, 4.

<sup>86</sup> Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold* (First published, 1953; second edition, Maidstone: George Mann, 1973), 59.

all of these people were members of the nobility in Britain. Nevertheless, American heiresses (and often their mothers) wanted to receive the most notoriety and rank out of their marriages; thus, dukes proved to be the British husband of choice in this period.<sup>87</sup>

In many cases, the courting practices of between an American heiress and any member of the British peerage typically amounted to little more than newspaper advertisements and the negotiations with her father, his lawyer, and personal banker. In February 1901, the following call for a prospective wife appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*:

An English peer of very old title is desirous of marrying at once a very wealthy lady. . . . If among your clients you know such a lady, who is willing to purchase the rank of a peeress for £65,000 sterling, paid in cash to her future husband, and who has sufficient wealth besides to keep up the rank of a peeress, I should be pleased if you would communicate with me.<sup>88</sup>

Both Americans and Britons, men and women, placed such advertisements. Another advertisement introduced a “refined young woman of 19 [who] wishes to meet [a] well bred man who can appreciate and afford the luxury of a well groomed companion; object, matrimony.”<sup>89</sup> Several advertisements placed by men and women in this period expressed an explicit desire in their aims by ending their personal ad with, “object, matrimony.” While the announcements normally offered specific information regarding money, residence, and weight, they failed to mention details concerning “personal attraction and human compatibility.”<sup>90</sup>

Quite often, the wedding of an American heiress and a British aristocrat served as an indication of how much money the young woman would bring to England and an opportunity

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<sup>87</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, 22. See also Pool, *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew*, 37-38, 46.

<sup>88</sup> Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, 397.

<sup>89</sup> W. H. Dunlop, *Gilded City: Scandal and Sensation in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 2000), 7.

<sup>90</sup> Dunlop, *Gilded City*, 7. See also Elizabeth L. Banks, *Campaigns of Curiosity: Journalistic Adventures of an American Girl in Late Victorian London* (First published, 1894; second edition, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2003).

for the bride's family to advertise their wealth in the United States by giving their daughter a grand wedding. After the Civil War, the traditional practice of a young couple being married in the parlor of the bride's family fell out of style. Lavish church weddings became fashionable with the onset of numerous fortunes in the United States, particularly in New York. By the end of the nineteenth century, "house weddings came to be regarded as the shabby expedients of Baptists and Methodists, who had neither altar nor liturgy."<sup>91</sup> Many of these marriages took place with ten or more bridesmaids (who, in some cases, had been selected by the mother of the bride and not the bride herself for the purposes of "aestheticism") in front of a crowd of perhaps two thousand or more guests, followed by an extravagant reception where an orchestra entertained the guests. At the wedding reception of Cornelia Sherman Martin to the Fourth Earl of Craven in 1893, the orchestra fittingly played "a popular Negro song, 'If You Haint Got No Money You Needn't Come 'Round'."<sup>92</sup> Such a sacred occasion deteriorated into yet another way for *nouveaux riche* families to behave as conspicuous consumers.

Problems for these young newlyweds derived from serious divergences in marital expectations, not only in the purposes of their marriage but also in the roles their spouse would assume. Very often, British aristocrats anticipated little more from their marriages than a woman who behaved as a proper British lady and fulfilled her duty in continuing the family line by producing at least one son, but preferably two—as the proverbial "heir and the spare." Love and companionship rarely figured into this conception of a successful marriage. This may be explained by the fact that men in this period held very sensible and functional conceptions of marriage, or perhaps it stemmed from the fact that Britons approached

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<sup>91</sup> Wecter, *The Saga of American Society*, 183.

<sup>92</sup> Dunlop, *Gilded City*, 35.

marriage from a very realistic and practical perspective. Married couples in Britain often took sexual partners outside the marriage and treated adultery in a very matter-of-fact way. As John Gillis explains, “sex, like everything else, was seen in highly impersonal terms, as a duty or a right that transcended personal sentiment.”<sup>93</sup> Accordingly, the stability of a marriage in Britain “was dependent on how well a husband and wife performed their respective duties,” Gillis clarifies, “not on how well they got along as a couple.”<sup>94</sup>

On the other hand, American women entered these unions with very different expectations of what married life would entail. Young, and often naïve, American heiresses anticipated that their married life in Britain would replicate their thrilling experiences during the London Season. Again, this romantic expectation of marriage could stem from a female viewpoint of marriage or her American conception of marriage as it functioned in the United States. Much to her dismay, the courting ended the moment they exchanged vows. Elite British culture employed a “separate sphere” approach to the schedules of men and women to such a degree that a transatlantic wife could go days or even weeks without seeing her husband. They often ate separately, spent their leisure time separately, and slept in different bedrooms. Overwhelming waves of homesickness flooded the hearts of American ladies in Britain and quickly resulted in very unhappy marriages indeed. Following Mary Leiter’s marriage to George Curzon in 1895, she wrote home to her family, “Just tell the dear [American] girls once a month so they won’t forget it *never never never* to marry away from home unless they find a George as it is always a sorrow to be an alien—and 50 years in a new country never alters your nationality and I shall never be an Englishwoman in feeling or character. An *oh!* the unhappiness I see around me here in England amongst American

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<sup>93</sup> John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 303.

<sup>94</sup> Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present*, 297.

women.”<sup>95</sup> Mary’s family reciprocated her homesickness due to their infrequent visits to England. Her father missed Mary so much and saw her so little that he bitterly wrote in a letter, “Mary might as well be dead.”<sup>96</sup>

Unlike American husbands, a British man did not want to hear about his wife’s unhappiness. After all, hundreds of British women would gladly take her place. Furthermore, American women found their husband’s extramarital activities reprehensible, with few exceptions; very often, Anglo-American marriages ended in a transfer of wealth and an eventual signing of divorce papers.<sup>97</sup>

#### ANGLO-SAXON IDENTITY AND THE “AMERICAN COLONY” IN LONDON

Despite the individual success or failure of Anglo-American marriages, contemporary ideals concerning race told Americans and Britons that such marriages represented the overall union between the United States and Great Britain. Very different from present-day ideas about “race,” “blood,” and “civilization” existed in the late nineteenth century. Blood, in this period, equated to race, and the two concepts included elements considered by today’s standards as cultural attributes and did not differentiate between social or biological traits. Many people thought of race as “a community of sentiments, modes of thought, an unconscious inheritance from their ancestors . . . ,” thereby functioning as an “integrated

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<sup>95</sup> Mary Victoria Curzon Papers, Mary to her father, November 5, 1898, MSS Eur/F306/8, ff48-49, India Office, British Library.

<sup>96</sup> Cecil Spring Rice Papers, CASR 1/6/27, Clara Hay to Cecil Spring Rice, no date, Churchill Archives Center, Churchill College, Cambridge.

<sup>97</sup> For more on the historical evolution of marriage in the United States and Europe, see Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking Adult, 2005). Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Sonya Ruth Sklar Das, *The American Woman in Modern Marriage* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948); E. J. Graff, *What is Marriage For?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999); Hendrik Hartog, *Man and Wife in America: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Elizabeth D. Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Pat Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics, 1860-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Wife* (New York: Perennial, 2001).

physical, linguistic, and cultural totality.”<sup>98</sup> The construction of an Anglo-Saxon identity blurred the line between blood and culture as many people began using phrases such as “Anglo-Saxonism,” “English-speaking peoples,” and the “Anglo-Saxon race.” As Benjamin Disraeli once proclaimed, “All is race; there is no other truth.”<sup>99</sup> As Akira Iriye argues, “apart from a tiny minority who believed in complete racial equality, Americans in all parts of the world had come to take the superiority of the white race for granted.”<sup>100</sup>

While scientific ideas about the alleged superiority of certain races emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, Social Darwinism took hold in the United States in the late nineteenth century far more than elsewhere.<sup>101</sup> Political leaders, such as Theodore Roosevelt, and public orators, such as Josiah Strong, spoke of the inherent connection between the United States and Great Britain based on their shared language, heritage, legal system, and history. More and more leaders on both sides of the Atlantic verbalized the need for Anglo-Americans to come together to lead and civilize the world. The bleeding of Anglo-Saxonist ideas into foreign policy occurred within the same period that Rudyard Kipling’s famous poem, “White Man’s Burden,” was published. Notably, Kipling married an American woman.<sup>102</sup> Popular belief in both the United States and Great Britain dictated that only through a strong alliance between the two countries could they achieve something greater than themselves. As LaFeber explains, “[S]alvation lay in the fulfillment of the Anglo-Saxon mission to reshape the world in the mold of western civilization.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> George Stocking, “The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race,” *Modernism/Modernity* 1 (1993), 6, 15.

<sup>99</sup> Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 62.

<sup>100</sup> Akira Iriye, *The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945*, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, Volume III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 9.

<sup>101</sup> LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity*, 41.

<sup>102</sup> Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden,” *McClure’s Magazine* 17, no. 4 (February 1899).

<sup>103</sup> LaFeber, *The New Empire*, 77. For other works dealing with ideas about race, whiteness, and the construction of Anglo-Saxonism, see H. C. Allen, *Conflict and Concord: The Anglo-American Relationship*

For many people on both sides of the Atlantic, transatlantic marriages seemed to foreshadow the “promising joint imperial ventures [between the United States and Great Britain] as they were happily united in the permanent ties of a race alliance.”<sup>104</sup> Many people on both sides of the Atlantic apparently found satisfaction in what they envisioned as proof of the alleged Anglo-Saxon race coming full circle. According to a contemporary magazine, “the marriages of American girls with Englishmen far exceeds those with men of any other nationality, and the ties of a common language, blood and affinity make this but natural.”<sup>105</sup> In view of this trend, Anglo-American marriages served as a “racial exceptionalist bridge between the United States and the British Empire . . . .”<sup>106</sup> What better way to fully illustrate the kinship and familial ties between Britons and Americans? Thus, for many, the union of an American woman and British man symbolized the marriage of interests of Great Britain and the United States. In this manner, transatlantic marriages represented racial alliances as a means to ease diplomatic relations rather than simply a means of achieving economic ambitions. Upon the news of yet another Anglo-American marriage, the Marquess of Lorne gushed, “How the American alliance is getting on!”<sup>107</sup>

As a result of their marriages into the British aristocracy, American wives used their wealth and position to place Anglo-American relations at the forefront of a public transatlantic exchange of ideals. While not an intentional development of these women’s

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*Since 1783* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1959); Stephen J. Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Peter Kolchin, “Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America,” *Journal of American History* 89, (2002), 154-73; Eric T. L. Love, *Race Over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, editors, *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

<sup>104</sup> Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons,” 1327.

<sup>105</sup> Abby G. Baker, “International Marriages,” *The Independent*, 65 (1908), 756.

<sup>106</sup> Kramer, “Empires, Exception, and Anglo-Saxons,” 1323.

<sup>107</sup> Davis, “‘We Are All Americans Now!’,” 140.

public effort, the creation of an American colony in London followed. So many American women had married titled Europeans that an annual periodical began tracing their numbers. *Titled Americans: A List of American Ladies Who Have Married Foreigners of Rank* made its first appearance in 1890, and while it dealt with all American women who had married European nobility, the large majority of the unions were between Americans and Britons, evidenced by a section with the heading, “A Carefully Compiled List of Peers Who are Supposed to be Eager to Lay Their Coronets, and Incidentally Their Hearts, at the Feet of the All-Conquering American Girl.”<sup>108</sup> As the editor of the publication insisted, “English titles enjoy greater consideration, both at home and abroad, than those conferred by any other State.”<sup>109</sup>

Yet another Americans-in-London pamphlet appeared in 1902. The *Directory of Americans Resident in London & Great Britain, Americans Firms and Agencies* provided a listing of American businesses in London, a listing of British-American merchants, a classified business directory, a shopping guide, a listing of American banks and bankers, a residential directory, a list of titled Americans, and a guide to American business enterprises in Great Britain.<sup>110</sup> The directory identified those belonging to “The American Society in London,” and the “Society of American Women in London,” in addition to their meeting days and times. The directory also advertised “The Anglo-American Press” as the “only newspaper published in the United Kingdom specially devoted to American interests.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *Titled Americans. A List of American Ladies Who Have Married Foreigners of Rank*. Annually revised. Illustrated with Armorial bearings. (New York: Street & Smith, 1890), 156.

<sup>109</sup> *Titled Americans*, 24.

<sup>110</sup> W. B. Brancroft, ed., *Directory of Americans Resident in London & Great Britain, Americans Firms and Agencies* (London: American Directory Publishing Company, 1902).

<sup>111</sup> Brancroft, *Directory of Americans Resident in London*, 293.

These publications, in addition to the hundreds of American-born, British-wed spouses, acted in concert to establish an unofficial “American colony” in London. A growing number of Americans lived in London or traveled regularly to Great Britain, to the point that organizations such as “The Anglo-American League,” formed in 1898, boasted a membership number exceeding five hundred.<sup>112</sup> In 1902, William T. Stead estimated that some 15,000 Americans lived in London.<sup>113</sup> The American colony in London enjoyed a general acceptance by British society. In the words of one periodical, “All society is strife, but the storm centre of London society is unquestionably the American colony . . . .”<sup>114</sup> In the quantity and quality, the American women residing in Britain during this period exerted an extraordinary degree of influence as a result of their marriages to British aristocrats and their own efforts, activities, and relationships in Britain. Given these developments, journalist William T. Stead anticipated “a day when a considerable proportion of the head men in England will be sons of American mothers.”<sup>115</sup>

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A number of factors occurred in the nineteenth century to bring about the trend of transatlantic marriages in general and Anglo-American marriages specifically. Changes in national economies, improvements in transatlantic travel, redefinition of societal elites, the approval of American women by Edward VII, the power of the London Season, and ideas

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<sup>112</sup> Brancroft, *Directory of Americans Resident in London*, 296.

<sup>113</sup> William Thomas Stead, *The Americanization of the World, or the Trend of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Horace Markley, 1902), 329.

<sup>114</sup> Anglo-American, “American Women in English Society,” *Harper’s Bazaar* 39, no. 7, part 2 (July 1905), 602.

<sup>115</sup> Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons,” 1327.

concerning Anglo-Saxons all coincided, thereby courting transatlantic marriages. These unions resulted in the relocation of hundreds of American women to Great Britain with varying results. Some marriages succeeded, others faltered, and still others remained in name only. In every case, the ability (or inability) of an American woman to adjust and adapt to her new country, new husband, new family, and new surroundings influenced British ideas about American women and the United States as a whole. By virtue of their marriages to leading British men, their lives unfolded beneath the watchful eye of London society, elite political circles, and public opinions of all Anglo-Americans. Just as her father worked to earn money, the American heiress worked “to make America respectable. . . . Because she was young and rich and pretty, and because her father and brothers were too busy making money to take on the job, the American heiress was the New World’s ambassador to the old.”<sup>116</sup>

But these women had much more to offer than simply their youth, money, and looks. People on both sides of the Atlantic observed American-born, British-wed women—their marriages, associations, friendships, influence—for reasons far more complicated and imperative than their little waists and big dowries. While “the private lives of public men and women . . . have always been the subject of natural curiosity,” this proved especially true for the women who, through their marriages, joined the ranks of the British aristocracy, but in their own ways forever remained American.<sup>117</sup> Now we turn to examine individually four women who approached their lives and marriages in Britain by different paths, who created their own opportunities abroad, and who made the most of their positions of influence.

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<sup>116</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 73.

<sup>117</sup> Brandreth, *Philip & Elizabeth*, 263.

## Chapter Four:

### American Amazon: Jennie Jerome Churchill

“A girl born and bred in the backwoods of some Western State, will adopt the manners and customs of her husband’s country to such an extent that, after a few years, she might pass as of his nationality.”

—Lady Randolph Churchill<sup>1</sup>

The large majority of American heiresses who married British aristocrats in this period called New York City home; thus, it seems only right that the woman who often receives credit for serving as the pioneer in the Anglo-American marital market called Brooklyn home.<sup>2</sup> Born on January 9, 1854, Jennie Jerome was the second daughter of Leonard and Clara Hall Jerome. The Jerome family experienced both extremes—great successes and great failures—of the post-Civil War business boom. While Mr. Jerome worked in New York, making and losing multiple fortunes, the Jerome women conquered Europe, starting in Paris and later moving to London, cutting a path for hundreds of American mothers and daughters to follow.

Leonard Jerome, a graduate of Princeton College, and his brother, Larry, began their adult lives in Rochester, New York, as the two brothers married two sisters of the Hall

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<sup>1</sup> Gail MacColl and Carol McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglo-Mania Really Got Started* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1989), 201.

<sup>2</sup> Some disagreement exists as to Jennie Jerome’s birthplace. In his autobiography, Winston Churchill wrote that his mother was born in Rochester, but other sources, including Jennie’s biographer, place Jennie’s birthplace in Brooklyn. Winston S. Churchill, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1930), author’s preface; Ralph G. Martin, *Jennie: The Life of Lady Randolph Churchill*, Volume I, *The Romantic Years, 1874-1895* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), 6. René Kraus also wrote an earlier biography of Jennie in 1943, but it contains numerous factual errors. Thus, his work is used on a limited basis in this study. René Kraus, *Young Lady Randolph: The Life and Times of Jennie Jerome, American Mother of Winston Churchill* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1943). See also Virginia Tatnall Peacock, *Famous American Belles of the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1901), Chapter 17; Richard Kenin, *Return to Albion: Americans in England, 1760-1940* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1979), Chapter 6.

family.<sup>3</sup> All women in the Hall family had black hair, dark features, and high cheekbones, bold physical characteristics allegedly due to a grandmother's having been raped by an Iroquois. Such "Hall-marks" only intensified with age. After their wedding in 1849, Clara Hall Jerome bore four daughters while her sister, Catherine, produced four sons for the Jerome family. Leonard and Clara had their first daughter on April 15, 1851, and named her Clarita, in honor of her mother. Both Jerome families enjoyed prominent standing in Rochester before Leonard moved his family to Brooklyn to chase even greater affluence in New York City, a decision indicative of his business ambitions. Jerome built two houses in Madison Square, one as his home and one which became the Manhattan Club House. In addition to financial capital, Jerome understood the importance of social assets.<sup>4</sup>

Besides his business ambitions, Jerome enjoyed the opera, almost as much as he enjoyed opera singers. He financed the careers of many young opera singers, provided they were young and pretty, but his favorite aspiring singer at the time of his second daughter's birth was Jenny Lind. Hence, when his wife gave birth to a second daughter in 1854, he suggested that they name her Jenny. Little did his wife know from where the name had come. By the time Clara realized that her husband had named his daughter after one of his many talented mistresses, several months had passed. So, Clara simply altered the spelling from Jenny to *Jennie*. Later, Clara insisted that "Jeanette" serve as her daughter's formal christening name, thus further distancing her child from her husband's current mistress. The births of two more daughters followed: Camille in 1855 and Leonie (the French form of Leonard) in 1859. Sadly, Camille died suddenly in 1863 of a fever at the young age of six. Her death stunned the family but brought together the three remaining sisters—ages twelve,

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<sup>3</sup> Churchill, *My Early Life*, author's preface.

<sup>4</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 1, 4, 6; Churchill, *My Early Life*, author's preface.

nine, and five—into a bond they enjoyed throughout their lives. The three sisters, rarely seen without the other two, earned the collective nicknames of “the Good” (Clara), “the Beautiful” (Jennie), and “the Witty” (Leonie). All three sisters married British aristocrats, a practice rather common for both Americans and Britons.<sup>5</sup> When his third and youngest daughter married an Englishman, Jerome protested, “Why couldn’t she have married a normal American and lived in my Country!”<sup>6</sup>

In addition to a passion for music, Jerome also loved horseracing. More like him than any of his other daughters, Jennie inherited his love for music and horses. On important occasions, Jerome drove around New York City with a team of six horses, thus demonstrating his equestrian skills. His beloved horse Kentucky never lost a race. His love

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<sup>5</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 8-15; Anita Leslie, *Mr. Frewen of England: A Victorian Adventurer* (London: Hutchinson, 1966), 117; Elisabeth Kehoe, *The Titled Americans: Three American Sisters and the English Aristocratic World into Which They Married* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2004); Numerous sets of siblings married across the pond. Several sets of American sisters married into the British aristocracy. The Bonynges: Louisa *m.* Major General Sir John Maxwell, and stepsister Virginia *m.* Viscount Deerhurst; The Breeses: Eloise *m.* Lord Willoughby de Eresby, later Earl of Ancaster, and Anna *m.* Lord Alastair Innes-Ker; The Carrs: Alys, “the lovely young widow Mrs. Chauncy” *m.* Sir Cecil Bingham, and Grace *m.* Lord Newborough; The Chamberlains: Jeannie *m.* Herbert Naylor-Leyland, later Sir Herbert, and Josephine *m.* T. T. L. Scarisbrick of Lancashire; The Frosts: Jane *m.* Sir Lewis Molesworth, Evelyn *m.* Phillip Beresford-Hope, and Louisa *m.* Hon. William F. C. Vernon; The Graces: Elena *m.* Lord Donoughmore, and Elisa *m.* Hon. Hubert Beaumont; The Jerome: Jennie *m.* Earl Randolph Churchill, Clara married Moreton Frewen, and Leonie married Sir John Leslie; The Leiters: Mary *m.* George Curzon, later Lord Cuzon, Marquerite (Daisy) *m.* Earl of Suffolk, and Nancy *m.* Major Colin Campbell; The Randolph/Whitney Stepsisters: Adelaide Randolph *m.* Hon. Lionel Lambart, and Pauline Whitney *m.* Almeric Paget, later Lord Queenborough; The Wadsworths: widow Cornelia Wadsworth Ritchie *m.* John Adair of County Rathdaire, Ireland, and her widowed sister Elizabeth Wadsworth post *m.* Arthur Barry, later Lord Barrymore; The Yznagas: Consuelo *m.* Viscount Mandeville, later Duke of Manchester, and Natica *m.* Sir John Lister-Kaye. British brothers who married American heiresses include Hon. Charles Coventry *m.* Lily Whitehouse; Hon. Henry Coventry *m.* Edith Kip McCreery; Alexander Gordon Cumming *m.* Florence Garner; Sir William Gordon-Cumming *m.* Frances Eames; 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Leigh *m.* Frances Helene Beckwith; Hon. Rowland Leigh *m.* Mabel Gordon; 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough *m.* Lily Hammersley; Lord Randolph Churchill *m.* Jennie Jerome; Hon. Amyas Northcote *m.* Helen Dudley; Hon. Hugh Northcote *m.* Edith Fish; Almeric Paget *m.* Pauline Whitney; Arthur Paget *m.* Minnie Stevens; Sidney Paget *m.* Marie Dolan; 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Roxburghe *m.* May Goelet; Lord Alastair Innes-Ker *m.* Anna Breese; 7<sup>th</sup> Baron Vernon *m.* Frances Lawrance; Hon. William Vernon *m.* Louisa Frost. Sets of British cousins married American heiresses, although this was far less common. 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Ashburton *m.* Frances Donnelly; 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Revelstoke *m.* Maude Lorillard; Sir John Leslie *m.* Leonie Jerome; George Cavendish-Bentinck *m.* Elizabeth Livingston; 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough *m.* Consuelo Vanderbilt; 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Roxburghe *m.* May Goelet. A number of father-duos and mother-daughter duos also married British aristocrats. MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 308-309, 332, 343, 347.

<sup>6</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 118.

for horses led to the building of Jerome Park. He also established the Jockey Club and served as its vice-president. Nearly single-handedly, Jerome made horseracing an elite sport for American high culture. For all of these reasons, Jerome earned the nickname, “The Father of the American Turf.”<sup>7</sup>

While his wife and daughters occupied themselves in their impressive house in Madison Square, Jerome kept himself busy throughout New York. He had served as the American Consul at Trieste for three years, resulting in his daughters becoming bilingual at an early age, but he expressed little interest in politics after he returned to the United States. Instead, he embarked on a number of financial adventures, from newspaper ownership, to real estate, to trying his hand at Wall Street. He worked as an art collector, an attorney, a newspaper editor, and as part owner of the *New York Times*. His ability to make and lose millions of dollars resulted in his acquisition of the nickname, “The King of Wall Street.”<sup>8</sup>

Like many other *nouveaux riches* Americans, Jerome held sufficient wealth to belong to the New York elite, but for a number of reasons his family remained on the outside of such social circles. Although their new money status was likely the reason, Mrs. Jerome blamed her husband’s extramarital affairs for their family’s social exclusion. Many wealthy men took mistresses in this period, but they did so with great discretion. Jerome, on the other hand, made little effort to hide his adulterous relations, a decision that elite society found repugnant. After years of enjoying great wealth, living in Madison Square, spending summer vacations in Newport, Rhode Island (*the* choice location for well-to-do Americans), and working to obtain success in New York social circles, Mrs. Jerome reached her limit. Her pride did not allow her to continue to seek Mrs. Astor’s favor, but neither did it allow her to

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<sup>7</sup> Churchill, *My Early Life*, author’s preface. Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Mrs. George Cornwallis-West, *The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill* (New York: The Century Co., 1908), 3, 4; Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 1.

surrender her social ambitions altogether. In 1867, she announced that her health required her to live abroad—in Paris. Mrs. Jerome had no known health problems, but nevertheless, the family sailed for Europe so that “she might consult the celebrated American physician Dr. Sims in Paris.”<sup>9</sup> At a later date, Mrs. Jerome regained her health but did not return to the United States. She likely had grown tired of her husband’s gallivanting about New York City with any number of women and realized that her husband’s behavior would likely prevent her daughters from marrying well. Overseas, however, his money afforded them a home in Paris and a chance for his wife and daughters to enjoy the elite social circles that had so long eluded them in their home country.

The women of the Jerome family enjoyed all that Paris had to offer. Their knowledge of Italian allowed them to learn the French language easily, and they quickly became *la belle Américaines*. Clara, the oldest daughter, especially enjoyed the Paris Season, making her debut at one of the Tuileries balls. Sadly, their joyous time in Paris came to an end in 1870. The beginning of the Franco-Prussian War drove hundreds of people, American and European, from the capital toward London. Mr. Jerome rushed to Paris to assist his wife and daughters in moving, but he returned to New York after his family had moved to London permanently. Not wishing to return to the United States, Mrs. Jerome and her daughters remained in London for several months, returning only once to Paris to find their beloved city of lights in ruins. They grudgingly returned to London, at this time not known for its social life. But all that changed quickly as affluent Americans began frequenting London, instead of Paris, looking for European entertainment and social life. Thus, a European war

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<sup>9</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 6.

helped to make London, and the London Season specifically, the new destination for wealthy socialites, acting as a catalyst for Anglo-American marriages.<sup>10</sup>

After settling into their new home in London, the Jerome women began testing the British social scene, not knowing the success they would find. In the summer of 1871, Jennie and her sisters paid their first visit to Cowes, a week-long event as part of the London Season. Jennie's presentation to the Prince and Princess of Wales followed the next year at the Royal Yacht Squadron Ball. She immediately caught the eye of Edward, thus assuring her success in London. Jennie never lacked for dancing partners that night, as one British guest described her delight at the ball as clearly "American."<sup>11</sup>

Jennie's social triumphs in London, especially with Edward, meant that her sisters would enjoy great success as well. They received invitations to all the London Season events, in addition to the best dinners and country estates all year long. But the following London Season brought Jennie's mother the transatlantic victory for which she had long hoped. In 1873, Jennie met Lord Randolph Churchill at the Cowes regatta week, where she had commenced life in London some two years before. Taken with Jennie right away, Randolph told a friend that he "meant, if he could, to make the dark one his wife."<sup>12</sup> Three days after their first meeting, Randolph asked Jennie to marry him. Ecstatic, Jennie expected her mother to share in her excitement. But Mrs. Jerome responded to her daughter's announcement with anything but approval. In the subsequent weeks and months, Mrs. Jerome did everything she could in hopes of ending the engagement.

Born in 1849, Lord Randolph Henry Spencer Churchill was the third son of Sir John Winston Spencer-Churchill, the seventh Duke of Marlborough, and Lady Frances Anne

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<sup>10</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 6-35.

<sup>11</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 48.

<sup>12</sup> Anita Leslie, *The Remarkable Mr. Jerome* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954), 162.

Emily Vane, Duchess of Marlborough, a commanding woman. Jennie later recalled that “at the rustle of [the Duchess’s] silk dress, the household trembled.”<sup>13</sup> Educated at Eton and Merton College, Oxford, Randolph fulfilled the role typical of a transatlantic groom—an Oxbridge man. Despite his lofty education, he took little interest in politics or in any other profession, for that matter. Instead, he spent most of his time traveling across various countries in Europe and seemed interested in little beyond “comparative idleness” and “leisurely fashion.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, his sudden announcement to his parents in 1873 that he planned to marry an American girl he met at a party received a frosty response from the Duke and Duchess. He admitted to his parents that he knew little about Jennie or her family. To his father he wrote, “Mr Jerome is a gentleman who is obliged to live in New York to look after his business. I do not know what it is.”<sup>15</sup>

Understandably distressed, both sets of parents found this sudden engagement troubling. The Jeromes found their daughter’s impulsiveness upsetting. While Randolph was a Duke’s heir, he was nonetheless a younger son. Likewise, the Marlboroughs regarded their son’s rash behavior as disturbing. Although Anglo-American marriages became quite fashionable by the late nineteenth century, most of British society in 1873 regarded such unions to be “as experimental as mating with Martians.”<sup>16</sup> Both sides anticipated that the hasty romance would end as quickly as it began, and Mrs. Jerome’s attempt to end the engagement included moving her daughters back to Paris temporarily. But the letters between the young couple continued, and Randolph even visited Jennie in France periodically. But an ever-present Mrs. Jerome monitored their every move, thus earning her

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<sup>13</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 53.

<sup>14</sup> Peter De Mendelssohn, *The Age of Churchill: Heritage and Adventure, 1874-1911* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961), 25.

<sup>15</sup> De Mendelssohn, *The Age of Churchill*, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 98.

the nickname of “Sitting Bull,” indicative of her close observance of her daughter and her suitor and of her Native American features, which only accentuated as she aged.

As time passed, both families realized that more than a flighty romance existed between their children. Even Jennie later admitted that “we had arrived at our momentous decision without much delay.”<sup>17</sup> But rather than concede the situation entirely, the Marlboroughs saw an opportunity to test their son’s devotion to his fiancée and secure his future. They finally agreed to allow their son to marry this mysterious American girl if he stood for Woodstock, the family borough, and ran for Parliament. Randolph attacked his campaign with passion, even encouraging Jennie to share his new interest. In one of the many letters written during their engagement, he persuaded Jennie to read one of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli’s speeches in the *London Times*. Determined to match her fiancé’s political intellect, Jennie read the speech in addition to everything she could find concerning British politics.<sup>18</sup> She would need ample political knowledge as the wife of Lord Randolph Churchill. Her future husband ran for and won a seat in the House of Commons, and a wedding date was set for the spring.<sup>19</sup>

Before the two could marry, a number of financial details required settlement. Under normal circumstances, a woman’s dowry passed directly from her father’s to her husband’s hands, thus leaving her at the mercy of her spouse. But Mr. Jerome saw little reason to follow protocol with his precious Jennie. When Jerome explained to Randolph and the Duke of Marlborough that he planned to provide Jennie with her own “pin money,” a settlement separate from her husband’s, the announcement nearly ended the wedding. Jerome’s

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<sup>17</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 74.

<sup>19</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 45; Mary Soames, ed., *Winston and Clementine: The Personal Letters of the Churchills* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 651.

decision to provide his daughter with her own money was decidedly abnormal in this period. With the backing of his father, Randolph told his future father-in-law that unless the dowry in its entirety came to him directly, “all business between us was perfectly impossible and he could do what he liked with his beastly money.”<sup>20</sup> Eventually, the three men compromised and agreed on a settlement that yielded £50,000 in capital through government and railway stocks, a mortgage worth some \$300,000. He also provided £2,000 in annual income for the couple and £1,000 for his daughter’s personal use.<sup>21</sup>

The night before the wedding, Jennie wrote in her diary, “This is the last time I shall wind the clock . . . this is the last time I shall look in this old mirror. Soon nothing will be the same for me anymore: Miss Jennie Jerome will be gone forever.”<sup>22</sup> Her words could not have been more accurate. The next morning, with the Prince of Wales’s secretary, Sir Francis Knollys, serving as Randolph’s best man, a clear sign of Edward’s approval of the union, the happy couple married on April 15, 1874, though not in the United States or in Britain.<sup>23</sup> Instead, they chose to marry at the British Embassy in Paris, as something of a reflection of the Jeromes’ ties to France and Randolph’s British heritage. Despite the fact that Jennie had not lived in the United States since the age of thirteen and did not choose her birth country for her wedding, Americans consistently identified her as a fellow American throughout her life in Britain.

Although they gave the couple their blessing, the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough did not attend the ceremony. When the time arrived for Jennie to leave with her new husband, Mrs. Jerome began to cry. In an effort to comfort her mother, Jennie responded

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<sup>20</sup> R. F. Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 18.

<sup>21</sup> Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 18. MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 39.

<sup>22</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 89.

<sup>23</sup> R. J. Minney, *The Edwardian Age* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1964), 51.

soothingly, “Why, Mama, don’t cry, life is going to be perfect . . . always.”<sup>24</sup> Little did Jennie know what joys and sorrows life in Britain would bring. When the newlyweds arrived in May at Blenheim Palace, the Marlborough family estate, the new Member of Parliament from Woodstock and his beautiful American wife received an “enthusiastic reception” from cheering tenants and constituents. Leaving behind her American country, family, and identity, she began a new life in Britain as Lady Randolph Churchill.<sup>25</sup>

### EARLY MARRIAGE, MOTHERHOOD, AND IRELAND

Many Anglo-American unions began with an exciting courtship during the London Season, followed by an impressive church wedding. The couple then quickly settled into a dull and monotonous marriage that included only an occasional dinner party or ball. Jennie Jerome, now Lady Churchill, had no intention of settling into anything of the sort. Her beauty and vitality demanded that her life function as a constant “whirl of gaieties and excitement.”<sup>26</sup> Of the few first months following her marriage she wrote, “I settled in London to enjoy my first season with all the vigor and unjaded appetite of youth.”<sup>27</sup> Unlike many of her fellow Anglo-American brides, Lady Churchill continued an exciting social life as a married woman.

Regardless of the many country-house parties and pigeon-shooting excursions Lady Churchill attended as a newlywed, she was often the lone American-born, British-wed bride. While the number of American women would increase drastically in the next three decades, in the 1870s Lady Churchill served as the solo informal ambassador for all American

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<sup>24</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 90.

<sup>25</sup> Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 17; Leslie, *The Remarkable Mr. Jerome*, 184. Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 75.

<sup>26</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 49.

<sup>27</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 49.

women. Writing in her memoirs, she explained 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 Girl.”<sup>28</sup> Writing of British expectations for American behavior, Lady Churchill remembered that “Anything of an outlandish nature might be expected of her. If she talked, dressed, and conducted herself as any well-bred woman would, much astonishment was invariably evinced, and she was usually saluted with the tactful remark, ‘I should never have thought *you* were an American,’ which was intended as a compliment.”<sup>29</sup> Overall, Lady Churchill often felt that her new fellow countrymen and women considered her “as a disagreeable and even dangerous person, to be viewed with suspicion, if not avoided altogether. Her dollars were her only recommendation . . . ; otherwise what was her *raison d’ être*?”<sup>30</sup> British men and women monitored Lady Churchill’s every move and analyzed her every action. For better or worse, Lady Churchill’s demeanor now represented all Americans.

Part of Lady Churchill’s initial aggravation stemmed from the fact that Britons could not detect the regional differences between Americans. She reflected that Britons made “no distinction . . . among Americans; they were all supposed to be of one uniform type.”<sup>31</sup> Lady Churchill found it frustrating that “the cultured, refined and retiring Bostonian; the aristocratic Virginia, as full of tradition and family pride as a Percy of Northumberland . . . the cosmopolitan and up-to-date New Yorker . . . were grouped in the same category, all were considered tarred with the same brush.”<sup>32</sup> Of course, Britons prided themselves on significant differences between people from York, Suffolk, and Cornwall but saw little

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<sup>28</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 60.

<sup>29</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 60.

<sup>30</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 60.

<sup>31</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 60.

<sup>32</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 60.

reason to consider the possibility of the same distinctions existing among Americans from various parts of the country. Thus, British men and women viewed all American women living in Britain as a result of transatlantic marriages through the same lens. From a British standpoint, all Americans dressed in an exaggerated fashion and spoke with a nasal twang.<sup>33</sup>

Eventually, Lady Churchill turned this seemingly impossible situation to her advantage. If she, by British standards, represented all Americans regardless of any socioeconomic or regional differences, then any mistakes she made by British etiquette definitions would cast her individually and Americans as a whole negatively. On the other hand, like so many diplomats before her, every deed could potentially reflect well on the United States as a whole. If Lady Churchill's life in Britain were destined to transpire under a magnifying glass, then she chose to make her life in Britain exhibit all the positive characteristics of American women specifically and all Americans in general.

Upon realizing the possibilities for her marriage and her lifelong presence in London, Lady Churchill embarked upon a fabulously successful social life. Although her social life in London as a married woman, attending the best parties and balls, differed little from her life in London as a single person, she now acted as a hostess for the best parties and dinners in London thus giving her a level of validity as a leader of London society rather than simply a participant. And, as an American, her social success in London permitted her fellow Britons to entertain positive opinions of American as a whole. Her marriage to a leading aristocrat and Member of Parliament clearly helped to establish Lady Churchill's position in society, but many British and American wives of politicians failed miserably as socialites. When Randolph gave his maiden speech—often an indicator of a member's future political success and career—in the House of Commons on May 22, 1874, his presentation received little

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<sup>33</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 61.

notice. Randolph, often described as cold and unsociable, held his seat in Parliament because of his family's status in Britain, not because of his interest in politics or career ambitions. While her marriage provided the platform, Lady Churchill's own social charm and personal warmth prompted London society to see her as "the most beautiful woman anyone had set eyes on."<sup>34</sup> Little time had passed before London society deemed Lord and Lady Churchill as "the most sought-after young couple in England. . . . Every party that included the young Churchills proved a success."<sup>35</sup> By the end of their first Season as a married couple, they found all doors of society open to them—a nearly endless stream of ballets, balls, concerts, garden parties, horse races, hunting parties, operas, plays—and nearly endless opportunities to advance their distinct but intertwined social and political careers.<sup>36</sup>

By attending and hosting notable parties, Lord and Lady Churchill increased their individual and collective political and social capital. Lord Churchill gave his wife access to the most important individuals in England while Lady Churchill gave her husband a sense of resilience and confidence he did not possess before his marriage. Britons also noted Lady Churchill's influence on her husband's political career. At one party hosted by the Churchills, the Prince of Wales observed a long conversation between the Prime Minister and Lady Churchill. Afterward, he inquired of her, "Tell me, my dear, what office did you get for Randolph?"<sup>37</sup> Together Lord and Lady Churchill interacted on a regular basis with the most influential people of their time, thereby securing his position in the House of Commons and her position within society. Much like a diplomat team of a husband and wife, they both

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<sup>34</sup> Leslie, *The Remarkable Mr. Jerome*, 187.

<sup>35</sup> Leslie, *The Remarkable Mr. Jerome*, 191.

<sup>36</sup> Kehoe, *The Titled Americans*, 69.

<sup>37</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 104.

pursued their respective duties of politics and society, but in the cases of Anglo-American marriages, only the wife represented her home country.

In addition to advancing their political and social careers, Lady Churchill embarked on another profession entirely—motherhood. On November 30, 1874, while at a shooting party at Blenheim Palace, Lady Churchill went into labor. Leaving the hunt, she gave birth to her first son, Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill, named after his American and English grandfathers. His official birth announcement in the London *Times* noted that his mother had given birth, “prematurely, of a son.”<sup>38</sup> Historians have frequently commented on the future prime minister’s entry into the world, only seven months after his parents marriage. Healthy and robust, the newborn certainly appeared to be a full-term baby. However, his younger brother, born four years later, was also premature. Given the risks and the lack of opportunity for intimate relations prior to marriage, it is likely that the young couple conceived their first-born on their honeymoon. But more importantly, even if Lady Churchill had been pregnant prior to her marriage, everyone involved stood to lose much if such news became public. American and British societies would have shunned Lord and Lady Churchill, in addition to their families, their children would have grown up in shame, and any political careers, by Lord Churchill or Winston, could never have occurred. Thus, all parties involved repeatedly asserted the premature nature of Lady Churchill’s son.<sup>39</sup>

Motherhood for Lady Churchill proved a delicate and constant negotiation of American and Victorian ideals of the proper care and raising of children. A number of private nurses and nannies tended to the daily needs of the children of British aristocrats and

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<sup>38</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 108.

<sup>39</sup> Soames, *Winston and Clementine*, 1; Kehoe, *The Titled Americans*, 71; Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 108.

acted as a “physical barrier between children and parents.”<sup>40</sup> Lady Churchill, mindful of her upbringing by an American mother, bridged the gulf typical of her social class, but she remained mindful of the fact that her every move, even her style of mothering, represented Americans.

Regardless of his mixed American-British upbringing, Winston adored his mother. In his biography, he wrote, “My mother always seemed to me a fairy princess; a radiant being possessed of limitless riches and power.”<sup>41</sup> He continued, reflecting, “She shone for me like the Evening Star. I loved her dearly—but at a distance.”<sup>42</sup> His birth and eventual leadership of Britain held great importance as the product of a transatlantic marriage. As Christopher Hitchens has argued, “In many ways, Winston Churchill was the human bridge across which this transition [the “special relationship”] was made. . . .”<sup>43</sup> Hence, not only the marriages of Anglo-American held great significance but so potentially did their offspring as well.

Despite a charmed beginning to life in Britain, complete with an exciting social life and new family, this phase of Lady Churchill’s life came to an end in 1876. Lord Randolph’s older brother, the Marquess of Blandford, had an affair with Lady Edith Aylesford. While the Earl of Aylesford toured India with the Prince of Wales, he received a letter from his wife saying that she and Blandford planned to elope shortly. Humiliated, the Earl returned home immediately to begin divorce proceedings. At this point, Lord Randolph stepped in on behalf of his brother. He asked the Prince to influence Aylesford not to divorce his wife. When the Prince refused to intervene, Lord Randolph encouraged his brother not to elope. During this time, Lord Randolph also came into the possession of some very intimate

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<sup>40</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 110.

<sup>41</sup> Churchill, *My Early Life*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Churchill, *My Early Life*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Christopher Hitchens, *Blood, Class, and Empire: The Enduring Anglo-American Relationship* (New York: Nation Books, 1990), 186.

letters between the Prince of Wales and Lady Aylesford, which he shared with the Prince's wife. Lord Randolph bragged that he held the Crown of England in his pocket, as the letters could have potentially prohibited Edward VII from becoming King. The Prince challenged Lord Randolph to a duel, which he could never accept, and the contest never took place. The Prince announced that he would never frequent any event or house that continued to include the Churchills. Thus, the Prince of Wales barred Lord and Lady Churchill from his social circle, and almost all members of his set followed suit. The rift never completely mended between Lord Randolph and the Prince, but the Churchills returned to society a decade later.<sup>44</sup>

The young couple escaped their social ostracism temporarily by spending a few short months in the United States with Lady Churchill's family, but they returned to England to a new development. At Prime Minister Disraeli's request, the Duke of Marlborough had accepted an appointment as Viceroy to Ireland and offered Lord Churchill a position as his private secretary. Ireland seemed to solve all the problems at hand. "Not being in favor with the Court, from which London society took the lead," Lady Churchill wrote, "we were nothing loath to go."<sup>45</sup> Lord Churchill served as his father's assistant while his wife naturally assisted the Duchess at all formal events.<sup>46</sup> While this journey north allowed Lord and Lady Churchill to escape their social banishment, Lady Churchill now served as an ambassador from the United States to Ireland as well as to England.

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<sup>44</sup> Minney, *The Edwardian Age*, 51-53; Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 31, 46; Shane Leslie, *Men Were Different: Five Studies in Late Victorian Biography* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1937), 21. Only Consuelo Yznaga, Duchess of Manchester, a fellow American bride, disobeyed Edward's orders explaining that she held friendship above snobbery. Not until 1885 did Lord James of Hereford make Randolph's peace with Edward, although Lady Churchill attended an event at the request of Queen Victoria in 1883. Leslie, *Men Were Different*, 53.

<sup>45</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 122.

<sup>46</sup> Leslie, *The Remarkable Mr. Jerome*, 207.

Arriving in Ireland in December 1876, Lord and Lady Churchill found social life there thrilling. Upon seeing Lady Churchill for the first time in Ireland, Lord Edgar Vincent D'Abernon wrote:

It was at the Viceregal Lodge at Dublin. She stood on one side, to the left of the entrance. The Viceroy was on a dais at the further end of the room surrounded by a brilliant staff, but all eyes were not turned on him or his consort, but on a dark, lithe figure, standing somewhat apart and appearing to be of another texture to those around her, radiant, translucent, intense. A diamond star in her hair, her favorite ornament—its luster dimmed by the flashing glory of her eyes. More of the panther than of the woman in her look, but with a cultivated intelligence unknown to the jungle. Her courage not less great than her husband . . . she was universally popular. Her desire to please, her delight in life and the genuine wish that all should share her joyous faith in it, made her the center of a devoted circle.<sup>47</sup>

But Lady Churchill offered more than simply her beauty and charm to the people of Ireland. Famine returned to the country in 1877, and aid from England did little to alleviate the hunger and panic across Ireland. The Duchess of Marlborough, Lady Churchill's mother-in-law, started the Irish Relief Fund, or a Famine Fund, with the purpose of supplying basic goods to Irish families. Raising some £135,000 (\$675,000) in contributions, the Duchess collected more than hundred and fifty thousand pounds of food, fuel, and clothing.<sup>48</sup> Lady Churchill supported the Duchess's efforts and quickly began traveling across Ireland to disperse provisions. Shocked by the profound poverty and living conditions of the Irish peasants, Lady Churchill was affected by the experience permanently. As she remembered, "In our walks, we had many opportunities of seeing the heart-rending poverty of the peasantry who lived . . . more like animals than human beings."<sup>49</sup> Appalled by the one-room huts with little more than straw and blankets and diets that consisted of potatoes and salt with

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<sup>47</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 126.

<sup>48</sup> Leslie, *The Remarkable Mr. Jerome*, 211. Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 98.

<sup>49</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 129.

meat twice a year, she never forgot what she saw. Nor would she ever allow Lord Churchill to forget either.<sup>50</sup>

Lord and Lady Churchill returned to England in 1879 with a new perspective on the “Irish Question” and on politics in general. After spending three years among the Irish people, they were some of the very few Britons who had traveled or spent any significant time in Ireland at all. Following Lord Churchill’s three-year political apprenticeship, he and his wife became much more interested in shaping British politics than ever before.<sup>51</sup> They now possessed a clear sense that their joint efforts could bring lasting change to not only Ireland but to the disaffected throughout Great Britain. Specifically for Lady Churchill, her participation in such an organization would influence the rest of her life in London.

#### RETURN TO LONDON, RETURN TO PARLIAMENT

Upon their return from Ireland, Lord and Lady Churchill moved into their new home at 29 St. James’s Place, where Lady Churchill’s marriage settlement permitted them to have electric lights installed, which created something of a stir as they enjoyed such a technological innovation a full nine years before the Lord Mayor did.<sup>52</sup> Lord Churchill returned immediately to Woodstock to stand for the General Election in 1880. Despite his family name and a previously secure seat in the House of Commons, the Conservatives were in political danger. Lord Churchill won his seat back by a mere sixty votes. The next few years in office proved critical for him to regain the trust of his constituents.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 129-130; Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 98-109.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Rhodes James, *Lord Randolph Churchill: Winston Churchill’s Father* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, Inc., 1960), 60.

<sup>52</sup> De Mendelssohn, *The Age of Churchill*, 43.

<sup>53</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 119; Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 137.

Their time in Ireland had brought Lord and Lady Churchill together, and they found they shared a new love for politics. Lady Churchill began attending speeches at the House of Commons and sat for several hours a day in the Ladies' Gallery, where wives of the members could listen, or the Speaker's Gallery, where one could listen to speeches if invited by the particular speaker on hand. While it slowly became fashionable for politicians' wives to pay attention to the goings on in Parliament, the physical barrier separating men and women in the House of Commons remained a critical division, both literally and figuratively, and illustrated the distinct spheres of British culture. Regardless of the division, Lady Churchill spent near countless hours listening to speeches, following about British politics, and conversing with the other politicians' wives; thus, the Ladies' and Speaker's Galleries became key space where political and social intrigues could take place.<sup>54</sup>

During the early years of his return to the House, Lord Churchill began working with Sir Henry Wolff, John Gorst, and Arthur Balfour in creating a "Fourth Party," in addition to the three political parties existing at this time in Britain: Conservatives, Liberals, and Tories. The Fourth Party criticized the weakness of the Liberal government in power and the fumbling opposition of the Conservative Party. These men met at Lady Churchill's home on a regular basis between 1880 and 1884 as her "house became the rendezvous of all shades of politicians."<sup>55</sup> Lady Churchill watched as "Many were the plots and plans which were hatched in my presence by the Fourth Party, who, notwithstanding the seriousness of their endeavours, found time to laugh heartily and often at their own frustrated machinations."<sup>56</sup> For the most part, these men simply found a way to voice their dissatisfaction with all of the political parties presently engaged in the House. But more important for Lady Churchill, all

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<sup>54</sup> Leslie, *The Remarkable Mr. Jerome*, 224. Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 119-120.

<sup>55</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 124.

<sup>56</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 124.

but an official member of the Fourth Party, the meetings gave her an opportunity to further her understanding the complexity of backroom deals in politics. The party also provided her an opportunity to slowly begin re-entering British social circles through a political door.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to the establishment of the Fourth Party, Lady Churchill began testing the political waters somewhat independent of her husband. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, another Conservative politician, approached Lord Churchill in 1883 about creating a new political society that could cut through all socioeconomic classes in Britain. They called the organization the “Primrose League,” reflecting former Prime Minister Disraeli’s favorite flower. Primrose members stated that their purpose was to “embrace all classes and all creeds except atheists and enemies of the British Empire.”<sup>58</sup> The Duchess of Marlborough served as President of the Ladies Council, and Lady Churchill became a “dame” in the organization. Wearing badges with the individual number of their membership, No. 11. Lady Churchill traveled widely with her mother-in-law, organizing sing-songs and presentations in an effort to win converts to the Conservative party. While the Tories and Liberals mocked the new organization, the Primrose League spread across England. For once, the Conservatives beat the other two parties at their own game: crossing class barriers as they used attractive women to mingle with the working classes to win votes. Twenty years after its inception, the Primrose League boasted membership surpassing one million people, a fact that helped keep the Conservatives in power.<sup>59</sup> The Primrose League also afforded Lady Churchill the opportunity to find her own voice in politics and discover that while she feared public speaking, she delivered speeches with ease and charisma. She also realized that she

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<sup>57</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 31, 145.

<sup>58</sup> Anita Leslie, *Lady Randolph Churchill: The Story of Jennie Jerome* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969), 100.

<sup>59</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 135.

possessed a great talent with the written word, a gift that later helped her husband in his own political career.<sup>60</sup>

By this time, the Churchill marriage functioned as more of a political “alliance than a love affair.”<sup>61</sup> Early in their marriage, Lord Churchill contracted syphilis as a result of an extramarital affair. Since his wife never contracted the disease, and syphilis is highly infectious for the first two years, he probably told his wife, and they never engaged in sexual relations again. Syphilis occurs in three stages: primary, secondary, and tertiary. In an era before modern medicine and penicillin, the infected person would assuredly suffer the first two stages but might be spared the third and most horrid stage. Between 50 and 70 percent of those infected with syphilis never enter this stage. But for those who do, death follows through painful and slow means: lesions on the skin, bone, and vital organs; cardiovascular syphilis, or the disintegration of heart valves; or neurosyphilis in which the disease destroys the brain, resulting in personality changes and eventual insanity.<sup>62</sup>

Lord Churchill likely acquired syphilis in 1875, and the disease affected his entire marriage. Rather than divorcing, Lord and Lady Churchill spent weeks and even months apart, which fueled gossip about their faltering marriage and adultery committed by both parties. Even though the couple’s marriage ended from a conventional viewpoint, Lady Churchill remained loyal to her husband with regard to his political career and frequent elections. Beginning in the 1880s, Lady Churchill became her husband’s informal campaign manager and brought an American style of politics and campaigning to Great Britain. Between 1884 and 1886, Lady Churchill supervised her husband’s campaigns and became the face and voice most associated with “The Wasp from Woodstock,” as he became

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<sup>60</sup> Leslie, *Lady Randolph Churchill*, 123; Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 142.

<sup>61</sup> Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 215.

<sup>62</sup> Kehoe, *The Titled Americans*, 76-78.

known.<sup>63</sup> British and American campaigns functioned very differently in this period. British politicians often printed and passed out flyers for election bids, while Americans seeking office took a much more assertive, to the point of aggressive, approach to public office. Bringing a distinctive American style to her husband's campaigns, Lady Churchill traveled across Woodstock, going door to door and factory to factory, seeking votes for her husband. Accompanied by her mother-in-law, Lady Churchill trotted through the countryside behind horses decorated with pink and brown ribbons, Lord Randolph's racing colors. They planned to call on each of the one thousand wives in Woodstock and to visit various factories where their husbands worked. When she approached voters, Lady Churchill simply stated, "Please vote for my husband; I shall be so unhappy if you don't."<sup>64</sup> Accompanied by her winning smile, she won many votes for her husband. Even her home country followed their American woman's efforts. Writing to his wife, Leonard Jerome bragged, "You have no idea how universally Jennie is talked about and how proud the Americans are of her."<sup>65</sup>

During one of Lord Churchill's elections, his wife and mother often heard various "jingling rhymes" discussing the American approach Lady Churchill had taking in securing her husband's reelection.

But just as I was talking,  
     With Neighbour Brown and walking,  
 To take a mug of beer at the Unicorn and Lion  
     (For there's somehow a connection),  
 Who should come but Lady Churchill,  
     with a turnout that was fine.  
 And before me stopped her horses  
     As she marshaled all her forces,  
 And before I knew what happened I had promised her my vote;  
     And before I quite recovered  
 From the vision that had hovered,

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<sup>63</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 193.

<sup>64</sup> Leslie, *The Remarkable Mr. Jerome*, 232.

<sup>65</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 202.

'Twas much too late to rally, and I had changed my coat.  
 And over Woodstock darted  
     On their mission brave, whole-hearted,  
 The tandem and their driver and the ribbons pink and brown,  
     And a smile that twinkled over,  
 And that made a man most love her,  
     Took the hearts and votes of all Liberals in the town.  
 Bless my soul! that Yankee Lady,  
     Whether day was bright or shady,  
 Dashed about the district like an oriflamme of war.  
     When the voters saw her bonnet,  
 With the bright pink roses on it,  
     They followed as the soldiers did the Helmet of Navarre.<sup>66</sup>

But not everyone received Lady Churchill's efforts with approval or amusement. Her perceived American approach to campaigns and to the voters especially offended many British constituents. When visiting the workers at a factory one day, Lady Churchill met with utter silence. When she inquired why they would not speak to her, a man responded, "We don't like being asked for our votes." Lady Churchill replied, "But you have something I want. How am I to get it, if I don't ask for it?" This retort raised a laugh from the gentlemen, but Lady Churchill's approach did not always melt the hearts of the voters. As she went door to door, a Woodstock wife answered. When Lady Churchill asked to speak to the woman's husband, the woman called to her husband, who was in the cellar, "Lady Churchill wants to see you." He responded, "Oh, does she? Well, tell Mrs. Churchill to go to —," at which point Lady Churchill "beat a hasty retreat."<sup>67</sup>

Although Lady Churchill found meeting with constituents sometimes trying, she always enjoyed the excitement of elections. Writing her memoirs, she remembered, "Reveling in the hustle and bustle of the Committee rooms, marshaling our forces, and hearing the hourly reports of how the campaign was progressing, I felt like a general holding

<sup>66</sup> Peregrine Churchill and Julian Mitchell, *Jennie: Lady Randolph Churchill, A Portrait with Letters* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), 131-32.

<sup>67</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 173-174.

a council-of-war with his staff in the heat of battle.”<sup>68</sup> Sir Henry James, the Attorney General, noted Lady Churchill’s influence on the elections in a letter he wrote to her congratulating her success: “You must let me very sincerely and heartily congratulate you on the results of the election, especially as that result proceeded so very much from your personal exertions. Everybody is praising you very much.”<sup>69</sup> Realizing the value of his American wife for his political career, Lord Churchill once wrote to her, “If I win, you will have all the glory.”<sup>70</sup> With his wife at the political helm, Churchill won all of his re-election bids, and his wife did receive great accolades for her efforts, not only from her husband but also from her mother-in-law and the British public as a whole. Lady Churchill slowly endeared herself to the British public through these elections. She also found the Queen’s favor, as Victoria chose to confer upon Lady Churchill the Order of the Crown of India in 1885. A royal recognition of this magnitude was quite an accomplishment for any American as the Queen, originally found Anglo-American marriages distasteful.<sup>71</sup>

In 1886, the Conservatives took back the House of Commons and Lord Salisbury became Prime Minister. As a result, Lord Churchill moved from Secretary of State for India, to which he was named in 1885, to become Leader of the House of Commons and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, all at the young age of thirty-six.<sup>72</sup> But his tenure at these posts was short-lived. Syphilis began to take over his mind and body in this decade, and Lord Churchill became increasing antagonistic and combative to even his closest friends and political allies. Six months after taking these posts, Lord Churchill picked a fight with the

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<sup>68</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 166.

<sup>69</sup> Churchill and Mitchell, *Jennie . . . A Portrait with Letters*, 132-133.

<sup>70</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 195.

<sup>71</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 178. Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, 104.

<sup>72</sup> *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, From Earliest Times to 1900*. Compiled by J. A. Venn, Part II. From 1752 to 1900. Volume II. Chalmers-Fytche. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944, 38. Soames, *Winston and Clementine*, 651.

prime minister over the budget and resigned that December with absolutely no warning to the Queen, his party, or to his wife. The following morning, Lady Churchill read the announcement in the London *Times*. When she came downstairs for breakfast with the newspaper in her hand, her husband smiled and simply said, “Quite a surprise for you.”<sup>73</sup> They never discussed it further; Lord Churchill’s mind had left him and there was little reason to engage him in any sort of rational argument. One newspaper wrote, “We are sorry Randy [Lord Randolph] is in the muck less for his own account than for that of the gallant American girl he had the luck to marry. She had worked so hard to popularize him and forward his ends.”<sup>74</sup>

Over the next decade, Lady Churchill tended to her husband as he began a slow decline in body and mind. When the chance for any recovery had left him, Lord and Lady Churchill took a final trip around the world, starting in June 1894. They visited the United States, Canada, and the Far East. Originally, they planned to spend several months in India, but Lord Randolph’s health failed, and they returned quickly to England. On January 23, 1895, he slipped into a coma and died early the next morning, the cause of death listed as “General Paralysis of the Insane.”<sup>75</sup> Some weeks later, when a Parliamentary representative came to retrieve Lord Churchill’s robes of office, Lady Churchill refused to surrender them, boldly declaring, “I am saving them for my son.”<sup>76</sup>

While she had not been able to make her husband Prime Minister, Lady Churchill now determined to make her son’s political career a success. For twenty years, her own ambitions had been intertwined with her husband’s. She now placed the same drive and

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<sup>73</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 184.

<sup>74</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 205.

<sup>75</sup> Churchill and Mitchell, *Jennie . . . A Portrait with Letters*, 170.

<sup>76</sup> Ralph G. Martin, *Jennie: The Life of Lady Randolph Churchill*, Volume II, *The Dramatic Years, 1895-1921* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), 99.

determination into Winston's career, becoming his unofficial political agent.<sup>77</sup> He later described her as "an ardent ally, furthering my plan and guarding my interests with all her influence and boundless energy."<sup>78</sup> But in looking at her own life, Lady Churchill felt overcome with despair. Widowed at forty, what would she do now without her husband? While her Anglo-American marriage had ended, her tenure as an informal ambassador had just begun.<sup>79</sup>

#### "AMERICAN AMAZONS" AND THE *ANGLO-SAXON REVIEW*

In 1895, several events transpired that forced Lady Churchill to reconsider her life in Britain. First, her son Winston spent several months in the United States after his father's death. Writing to his mother about his time in her home country, he exclaimed, "What an extraordinary people the Americans are! Their hospitality is a revelation to me and they make you feel at home and at ease in a way that I have never before experienced."<sup>80</sup> While the United States was his mother's country, people, and heritage, they were a part of him as well, a fact he relayed in numerous letters to his family in Britain. As he wrote in one letter, "I am a child of both worlds," meaning that his mother was a part of both the New and Old Worlds as well.<sup>81</sup> In 1895, she had spent the first twenty years of her life in the United States and the next twenty in Britain; thus, she could claim to identify as a member of both countries. Rather than feel divided by these two loyalties, Lady Churchill felt a deep attachment to both her country of birth and country by marriage. This connection to both the

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<sup>77</sup> Juliet Gardiner, ed., *The History Today: Who's Who in British History* (London: Collins & Brown, 2000), 180.

<sup>78</sup> Churchill, *My Early Life*, 62.

<sup>79</sup> Kehoe, *The Titled Americans*, 176; Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 378-79; Leslie, *Men Were Different*, 78.

<sup>80</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume II, 71-72.

<sup>81</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume II, 72.

United States and Great Britain only intensified as a result of an Anglo-American crisis in 1895 over a boundary in South America.

The United States and Great Britain had quarreled about the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana for decades, but not until President Grover Cleveland demanded in the fall of 1895 that Britain submit to arbitration over the border did the issue develop into an Anglo-American crisis. Cleveland threatened war, if necessary, and the British government marveled at why the Americans suddenly found this decades-old crisis so imperative now. Conditions between the United States and Britain became so tense that many in the American colony in London found themselves in a very uncomfortable situation, and many Americans withdrew to Europe or to the United States for an indefinite period. But Lady Churchill had no intention of abandoning this predicament. Instead, having learned from her days at the center of London's political and social circles, she quietly began hosting small dinners for the most influential persons in London. She strove to assure governmental leaders and influential newspaper editors that extreme political propagandists had created false "war talk," and that such sensationalism would soon disappear. After spending time in England, one U.S. general reported to the American press that Lady Churchill led some ten American women,

ten daughters of the United States, who are working quietly and mightily to prevent war between the two countries that are looking at each other in a sinister way. For these women, the war means a thousand times as much as it does to other American; and they have untold power of international arbitration. . . . These particular ten are so situated that they are in the midst of the greatest powers that rule England today. Their influence, thrown upon the scales, would turn it whichever way they bent themselves.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume II, 74. By 1895, many American-born, British-wed women were living in Great Britain. It is difficult for historians today to identify specifically the ten women this particularly newspaper article was referring to, but ten leading American women during this period were: Lady Churchill, his sister

Lady Churchill kept her dinners private, so as not to draw attention to her subtle campaign or ruffle any feathers on either side of the Atlantic, but her efforts had a significant calming effect on the situation. British and American newspapers noted her leadership as the American leader of Anglo-American brides living in Britain. One Boston newspaper ran an article with the headline, “Lady Churchill was U. S. Best Ambassador.”<sup>83</sup> One British correspondent wrote in the *New York Journal*, “It is difficult to estimate the power Lady Randolph Churchill would have in preventing a conflict between the two countries . . . . Cousins, friends, dear relatives and fortune over there! Home, children and immediate interests here!”<sup>84</sup> The same article went on to argue that “If there should come hard war talk, Lady Randolph Churchill would set out lecturing, as she did when she elected her husband a few years ago. And her talks would put things straight in a short time. . . . And she would be convincing.”<sup>85</sup> Clearly, the United States and Great Britain now regarded their Anglo-American women as intermediaries between the two countries. As a result, 1895 marked a year when Lady Churchill began viewing her position as an American in Britain as an asset and began acting more and more as an overt ambassador between her two countries.

Using her talents made manifest during the 1895 crisis, Lady Churchill continued hosting and attended dinner parties. But a specific dinner party in 1898 opened a new chapter in her life as an informal ambassador. When George Curzon, the husband of a fellow Anglo-American bride, was named Viceroy of India, Lady Churchill attended a going-away dinner party for the couple. At one point during the party, she had a long conversation with

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Clara Frewen, her other sister, Leonie Leslie, Consuelo (the Duchess of Manchester), Consuelo (the Duchess of Marlborough), Mary Chamberlain, Lily Hammersley, Mrs. A. A. Blow, Fanny Reynolds, and Cornelia Adair.

<sup>83</sup> Kehoe, *The Titled Americans*, 200.

<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth Eliot, *Heiresses and Coronets: The Story of Lovely Ladies and Noble Men* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959), 73.

<sup>85</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume II, 74.

the appointed. They discussed her position in society and her widowhood. Lady Churchill “bemoaned the empty life [she] was leading at that moment.”<sup>86</sup> Curzon attempted to comfort her by explaining that a “woman alone was a godsend to society, and that I might look forward to a long vista of country-house parties, dinners, and balls.”<sup>87</sup> In the days after the dinner, Lady Churchill pondered Curzon’s words to her and “found [herself] wondering if this indeed was all that the remainder of my life held for me. . . .”<sup>88</sup>

Instead of waiting for the next dinner invitation, Lady Churchill decided to start a literary review focusing on the relationship between the United States and Great Britain. Thus far, Lady Churchill had endeared herself to the Marlborough family and the British monarchy. She had conquered the London social scene and had fine-tuned her political management skills for her husband. Why not try her hand at a literary publication? Although such a publication seemed reasonable given her American and British connections, a female editor was unusual for the Victorian period. While this endeavor gave Lady Churchill an opportunity to unite her two countries and a task to keep her busy following the death of her husband, she could not forget that such a publication was a business venture. She had to identify an audience, retain readers, and generate a product that people wanted to consume.<sup>89</sup>

She originally named her magazine *The Anglo-American Review* but later changed it to the *Anglo-Saxon Review*, as the previous name was taken.<sup>90</sup> The journal became known as

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<sup>86</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 361.

<sup>87</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 361.

<sup>88</sup> Churchill and Mitchell, *Jennie . . . A Portrait with Letters*, 172.

<sup>89</sup> For more on the nature of editorship and gender, see chapter three in Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green, and Judith Johnston, *Gender and the Victorian Periodical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>90</sup> Lady Churchill to John Lane, April 19, 1899, Jan 21, 1899, June 2, 1899, John Lane Company Record, Folder 9.4, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin. The complete correspondence between Lady Churchill and John Lane is held at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin. The letters begin in April, 1899, and continue through November,

“Maggie” for short among the numerous people Lady Churchill approached to contribute to her periodical. Upon the advice of Winston, Lady Churchill approached publisher John Lane to work with her on the journal. Lady Churchill began the project with considerable faith in Lane, originally touted by her son, and his ability to promote her journal. But the two quickly began quarreling about money, and the publication suffered because of their squabbling.<sup>91</sup>

The first *Anglo-Saxon Review* appeared in June 1899. Lady Churchill’s objective in publishing “Maggie,” focused on her desire “to render the U. S. and Great Britain more intelligible to each other.”<sup>92</sup> She approached notable individuals from both countries to write articles on a number of subjects, including history, science, art, and current events as well as original printings of plays and poems. In 1900, the *New York Times* confirmed that “the literary contents are skillfully varied between history, fiction, “actuality,” and criticism.”<sup>93</sup> Contributors included the Hon. Whitehall Reid, American ambassador to Britain; Henry James, the author; George Bernard Shaw, the playwright; various members of the aristocracy, and Lady Churchill herself. From the subjects published in the journal to the writers themselves, the *Anglo-Saxon Review* provided a literary connection between elites Anglo-Americans. The quarterly publication served as an intellectual reminder that a special connection existed between the United States and Great Britain.

But Lady Churchill did not market the *Anglo-Saxon Review* to a wide audience on both sides of the Atlantic. Rather, the price of the publication, a guinea per issue

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1900. The Churchill Archives Centre at Churchill College in Cambridge also holds a complete set of the correspondence as well.

<sup>91</sup> Lady Churchill to John Lane, Correspondence, John Lane Company Record, Folder 9.4, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin. Heated financial discussions began between Mr. Lane and Lady Churchill began early in their business relationship and continued throughout their correspondence.

<sup>92</sup> Kraus, *Young Lady Randolph*, 349.

<sup>93</sup> *New York Times*, 28 April 1900.

(approximately £70 or \$140 in today's money) automatically limited the potential subscribers, and thus circulation, to the magazine. Part of this limitation stemmed from Lady Churchill's wish to separate her publication from the "miles of newspapers, tons of magazine articles, mountains of periodicals [which] are distributed daily between sunrise and sunset. They are printed; they are read; they are forgotten." Lady Churchill hoped that the price of the periodical alone would make her readers value the publication more than other sources of information in the period and collect the quarterly as one of "the best products of an age."<sup>94</sup> Rather, she intended her publication to connect the peoples of her two countries as she identified them: the *authentic* British aristocracy and the *manufactured* American aristocracy. Only one of the ten volumes of the *Anglo-Saxon Review* includes a list of subscribers. The March 1900 quarterly (volume VI) presented the first and only index of subscribers. Much like the record of marriages between American heiresses and British aristocrats, the record reads as a political and social "Who's Who" among Anglo-Americans: the Prince of Wales, Hon. Arthur Balfour (future prime minister), O. H. P. Belmont, M. Paul Cambon (the French Ambassador), Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain, J. M. Choate (the U. S. Ambassador to Britain) George Cornwallis-West, Lady Curzon of Kedleston, the U. S. Department of State, Moreton Frewen, Mrs. Ogden Goelet, Levi Z. Leiter, Mrs. Jack Leslie, Mrs. Pierpont Morgan, Mrs. Arthur Paget, Hon. Whitelaw Reid, Alfred Rothschild, Mrs. W. H. Sherman, Cornelius Vanderbilt, W. K. Vanderbilt, Mrs. Henry Whitney, numerous members of the aristocracy, and public libraries including Athenaeum Library in Minneapolis, Carnegie Library in Alleghany and Pittsburg, Iowa State Library, Leeds Library, Manchester Free Library, and the New York Public Library. The journal reached an

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<sup>94</sup> Lady Randolph Spencer Churchill, editor, *The Anglo-Saxon Review*. A Quarterly Miscellany. Vol. I. June 1899 (London and New York: John Lane, 1899), 1. Texas Christian University, Mary Coutts Burnett Library, Special Collections.

affluent audience in Britain and the United States with private subscriptions and a wider audience for those who chose to read the magazine in various public libraries in both countries. But the high price of the periodical remained a point of criticism. On July 2, 1899, the *New York Times* announced that “Lady Randolph has planned her quarterly with daring and originality and has carried it out with remarkable success.”<sup>95</sup> In the same breath, another New York paper reasoned, “You pay five dollars for this magazine. It may be good, but you can buy *The World* for a cent.”<sup>96</sup>

After publishing ten volumes, Lady Churchill’s Anglo-American literary project ended. The publication had failed to produce a profit, and the business relationship between her and Lane prevented them from working together to find an alternative to publishing the volumes or seeking a wider audience. Lane felt that Lady Churchill was too controlling over the quarterly and would not listen to his suggestions. Likewise disappointed in her business partner, she felt that he never cared about her publication, was constantly out of the country and unavailable for discussions, and only cared about the volumes if they turned a profit. Thus, both parties ended the venture on a sour note.<sup>97</sup> The short-lived existence of the *Anglo-Saxon Review* came down to money, a topic that never interested Lady Churchill as long as she could maintain her lifestyle and social engagements. Despondent over the journal’s end, she confided to her sister, “I no longer even want to understand money. . . . There is never enough of it however hard one tries. Better to put it from one’s mind and trust in fate.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *New York Times*, July 2, 1899.

<sup>96</sup> Kraus, *Young Lady Randolph*, 349.

<sup>97</sup> Lady Churchill to John Lane, December 15, 1900, January 5, 1901, November 25, 1901, John Lane Company Record, Folder 9.4, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin. CHAR 28/81/9, CHAR 28/71/1, CHAR 28/67/22, CHAR 28/25/51-52, CHAR 28/36/32, CHAR 28/71/1-2, CHAR 27/71/9, CHAR 28/71/33, CHAR 28/77/85, Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge, England.

<sup>98</sup> Leslie, *Lady Randolph Churchill*, 262.

A disappointing end to her literary career did not stop Lady Churchill from taking on yet another Anglo-American project. In the fall of 1899, the Boer War began in South Africa, an imperial struggle between British forces and African rebels. A similar conflict between the United States and Cubans occurred a year earlier in the Spanish-American-Cuban War. Many Anglo-Americans drew similarities between the two encounters and concluded that the United States and Great Britain fought similar colonial wars as a consequence of their overseas empires, an international development that brought the two countries closer together at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>99</sup> Approaching the war from her distinctly unique informal ambassador status, Lady Churchill considered organizing an American hospital ship to take to South Africa to tend to the wounded soldiers, which she felt could do a great deal of good for both her countries. She shared the idea with a friend, Sir William Garstin, a famous Egyptologist and the closest thing to an expert on South Africa, who encouraged her to follow through with the proposal, predicting, “Believe me, you will be making history.”<sup>100</sup> After conferring with a number of American-born, British-wed women, including her two sisters, Lady Churchill decided to go forward with the project.<sup>101</sup>

On October 25, 1899, Lady Churchill held the first committee meeting for the organization of the hospital-ship. The committee selected Mrs. A. A. Blow as Honorary Secretary; Fanny Ronalds, Treasurer; Mrs. Cornelia Adair, Vice-Chairman; and Lady

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<sup>99</sup> For more on the U.S.-U.K. imperial connection between the Spanish-American and Boer Wars, see Richard B. Mulanax, “South Africa and the United States at the End of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1992).

<sup>100</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume II, 200.

<sup>101</sup> The idea for an American-sponsored ship was originally suggested by Mrs. A. A. Blow, the American wife of the manager of one of South Africa’s richest mining syndicates. Kehoe, *The Titled Americans*, 209. Lady Churchill’s older sister, Clara, married Moreton Frewen, a real estate speculator from a distinguished Sussex family, in 1881. Her younger sister, Leonie, married Sir John Leslie, a handsome and artistic man from a noteworthy Irish family, in 1883.

Churchill, Chairman. The women decided that the funds raised to purchase a hospital-ship would come strictly from American donations and that a combination of American and British doctors and seamen on-board the ship would constitute the ship's staff. The women began immediately organizing fundraising activities such as concerts and public entertainments. They also petitioned donations from wealthy Americans. On October 27, 1899, a solicitation appeared in the *New York Times*:

Whereas, The people of Great Britain, by their sympathy and moral support, materially aided the people of the United States in the war over Cuba and the Philippines; It is resolved that the American women in Great Britain, while deploring the necessity for war, shall endeavor to raise among their compatriots here and in America a fund for the relief of sick and wounded soldiers and refugees in South Africa. It is proposed to dispatch immediately a suitable hospital ship, fully equipped, with medical stores and provisions, to accommodate 200 patients for three months, with a staff of four doctors, five nurses, and forty non-commissioned officers and orderlies. To carry the foregoing resolution into effect the sum of £30,000 (\$150,000) will be required which will have to be raised within a fortnight. Your sympathy and cooperation are earnestly desired.<sup>102</sup>

The "American Amazons," as they named their organization, met daily during October and November. The women and their project received great approval from Americans and Britons. The *New York Times* regularly published all donations made to the cause, often the same people who subscribed to the *Anglo-Saxon Review*. The *St. James's Gazette* praised the women, explaining, "Few more graceful examples could be imagined of the courteous spirit of American sympathy with this country. . . . the widespread and generous responses to its appeals from both sides of the Atlantic show how warmly the merciful idea is accepted by the citizens in both countries."<sup>103</sup> One British paper commended "our American cousins," with another noting that "they have formed a strong committee,

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<sup>102</sup> *New York Times*, 27 October 1899.

<sup>103</sup> *New York Times*, 3 November 1899.

with Lady Randolph Churchill at its head. It is to be supposed, therefore, that the result will be a great success.”<sup>104</sup>

Within two months, the group had raised over £45,000, more than enough to purchase a ship, hire a full staff, and sail to South Africa.<sup>105</sup> They purchased a former cattle boat from Bernard Nagel Baker, the owner of the Atlantic Transport Company. Bernard generously agreed to transform the vessel into a hospital-ship and maintain the ship and a crew—including four doctors and five nurses, all American, and a total of forty commissioned British officers and orderlies—at his expense. Ironically, the ship’s name was the *Maine*, the same name of the ship that played a central role in the Spanish-American War.<sup>106</sup>

Under a British flag presented on behalf of Queen Victoria and an American flag, the *Maine* set sail for Cape Town, South Africa, on December 23, 1899. Lady Churchill decided to accompany the ship on its journey not only to settle any minor disagreements between the British and American staffs, but also because the American Amazons felt “the committee should be represented by a person of authority without a salary.”<sup>107</sup> Not surprising to Lady Churchill, conflicts arose between the American and British crews on their way to South Africa, and she smoothed things over between her two sets of countrymen and women. But upon their arrival in South Africa, the crew quickly began setting about their objective: caring for the sick and wounded soldiers regardless of nationality.

Having no medical training, Lady Churchill helped the doctors and nurses when she could but spent most of her time writing letters home from the wounded soldiers. After four months of service, British soldiers name the new 4.7 gun the *Lady Randolph Churchill* in

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<sup>104</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume II, 202.

<sup>105</sup> Leslie, *Lady Randolph Churchill*, 265.

<sup>106</sup> Kehoe, *The Titled Americans*, 209.

<sup>107</sup> Leslie, *Lady Randolph Churchill*, 269.

honor of her work. Just before the ship returned to Britain, Lady Churchill received a letter of thanks from a group of soldiers. In part, it read, “It is impossible to express in a few words adequate thanks for all the comforts we have received on board . . . We hope the next voyage of the ship will be as pleasant to you as this one has been to all of us.”<sup>108</sup> She also received letters of thanks from Elihu Root, American Secretary State of War, the Lords of Commissioners of the Admiralty, Vice Admiral E. H. Seymour, and the U. S. War Department.<sup>109</sup> Lady Churchill described her work as “one of the most thrilling experiences of my life, certainly the most important public work I have ever tried to do.”<sup>110</sup>

Upon her return to Britain, she married in 1900 Captain George Cornwallis-West, a man twenty years her junior and an officer of the Scots Guards. They later divorced in 1913 but always remained fond of one another.<sup>111</sup> Five years later, Lady Churchill married a much younger man in 1918, colonial administrator, Montague Phippen Porch. The London *Daily Mail* described her in 1912 as “the busiest woman in London . . . she has always been energetic. It is in her American blood.”<sup>112</sup> But when World War I began in 1914, Lady Churchill (as she remained known throughout her life despite her husband’s death and her subsequent marriages) did not lead the American women’s efforts in Britain. The transatlantic torch had passed to another American-born, British-wed bride living in London. Nonetheless, Lady Churchill remained a notable woman in Britain and the United States until

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<sup>108</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 454.

<sup>109</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 458-60.

<sup>110</sup> Cornwallis-West, *Reminiscences*, 460.

<sup>111</sup> Hesketh Pearson, *The Marrying Americans* (New York: Coward McCann, Inc., 1961), 84. The public often noted that Captain West was born the same year that Lady Churchill married her first husband. Despite their divorce, Captain West spoke fondly of Lady Churchill throughout his life. George Cornwallis West, *Edwardian Hey-Days: Or a Little About a Lot of Things* (New York: Putnam, 1930).

<sup>112</sup> Kehoe, *The Titled Americans*, 275.

her death on June 29, 1921, at the age of sixty-seven. She was buried at the churchyard at the Marlborough family estate, Blenheim Palace, next to Lord Churchill.<sup>113</sup>

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Lady Churchill's term as an informal Anglo-American ambassador had come to an end. Once described as "one of the greatest political and social powers of Great Britain," she lived her life to the fullest until the very end of her days.<sup>114</sup> Daisy Warwick, an old friend, wrote to Lady Churchill, "Do you remember all the fun we had together in the old days, dear Jennie? But I never *regret* anything, do you? We have both *lived* our lives."<sup>115</sup> During her exciting life in England and Ireland, she represented the United States to Great Britain during a critical time in Anglo-American relations. Her marriage marked the beginning of hundreds of transatlantic marriages, specifically marriages between American heiresses and leading British men. Through her success in the political and social circles in London, and her philanthropic activities in Ireland, she represented the United States to Great Britain. Her distinctly American approach to her husband's political campaigns and her own interests in politics made "the Conservative party more democratic [and enlarged] the sphere of women's activities" in Britain while advancing both of their respective careers in Britain.<sup>116</sup> Her assertive and unique projects aimed at bolstering Anglo-American relations met with success and failure. Nonetheless, she placed herself squarely between her two countries with such undertakings by serving as an informal ambassador when the nineteenth century came to a

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<sup>113</sup> *New York Times*, 24 January 1965.

<sup>114</sup> *Titled Americans: A List of American Ladies Who Have Married Foreigners of Rank* (New York: Street & Smith, 1890), 156.

<sup>115</sup> Churchill and Mitchell, *Jennie . . . A Portrait with Letters*, 267.

<sup>116</sup> *New York Times*, 2 May 1943.

close. Lady Churchill reached legendary status during her life with one magazine describing her as “the most influential Anglo-Saxon woman in the world.”<sup>117</sup>

Lady Churchill’s zest for life caught the eye of a young Lord Randolph Churchill and endeared her to the British public over the span of her life. A fellow Anglo-American bride, Mary Leiter Curzon, once wrote to Lady Churchill, “You are the only person who lives on the crest of the wave and is always full of vitality and success.”<sup>118</sup> Although she received no formal training from the United States government, the U.S. could not have selected a more charming, well-bred, beautiful, or talented hostess to represent the country at a time when Anglo-American relations could have improved or worsened significantly. Margot Asquith, wife of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, once proclaimed that “she could have governed the world.”<sup>119</sup> Lady Churchill took on the duties of the traditional diplomat’s wife—hostessing and establishing important contacts with influential people—while acting as a diplomat in her own right—taking on a public role and influencing public opinion concerning her country of birth to her country by marriage. In so doing, Lady Churchill, formerly Jennie Jerome of New York, shaped Britons’ opinions of Americans throughout her adult life. By all definitions, she served as an informal ambassador for the United States as a result of her transatlantic marriage.

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<sup>117</sup> Author unknown, “The Most Influential Anglo-Saxon Society Woman in the World,” *Current Literature*, 45, no. 6 (1908), 626-629.

<sup>118</sup> *New York Times*, November 7, 1908.

<sup>119</sup> Martin, *Jennie*, Volume I, xii.

## Chapter Five

### Formerly Miss Vanderbilt: Consuelo Marlborough Balsan

So is it surprising that an American girl who held democratic views found it difficult to accept the assumption that birth alone confers superiority?

—Consuelo Balsan<sup>1</sup>

While Americans and Britons looked to Lady Churchill to calm fears on both sides of the Atlantic in the midst of the Venezuelan boundary crisis, a new American heiress reluctantly prepared to join the ever-growing number of American-born, British-wed wives living in Britain. Unlike the marriage between Lord Randolph Churchill and Jennie Jerome, neither the bride nor the groom wanted to proceed with the union. The nuptials took place under duress even as newspapers described Lady Churchill as America's best ambassador during a significant Anglo-American crisis. Nevertheless, the ceremony proved to be the social event of year in New York and had a much-needed calming effect on British-American relations. As Charles S. Campbell argues, the ostentatious wedding "created an unintended tranquilizing effect on the contemporary Venezuelan affair by providing the American public with a far more fascinating spectacle even than the most provocative of Secretary [of State Richard] Olney's notes."<sup>2</sup>

Almost from the beginning, the union began to disintegrate. Neither Consuelo Vanderbilt, great-granddaughter of Cornelius "Commodore" Vanderbilt, nor her fiancé Charles Spencer-Churchill, the Ninth Duke of Marlborough and Winston Churchill's cousin,

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<sup>1</sup> Consuelo Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold* (First published, 1953; second edition, Maidstone, England: George Mann Books, 1973), xi.

<sup>2</sup> Charles S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding, 1898-1903* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957), 9. For more on the Venezuelan boundary dispute, see Robert L. Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900* (Arlington Heights, IL: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1975), 98-125.

chose the other as their marriage partner and both claimed to be in love with other people. But both parties succumbed to pressure from their families and proceeded with the union. In Consuelo's case, her mother forced upon her daughter what she had always longed for herself, imposing her own definitions of happiness and success upon a naïve eighteen-year-old girl, not yet a woman. For the Duke of Marlborough, his family encouraged their son to make a strategic match with a wealthy American heiress as their own financial condition demanded such security. But much to the surprise of Consuelo and both of her families, American and English, her life abroad did much to shape British and American opinions, even after her marriage failed.

Like Lady Churchill, Consuelo Vanderbilt Marlborough married a leading member of the British peerage. But these two American women approached their lives in Britain, as a result of their marriages, very differently. While Lady Churchill's life serves as an excellent example of one woman's efforts to improve Anglo-American relations, Consuelo did not use her position in Britain openly to pursue the same cause. Instead, her life provides an opportunity to analyze the question of personal and national identity as she negotiated between her country of birth and country by marriage. Without a doubt, Consuelo's years in Britain made her a leading American woman living in Britain at the turn of the century.

Born in the early hours of Friday, March 2, 1877, Consuelo Vanderbilt was the first child and only daughter of Alva Erskine Smith and William Kissam Vanderbilt. Her mother, originally from Mobile, Alabama, met William K. Vanderbilt through a close childhood friend, Consuelo Yznaga of Natchez, Mississippi. Determined to marry well and escape the post-Civil War devastation of the South, Alva approached William as she did everything in her life: with strategic and deliberate calculations. The two married on April 20, 1875, and

the bride later bragged, “I was the first of my set to marry a Vanderbilt.”<sup>3</sup> Alva had accomplished her dream of permanently leaving the South and entering New York society by her marriage to a wealthy man. Or so she thought.<sup>4</sup>

Alva quickly came to two startling realizations shortly after her marriage. First, New York society did not welcome new money into their elite circles; thus, her marriage to a Vanderbilt guaranteed her nothing in terms of mingling with the upper crust of New York. Second, marriage to a rich American man no longer marked the pinnacle by which a young and beautiful American woman could aim her marital ambitions. While Alva’s marriage to William K. Vanderbilt seemed quite impressive in 1875, a year later the wedding paled in comparison to the splendor of her best friend’s wedding. On May 22, 1876, Consuelo Yznaga married Viscount Kim Mandeville, the future 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Manchester, which made his wife Viscountess Mandeville and eventually the Duchess of Manchester. While Alva could only hope to receive the approval of *the* Mrs. Astor in New York City, her best friend mingled on a daily basis with a number of members of the British aristocracy.<sup>5</sup>

At that point, Alva made up her mind that her unborn daughter would not only enter society but Alva would secure the best possible British match for her daughter, one that would not only make her daughter the envy of families like the Astors but also union that would demand respect and inclusion from the very leaders of New York society.

Approximately one year later, her daughter entered the world completely oblivious to the fact

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<sup>3</sup> Louis Auchincloss, *The Vanderbilt Era: Profiles of a Gilded Age* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1989), 46.

<sup>4</sup> James Brough, *Consuelo: Portrait of an American Heiress* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1979), 22. See also Margaret Hayden, *Alva, that Vanderbilt-Belmont Woman* (Wickford, RI: Dutch Island Press, 1992); Richard Kenin, *Return to Albion: Americans in England, 1760-1940* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1979), chapter six.

<sup>5</sup> Clarice Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women: Dynasty of Wealth, Glamour, and Tragedy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 83; Arthur T. Vanderbilt, *Fortune’s Children: The Fall of the House of Vanderbilt* (New York: Morrow, 1989), 88. See also Marian Fowler, *In a Gilded Cage: From Heiress to Duchess* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 129-99.

that her mother had already planned her entire life. Alva named her child after her best friend, who also became her godmother, thereby symbolizing her ultimate ambition for her daughter. Years later, Consuelo reflected that “It was her [mother’s] wish to produce me as a finished specimen framed in a perfect setting . . . my person was dedicated to whatever final disposal she had in mind.”<sup>6</sup>

Consuelo’s childhood consisted of a seemingly endless experiment in superior education and cultural training. Alva took pride in the fact that her daughter never attended school. Rather Alva saw to her daughter’s education by hiring a team of English, French, and German governesses. On Saturdays, Consuelo recited poetry to her mother in all languages; thus, by the age of eight she could read and write in three languages. At the age of seventeen her mother requested the entrance exams for Oxford University.<sup>7</sup> Her daughter passed the exams with ease. But, like other American heiresses in training, Consuelo would never attend Oxford or any other university. Instead, her mother arranged for daily music lessons where Consuelo learned French and English songs. She exercised in Central Park every day. Once a week, she took lessons in dancing and deportment. At an early age, Consuelo became a beautiful girl and never wanted for dancing partners. This experience

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<sup>6</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 56.

<sup>7</sup> Alva Smith Vanderbilt Belmont Memoir, Matilda Young Papers, Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript & Special Collections Library, 98. The Matilda Young Papers are one of the very few archival collections containing archival information regarding Alva or Consuelo Vanderbilt. Many of Consuelo’s own papers were destroyed at the time of her death. Her granddaughter, Lady Sarah Russell, thought Consuelo’s papers were of no interest when she was clearing out Consuelo’s house in Southampton, Long Island. Two of Lady Sarah’s daughters, Mimi and Serena, were rather horrified when they discovered this and rescued some cuttings and photograph albums, which they still have. Unfortunately, the Vanderbilt collections at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN, hold some photographs and some newspapers articles but little in the way of private papers or a manuscript collection typical of traditional archives. Email exchange with biographer Amanda Mackenzie Stuart, May 30, 2006, and June 14, 2006.

served as a small boost to her ego as she remembered that “the competition gave me a sense of superiority I did not often enjoy at home.”<sup>8</sup>

Consuelo’s life at home was another matter. Alva rarely praised her daughter but instead treated her like a constant work in progress. Consuelo received love and affection only from her father, a wealthy and powerful man who relinquished the management of the home and development of their children to Alva, a woman who constantly looked at her daughter with a judgmental eye. Alva frequently discussed Consuelo’s nose with her friends, saying that it was too upturned, in front of her daughter. Consuelo never had the opportunity of choosing her own clothes. When her mother felt that Consuelo needed to improve her posture, Alva forced her daughter to wear a back brace consisting of a steel rod that extended the length of her spine, held in place by belts around her waist, shoulders, and forehead. This apparatus made reading and writing exceedingly difficult, and reading served as Consuelo’s one escape from her overbearing mother. Nevertheless, Alva credited her daughter’s magnificent carriage as a young woman, commented on frequently by strangers and friends, to this device. While Consuelo became quite a beautiful and stunning young woman, she was also incredibly introverted and hypersensitive to any sort of criticism.<sup>9</sup>

In 1893, at the age of sixteen, Consuelo took a sailing trip with her parents and several family friends to India. Finding herself drawn to Winthrop Rutherford, one of the other guests, Consuelo fell in love with the gentleman—thirteen years her senior.<sup>10</sup> Descended from distinguished families such as the Stuyvesants and Winthrops, Rutherford mingled in the best circles of New York. His ancestor, Peter Stuyvesant, served as the governor of colonial New York, and his father had worked as President Abraham Lincoln’s

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<sup>8</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 40.

<sup>9</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 42; Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 99.

<sup>10</sup> Winthrop Rutherford has also appeared as Winthrop Rutherford. See Brough and Stasz.

secretary of state. The two kept their growing attraction for one another hidden so as not to draw Alva's attention. They continued to see one another secretly after they returned to New York. Several months later, Rutherford proposed to Consuelo and she accepted. When her mother realized what had transpired under her nose, she threatened to kill Rutherford.<sup>11</sup> The next day, Alva and Consuelo left for Europe. In less than twenty-four hours, Alva had arranged for herself and her daughter to spend the next several months abroad in an effort to prevent any marriage from taking place. Alva had not prepared her daughter for the last sixteen years to simply marry an American man. Alva had spent countless years and dollars on molding the perfect American heiress to enter the highest echelons of the British aristocracy. As one British paper later surmised, "Winty was outclassed. Six-foot-two in his golf stockings, he was no match for five-foot-six and a coronet."<sup>12</sup>

Consuelo and her mother spent the next several months abroad, beginning their journey in France and eventually spending several weeks in England. While in Paris, Alva arranged for her daughter to make her formal debut through a series of several small and informal receptions rather than an elaborate social function. Being young, beautiful, and thanks to her mother, submissive, Consuelo garnered many proposals of marriage. But notably, the suitors made the proposals to Alva and not to Consuelo, as French custom dictated. Alva likely enjoyed this position of power over socially and politically prominent men but especially because her position reinstated her control over her daughter and her choice of spouse. Alva turned down all of these proposals, reasoning that she felt it "better for an Anglo Saxon woman to marry in the Anglo Saxon race."<sup>13</sup> Thus, France served as an

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<sup>11</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 57-71; Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 116.

<sup>12</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 74.

<sup>13</sup> Alva Smith Vanderbilt Belmont Memoir, Matilda Young Papers, Duke University, Library, 142.

gauge for her daughter's success in England and as something of a precursor to her daughter's real debut during the London Season.

Over the course of the next year, Alva took her daughter to England several times with the goal of terminating any relationship with Rutherford and making contact with the Charles Richard John Spencer Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough. Born in 1871, the Earl of Sunderland, his second title, was always known as "Sunny." But he had anything but a sunny disposition. Educated at Winchester and Cambridge, Sunny fit the transatlantic stereotype as an Oxbridge man. As the eldest son in line to inherit his father's title, Sunny had few goals in life and little reason to develop any ambition. His duty in life was to marry and continue the family line. But in the aftermath of decreasing agricultural prices and a declining economy, the family looked to Sunny to marry well and bring some level of prestige (i.e., money) back to the Marlborough name and Blenheim Palace, the family estate. Sunny's family pressured him to marry soon and marry well. Much like Consuelo, he never wanted to go through with this marriage. Sunny received intense pressure to marry a girl not of his choosing in order to pacify his family.<sup>14</sup>

Alva approached her daughter's engagement in the same manner she had arranged for her daughter's education and cultural training. Months of scheming finally paid off when the Duke proposed to Consuelo during a trip to Marble House, the Vanderbilts' magnificent summer house at Newport. Consuelo said yes, burst into tears, and ran out of the room. Within hours, Alva had notified the New York newspapers that "a marriage had been

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<sup>14</sup> G. E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage or a History of the House of Lords and All its Members from the Earliest Times*, Volume III, *Lindley to Moate* (London: The St Catherine Press, 1932), 503; Mary Soames, ed., *Winston and Clementine: The Personal Letters of the Churchills* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 656.

arranged” between her daughter and the Duke.<sup>15</sup> When Consuelo told her younger brother that she had agreed to marry the Duke, he bluntly responded, “He’s only marrying you for your money.”<sup>16</sup> Even a twelve-year-old could see through this arrangement. Alva had finally achieved her dream, but she had forced it upon a naïve, subservient, and miserable young girl at the age of eighteen. In justifying her actions, Alva reflected some years later, “My idea was that Consuelo should take a place in a life of whose firm establishment there could be no question. It was such a position that the House of Marlborough offered her through the present Duke at that time a young man of promise.”<sup>17</sup>

The original wedding date, November 5, 1895, had to be changed after the Duke of Marlborough explained to his fiancée that their original wedding date was unacceptable due to its association with Guy Fawkes Day. Consuelo quickly rescheduled the ceremony for the next day. But, as she wrote in her memoirs, she did not “understand why Guy Fawkes’s attempt to blow up Parliament almost three centuries before should affect the date of our marriage, but this was only the first of a series of, to me, archaic prejudices inspired by a point of view opposed to my own.”<sup>18</sup> Perhaps this cultural ignorance should have indicated that the marriage would be a difficult one, at best, but Consuelo did not dare to challenge her mother again over the wedding. Clearly, her mother was in charge of the wedding as she did not allow her daughter to choose her own bridesmaids.<sup>19</sup>

The Vanderbilt-Marlborough wedding created a great deal of interest as it was the first prominent Anglo-American marriage to take place in some time. In many ways, the

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<sup>15</sup> Gustavus Myers, *History of the Great American Fortunes*, Volume I (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1909), 274.

<sup>16</sup> Auchincloss, *The Vanderbilt Era*, 49.

<sup>17</sup> Amanda Mackenzie Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt: The Story of a Daughter and a Mother in the Gilded Age* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), 154.

<sup>18</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 40.

<sup>19</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 41; Alva Smith Vanderbilt Belmont Memoir, Matilda Young Papers, Duke University, Library, 149.

printed press did much to sensationalize these marriages and almost glorified the American women who left the United States to enter the British aristocracy. The New York newspapers published frequent updates on the impending nuptials in an effort to keep its readers informed of every minute detail concerning the bride and the wedding. The *New York Times* published an article discussing the bride's trousseau. A week later the same newspaper presented the details of the wedding including music, procession, and minister selected for the ceremony. The same article informed the public that the bride's family sent out nearly four thousand invitations for the church ceremony but had limited the breakfast following to two hundred people.<sup>20</sup> In late September, the *New York World* published a list describing Consuelo's physical characteristics: "Chin: pointed, indicating vivacity . . . Eyebrows: Delicately arched . . . Length of hand: six inches . . ." <sup>21</sup> But, as with other transatlantic marriages, the two most important numbers followed. "Waist measure: Twenty inches . . . Marriage settlement: \$10,000,000."<sup>22</sup>

As with previous Anglo-American marriages, the bride's tiny waist and her father's vast fortune seemed to impress the public on both sides of the Atlantic more than any other piece of information. But the Vanderbilt-Marlborough settlement exceeded the marital settlement of any previous transatlantic marriage. In marrying Consuelo, William K. Vanderbilt conferred upon his son-in-law some \$2.5 million in fifty thousand shares of railroad stock, with a guaranteed annual payment of 4 percent. They agreed that should Sunny die before his wife, Consuelo would receive the interest. Her father also gave the couple £500,000 to buy a house on the fashionable Curzon Street in London. Overall, Sunny received approximately \$15 million—in the currency of that period. But Sunny apparently

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<sup>20</sup> *New York Times*, October 27, 1895, November 3, 1895.

<sup>21</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 1.

needed such funds as the payroll of Blenheim Palace alone exceeded \$100,000 a year.<sup>23</sup>

Referring indirectly to the immense amount of money and stature involved in this marriage, the *New York World* declared, “Miss Consuelo Vanderbilt is one of the greatest heiresses in America. The Duke of Marlborough is probably the most eligible peer in Great Britain. . . . From the standpoint of Fifth Avenue it will be the most desirable alliance ever made by an American heiress up to date.”<sup>24</sup> Without a doubt, this marriage garnered a great deal of public attention for a number of reasons.

The *New York Times* predicted that “the Vanderbilts, with their characteristic reserve, will avoid as much as possible the publicity that attached to an international match of such importance.”<sup>25</sup> This author of this statement obviously did not know Alva Vanderbilt. Consuelo’s marriage to Sunny was a spectacle even by New York standards. Fifty policemen patrolled the Vanderbilt mansion while twelve detectives attempted to hold back the growing crowd. Some two thousand spectators gathered to watch the event of the decade fully equipped with lunch bags and stools. Curious eyes stared out from every window in the neighborhood toward the Vanderbilt home with some bystanders eagerly staring through their opera glasses for a glimpse of the bride. The scene at the church was no different. Three hundred policemen tussled with a mob of some seven thousand people outside the church where some eighty decorators and florists had worked for days according to Alva’s wishes.<sup>26</sup>

Amidst such commotion, Consuelo spent the morning of her wedding “in tears and alone; no one came near me. A footman had been posted at the door,” so that she could not

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<sup>23</sup> Myers, *History of the Great American Fortunes*, Volume I, 274; Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 127.

<sup>24</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> *New York Times*, September 22, 1895.

<sup>26</sup> Vanderbilt, *Fortune’s Children*, 163-65.

escape from the fate her mother had chosen for her daughter.<sup>27</sup> Arriving twenty minutes late, Consuelo reluctantly married the Duke of Marlborough at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in New York City. She remembered that Sunny's "eyes were fixed in space," and Consuelo reportedly wept at the altar while taking her vows.<sup>28</sup> Despite their obvious reluctance, the young couple married and attended a reception in their honor afterwards. When she and her new husband left for their honeymoon, Consuelo looked back longingly to her home and saw her mother, hiding behind a curtain but obviously in tears. Perhaps Alva finally realized what she had done, but it was too late. "And yet," Consuelo thought, "she had attained the goal she set herself, she has experienced the satisfactions wealth can confer, she has ensconced me in the niche she so early assigned me."<sup>29</sup>

The next day, the *New York Times* praised the bride, asserting that "no fairer or bonnier a young woman ever became the wife of a member of the house founded by England's great military commander."<sup>30</sup> The newspaper described the event as "without exception the most magnificent [wedding] ever celebrated in this country . . . ."<sup>31</sup> Without a doubt, this transatlantic marriage included all of the most negative stereotypes of Anglo-American marriages: a title-hunting American mother, a bankrupt duke, a loveless marriage. Like Lady Churchill before her, Consuelo Vanderbilt left her country and previous identity behind her upon her marriage. Formerly Miss Vanderbilt, as the American and British newspapers described her, Consuelo now became the Duchess of Marlborough. The act of marrying Sunny transformed her into the wife of the Ninth Duke of Marlborough.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 41.

<sup>28</sup> Vanderbilt, *Fortune's Children*, 172.

<sup>29</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 42-43.

<sup>30</sup> *New York Times*, November 7, 1895.

<sup>31</sup> *New York Times*, November 7, 1895.

<sup>32</sup> Hendrik Hartog, "Marital Exits and Marital Expectations in Nineteenth Century America," *Georgetown Law Journal* 80 (October 1991), 96.

Throughout her life, she would forever be identified in this capacity. As the *New York Times* reported, “She is now a Duchess.”<sup>33</sup>

#### NEW HOME, NEW COUNTRY, NEW IDENTITY

If Consuelo’s honeymoon served as an indicator of what her impending life in Britain would bring, she likely dreaded her eventual arrival. While on the train to Oakdale, the first stop in their four-month-long honeymoon, the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough read numerous telegrams expressing their congratulations to the newlyweds. The Duchess received her first lesson in British class-consciousness by gauging the importance of each person by reading the manner in which the Duke presented the telegram to his wife.

“Unfortunately,” the Duchess remembered, “there was no silver platter on which to present Her Majesty Queen Victoria’s missive, but it was read with due respect, and a sense of her intimidating presence crept into that distant railway car.”<sup>34</sup>

While the Duke finished reading the many telegraphs sent to the newlyweds, the Duchess felt the need to address one matter. Summoning the courage to speak candidly with her husband about the circumstances leading up to their marriage, she said, “I am sure that we shall both do our best to make the other happy, but there is something you must believe. Our marriage was my mother’s idea, not mine.” The Duchess waited a moment before continuing. “She insisted on it, even though there was another man who wanted me. She made me turn him away.” The Duke stopped opening telegrams for a moment and looked at his wife. “Really?” he replied. “I take it he was an American. I don’t see much point in

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<sup>33</sup> *New York Times*, November 7, 1895.

<sup>34</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 44.

discussing it any farther.”<sup>35</sup> The couple never again discussed the background to their unfortunate union.

Over the next four months, the couple traveled widely, as Blenheim Palace would not be ready until March due to renovations. The newlyweds left New York and began a European tour that would make any American heiress envious. They visited Spain, the French Riviera, Egypt, Italy, Cairo, Marseilles, and Paris. In early spring, they crossed the English Channel and headed for the Duchess’s new home in England. Before they reached the Duke’s home country, he gave his wife a copy of *Burke’s Peerage*, a published guide to the aristocracy in Britain, and told her to learn all the families, their titles, and their histories before they reached home. The Duchess remembered that her “husband spoke of some two hundred families whose lineage and whose ramifications, whose patronymics and whose titles I should have to learn.”<sup>36</sup> The Duke had grown up within aristocratic circles and knew the various distinctions and titles from a very early age. To ask, or rather order, his wife to memorize the same amount of information on their honeymoon was at the very least challenging, and at the worst, impossible. Her marriage had not provided the Duchess with an escape from a demanding and harsh mother. Rather, her husband had simply replaced her demanding mother. Upon their arrival at London’s Victoria Station, the Duchess looked at the throng of the Duke’s relatives: Lady Blandford, her mother-in-law; Lillian and Norah, her sisters-in-law; Ivor Guest, a cousin; Lady Sarah Wilson, an aunt; Lady Randolph Churchill and Winston, now her cousins. The Duchess suddenly felt homesick. “Like a deserted child,” she later remembered, “I longed for my family.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 86.

<sup>36</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 45.

<sup>37</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 46.

As the Duke and Duchess stepped off the train, the group awaiting their arrival began to talk in hushed voices and strange accents, which the Duchess noted “I knew I should have to imitate . . . . I felt thankful that I had no nasal twang.”<sup>38</sup> From Victoria Station the group went to the family borough of Woodstock where some twenty thousand sightseers gathered in hopes of catching a glance at the new Duchess. A red carpet emerged, on which the mayor stood with other dignitaries of the town to greet them. A large crowd sat down to lunch together, and as the *Illustrated London News* reported, “the day closed amidst brilliant illuminations and general rejoicings.” The Duchess, on the other hand, “felt distraught . . . with a wild desire to be alone.”<sup>39</sup>

Another formal gathering followed that evening at dinner, but the evening meal consisted only of the Marlborough family. Not surprisingly, dinner discussion turned to the United States, and the Duchess’s new family began commenting at length on America and Americans. Lady Blandford, her mother-in-law, did not share her son’s disdain for Americans, but she was quite ignorant of the United States and its citizens.<sup>40</sup> She made a number of comments that revealed to the Duchess that she believed that all Americans “lived on plantations with Negro slaves and there were Red Indians ready to scalp us just round the corner.”<sup>41</sup> Another dinner guest expressed his inability to understand the war between North and South America. When told that such a war had never occurred, he answered indignantly, “Oh yes, you did. It was in 1861.”<sup>42</sup> The Duchess retired to bed that evening at a complete loss for what she had experienced in the last several hours.

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<sup>38</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 54.

<sup>39</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 97.

<sup>40</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 91.

<sup>41</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 55.

<sup>42</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 56.

The next morning, the Duchess of Marlborough met her husband's grandmother, the Dowager Duchess. She closely inspected her new granddaughter by marriage before explaining to the Duchess what she expected in the coming years. At the top of the list, the Dowager Duchess wished "to see Blenheim restored to its former glories and the prestige of the family upheld."<sup>43</sup> The Duchess took her words to mean that she expected a certain level of behavior from this new American that had joined their ranks. The Duchess could never forget what followed. The Dowager Duchess locked eyes on the Duchess and explained to her in no uncertain terms, "Your first duty is to have a child and it must be a son, because it would be intolerable to have that little upstart Winston become Duke." She then inquired of the young woman she had just met, "Are you in the family way?"<sup>44</sup> Clearly, the Marlborough family had three expectations of this dubious American girl: a behavior becoming a Duchess, the restoration of Blenheim Palace, and the production of "an heir and a spare," in quick order. The Duke had married; thus, the time had come to beget an heir.<sup>45</sup>

Both sides of the Duke's family seemed obsessed with the birth of sons to maintain the family line. Upon meeting the Duke's uncle, he looked the Duchess up and down, and then asserted, "I see the future Churchills will be both tall and good-looking."<sup>46</sup> The Duchess had arrived at her new home one day before, and, as she recalled, several family members had already expressed their concern "with the immediate necessity of an heir to the dukedom, and were infecting me with their anxiety."<sup>47</sup> For years, the Dowager Duchess complained that Consuelo did not understand the importance of her position.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 57.

<sup>44</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 57.

<sup>45</sup> Gail MacColl and Carol McD. Wallace, *To Marry and English Lord: Or How Anglomania Really Got Started* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1989), 209.

<sup>46</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 57.

<sup>47</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 57.

<sup>48</sup> Hesketh Pearson, *The Marrying Americans* (New York: Coward McCann, Inc., 1961), 97.

Closely related to the demanding expectations placed immediately on the young Duchess was an intense level of British class-consciousness that she had not experienced before. First, the Duchess paid visits to all of Marlborough's family, then country neighbors, and finally the tenant farmers on the estate. A clear sense of importance of the persons based on their position within the hierarchy of the borough dictated the length and formality of each visit. For some families, they genuinely wanted to meet the new American Duchess, but others simply wanted to earn favor with the Marlborough family and had no real interest in the Duchess herself. But of all the people she met in paying these calls, the Duchess greatly enjoyed her time with the farmers and came to admire them as hard workers and trusted friends. But each time she returned to Blenheim, she found herself constantly reminded of her duty as a Duchess and to the family, indirect references to her fortune and reproductive capabilities. Yet, even as the family all but demanded her fortune for the refurbishment of the Palace, the Marlboroughs never allowed her to participate in the planning of such renovations. And yet they expected her to finance it without question. Additionally, the Marlboroughs reminded her on a regular basis just how fortunate she was to have become one of them—yet reminding her on an equally frequent basis her American-ness was not a point in her favor. The Duchess found their collective British belief in their own class-based superiority confounding.<sup>49</sup> “But in time I learned,” she recalled, “that snobbishness was an enthroned fetish which spreads its tentacles into every stratum of British national life.”<sup>50</sup>

The one advantage to the Duchess's so-called American-ness was Lady Churchill. Consuelo's arrival at Blenheim, and the eventual birth of her sons, ended any chance of Winston's becoming the Duke of Marlborough. And yet Lady Churchill never treated the

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<sup>49</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 202, 240.

<sup>50</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 45.

Duchess with contempt but rather served as her protector and counselor of sorts. In future years, the Duchess confided to Lady Churchill about her failing marriage. Lady Churchill had twenty years of marital and British experience when Consuelo became the Duchess of Marlborough. The two American women became quite close due to their similar positions of marriage within the British aristocracy and their forever foreigner status because they were Americans. But the Duchess never adjusted fully to her surroundings at Blenheim and what she found to be a staid, stuffy, and snobbish atmosphere. While she had mastered the social complexities and hierarchical games in the United States and in France, she always regarded the class-obsessed British version as full of hypocrisies, recalling “a society whose conventions were closer to the eighteenth century than to the twentieth century . . . .”<sup>51</sup>

The one area through which Consuelo enjoyed a degree of autonomy was the Woodstock community. Had she married a rich American man and stayed in the United States, her ability to participate in charitable organizations or to assist her husband if he entered politics would have received disapproval. But in Britain, as the wife of the Duke of Marlborough, she had a nearly endless stream of opportunities to enter the public sphere by either assisting her husband (or in the case of Lady Churchill, her son) if he were in politics or by performing good deeds on a local level. Having enjoyed a lifetime of affluence, she pursued charitable work with the needy.<sup>52</sup> The Duchess enjoyed visiting the poor and even reading to the blind at the almshouses. The Marlboroughs had long supported the local poor from a distance, but the Duchess’s physical presence and sincere desire to interact with and aid the destitute within Woodstock was a first. Blenheim Palace had long distributed containers with leftover food crammed into the tins without any regard to mixing the foods

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<sup>51</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, xi; Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 131; Brough, *Consuelo*, 136.

<sup>52</sup> Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 133, 162.

together. It occurred to the Duchess that simply separating meat, vegetables, and desserts into separate containers would be a thoughtful gesture on the part of the Marlborough family.<sup>53</sup> As hard as she tried, Consuelo rarely pleased her British family, but the poor simply adored the American Duchess.

Like her new friend and American compatriot Lady Churchill, Consuelo found ways to negotiate her American identity within the repressive world of Blenheim. When Lady Churchill organized the “American Amazons,” Consuelo quickly joined the cause. While American-born, British-wed woman had been active in Britain for some years, the “American Amazons” marked the first time that American women living in Britain had identified themselves collectively. The cause also functioned as Consuelo’s first venture into philanthropy. At this point in her life, Consuelo had little knowledge of charitable committees or fund-raising. In fact, Lady Churchill’s sister, Clara, described Consuelo as “about the most useless member of all.”<sup>54</sup> In any case, the group gave her “a glimpse of what could be done by deploying American energy and English aristocratic connections.”<sup>55</sup>

Just as Lady Churchill had discovered that she could use her identity as an American to her advantage, Consuelo began to fine-tune her ability to negotiate her British and American identities. Over the next several years, the Duchess discovered that her national identity could be negotiable. When she did something that found favor with the Marlboroughs, she praised her British family. To an increasing degree, she sought to diminish her American identity on a public level, but she never denied or disparaged her home country. Over time, she learned to maintain both identities but realized when to

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<sup>53</sup> Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 165; Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 68; Ruth Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses: Sagas of Upward Nobility, 1870-1914* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1980), 109.

<sup>54</sup> Elisabeth Kehoe, *The Titled Americans* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2004), 211.

<sup>55</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 261.

downplay or amplify one over the other.<sup>56</sup> After several years of marriage, she had endeared herself to her mother-in-law, Lady Blandford, who once praised her daughter-in-law, stating, “I must tell you that no one would take you for an American.” Consuelo quickly answered, “I suppose you mean that as a compliment, Lady Blandford, but what would you think if I said you were not at all like an Englishwoman?” Lady Blandford explained that *that* was quite a different situation, to which Consuelo replied, “Different to you, but not to me.”<sup>57</sup> An Englishwoman by marriage, Consuelo always retained a feeling of her democratic American heritage.<sup>58</sup> Slowly and cautiously, the Duchess of Marlborough found a way to balance her two identities simultaneously without alienating either country.

Consuelo continued to find favor with her British family when she gave birth to a son on September 18, 1897. The Duke and Duchess named him John Albert William Spencer-Churchill, but he always went by his nickname of Blandford, his family title. The *New York Times* reported the birth under the headline of “Consuelo, the American Duchess, Gives Birth to a Son.”<sup>59</sup> Approximately a year later, the American Duchess produced “the spare,” when she gave birth to her second son, Ivor, on October 14, 1898. Again, the *New York Times* carried word of the birth to their American readers announcing, “Second Child Born to the Duke and His American Wife, Formerly Consuelo Vanderbilt.”<sup>60</sup> The press and the public on both sides of the Atlantic confirmed the Duchess’s former identity. As a Duchess, she was the wife of a Duke, mother of the future Duke, and formerly Miss Vanderbilt.

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<sup>56</sup> Katharine W. Jones, *Accent on Privilege: English Identities and Anglophilia in the U.S.* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

<sup>57</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 76.

<sup>58</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 91.

<sup>59</sup> *New York Times*, September 19, 1897.

<sup>60</sup> *New York Times*, October 15, 1898.

Consuelo visited the United States for the first time after her marriage during the fall of 1902. She spent only a month at home, but the *New York Times* happily reported that “her seven years as one of the leaders of the British aristocracy has in no way changed her American spirit.”<sup>61</sup> But something in Consuelo’s life had changed: her marriage. She had evolved into a leading woman in British society largely due to her increasing interest in philanthropic activities. But as her public life was thriving, her private life was crumbling. Consuelo saw herself and the Duke as “people of different temperament condemned to live together.”<sup>62</sup> The Duke and the Duchess picked on one another in public and criticized each other to friends and family, thus breaking a rule of aristocracy marriages. Tradition required marriage, custom permitted adultery, but problems remained private. And divorce was never acceptable. When the two finally separated in 1906, it drove a wedge between Consuelo and Lady Churchill, and for a short time, King Edward. Lady Churchill felt that even if they did have problems, they should simply spend more time traveling and away from one another—very similar to what she had done in her marriage to Lord Randolph Churchill. Likewise, King Edward announced that neither one of them would be welcome in his presence. Furthermore, he would not attend any function if either one of them was present. Thus, a great deal of pressure fell on both the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough to stay married, if only in name.<sup>63</sup> But neither party had ever wanted to marry the other, and neither felt the need to acquiesce to other’s suggestions now. But in the case of Consuelo, her separation and eventual divorce brought a degree of freedom she had never known before.

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<sup>61</sup> *New York Times*, August 20, 1902.

<sup>62</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 148.

<sup>63</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 272-73; Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 166.

### “A CREDIT TO HER COUNTRY”

Shortly after her separation from her husband in the fall of 1906, Consuelo went to live in Sunderland House on Curzon Street in London, a house built for her by her father a year earlier, which served as her base for the next decade.<sup>64</sup> In late 1906, Consuelo made another trip to the United States, which was announced in the *New York Times*. Consuelo likely wanted to spend some time with her family in her time of need, but she had another reason for coming home at this time. For at least part of her stay, the Duchess lived at the Martha Washington hostel for women.<sup>65</sup> As Consuelo took an increasing interest in philanthropy, the Progressive Era in the United States may have influenced her activities in Britain as she participated and learned from both American and British forms of charity at the turn of the twentieth century. In Britain, society all but expected aristocratic women to support philanthropic work, but this generally meant that they donated a great deal of money in lieu of their own time or work. But with her mother’s participation in the burgeoning Progressive Movement in her home country, specifically in regard to woman’s suffrage, Consuelo had an opportunity to learn from women leading philanthropic movements in two countries. Thus, her experiences in each allowed her to convey organizational styles and fundraising techniques across the Atlantic as something of a transatlantic Lady Bountiful. Due to her notable standing in both countries, the press in the United States and Great Britain followed her efforts and activities.

Consuelo’s philanthropic leadership began in earnest after her separation from her husband. They agreed to share custody of their two sons, but several private nurses and nannies tended to their daily upbringing. This Victorian approach to childrearing allowed the

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<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Eliot, *Heiresses and Coronets: The Story of Lovely Ladies and Noble Men* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959), 192.

<sup>65</sup> *New York Times*, March 6, 1907.

Duchess to pursue her own activities, and after 1906, this freedom meant an increasing participation and direct leadership of charitable causes. Due to her separation, she could no longer spend her days and nights among elite British socialites. King Edward had closed the door of London's social circles to the American Duchess, but she did not respond by mourning her lack of invitations to dinner parties and balls. She had had her fill of such social activities since the age of sixteen. At nearly thirty years old, "a purely social life had no appeal," and Consuelo looked for something more substantial to bide her time.<sup>66</sup> Having enjoyed a life of fine clothes, beautiful houses, and ample wealth, she felt the need to spend her fortune not on tea parties and trips to Paris but rather on a number of personal projects aimed at helping the poor and disadvantaged. Over time, her philanthropic missions shifted their focus to help women specifically.

While some may dismiss the Duchess's philanthropic efforts as little more than "emotional therapy for an unhappy aristocrat" or an attempt to reinstate "her social position after a much-discussed marital breakdown," her involvement in charitable works went far beyond the simple writing of a check or lending her name to an institution.<sup>67</sup> She donated her money, time, and leadership skills to address major problems of the day as affected Britons overall and women especially. Furthermore, the practice of serious philanthropy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has earned the attention of scholars. As Amanda Stuart Mackenzie asserts, "historians have re-examined nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century female philanthropy and come to see it as an important factor both in an extension of female power in general and the campaign for the vote in particular."<sup>68</sup> During this period, women used "philanthropy as an entry point into *public* life without agitating conservative elements

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<sup>66</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 149.

<sup>67</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 285.

<sup>68</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 285.

because it was seen as an extension of their role as wives and mothers and, in the case of rich or aristocratic women, as part of their traditional role.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, Consuelo’s philanthropic identity did not serve as an attempt to re-establish her membership in London society. She genuinely cared about changing the lives of the women, children, and the poor. But she did not merely show up in an inner-London slum, announce that she planned to bestow ample money on the poor, and walk away. Rather, exhibiting great courage and dedication, she earned their trust over time by working directly with disadvantaged people on a daily basis and proving her sincerity to whatever project lay before her.

Consuelo’s first charitable exercise came at the invitation of Prebendary Carlile, the head of the Church Army. Originally established in 1882, the Church Army hoped to re-connect the Church of England with the working-class men and women of inner-city London. Together, Carlile and the Duchess leased two adjoining houses in London and established a Home for Prisoners Wives. The home opened in May, 1907, and provided the wives of first offenders laundry and sewing rooms, and a chance to earn standard wage, thereby giving them a degree of financial independence they had never known. These women worked while their children played in the day nursery next door. Consuelo, who argued that “to be punished for the guilt of others is essentially unfair,” closed every day with a word of prayer. This endeavor gave her a great deal of hands-on experience in managing such an establishment and labeled her as the new Lady Churchill in London. Consuelo now became *the* Anglo-American face in Britain.

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<sup>69</sup> Italics, mine. Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 285. See also Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Lady Bountiful Revisited* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991); F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Pat Thane, “The Social, Economic and Political Status of Women,” in *Twentieth Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change*, ed. P. Johnson (London: Longman, 1994).

By establishing herself as a ready leader and financially able philanthropist, Consuelo now received a barrage of invitations and requests from other benevolent groups. Invited to serve on the National Birth Rate Commission, Consuelo worked as a lay member with “a conclave of clergy, doctors, eugenists, economists, and social workers,” who investigated the declining birth-rate in Britain. “The men, who predominated, maintained that the declining birthrate in the middle classes was entirely due to the higher education of women,” Consuelo remembered, “an argument so conspicuously prejudiced that I immediately determined to champion the cause.”<sup>70</sup> In response, the Duchess made a mental note of another cause that needed her support: birth control for wives and mothers.<sup>71</sup> Rather than simply focusing on the declining birth rate and supporting the masculine need to blame the education of women, Consuelo instead sought to provide free prenatal and infant care to the poor. In 1916, she delivered the Lady Priestley Memorial Lecture to the National Health Society, the first woman to give the lecture, and spoke on the annual mortality rate in Britain. According to the *New York Times*, the “former Miss Vanderbilt” stressed that the 320,000 babies lost every year surpassed the number of Britons killed in World War I.<sup>72</sup> Notably, her Anglo-American identity influenced her views on this matter. Her concern was not only for women and children, but as “a supporter of racial theories, she spoke out publicly for the need to preserve and increase the Anglo-Saxon stock of the world.”<sup>73</sup> To her, Christian ethics dictated “the preservation of infant life,” provided that that child was an Anglo-Saxon life.<sup>74</sup> Like her predecessor, Lady Churchill, Consuelo enjoyed philanthropic activities centering on Anglo-

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<sup>70</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 151.

<sup>71</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 174.

<sup>72</sup> *New York Times*, 30 June 1916.

<sup>73</sup> Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 194.

<sup>74</sup> Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 194.

Saxon ideas which contributed indirectly a closing of the gap between the United States and Great Britain.

In 1908, Consuelo took a trip to the United States and spoke at a dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Returning to her “native land deeply impressed with the civic country . . . [she felt] an obligation to tell my countrywomen what I had learned.”<sup>75</sup> In her speech, Consuelo asserted that “rich American [women] were idle . . . [and that] they should follow the example of their English counterparts to make a useful contribution to society.” She asked her audience, “Is it not possible for the women citizens of this great Republic to recognize that personal obligation on its ethical basis and to turn it to account in practical works?”<sup>76</sup> Not all Americans received the criticism of a Duchess with approval. The next day, the New York newspapers ran headlines reading “Consuelo in Dinner Talk Criticizes U.S. Women,” and “Duchess of Marlborough Delivers an Eloquent Speech.” The article below each headline presented verbatim reports of her lecture.<sup>77</sup>

After returning to Britain, Consuelo edited her American speech into three articles, which appeared under the title of “The Position of Women,” published in the *North American Review* in the spring of 1909.<sup>78</sup> The articles gave her an opportunity to reflect on her philanthropic achievements and her personal views on the role and duty of affluent women. Through her frequent trips to the United States, Consuelo observed that rich American women’s lives were incredibly empty. Appalled by their “vapid and meaningless, starved and bored” lives with no meaning, she reflected that her life in Britain had given her the opportunity to accomplish great things. Confiding to her mother, she said, “In spite of all

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<sup>75</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 151.

<sup>76</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 290.

<sup>77</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 152.

<sup>78</sup> The Duchess of Marlborough, “The Position of Woman,” *North American Review*, 189 (1909), 11-24, 180-93, 352-59.

that has happened I am glad I married an Englishman.”<sup>79</sup> But one should note that only after her separation from the Duke did Consuelo begin her philanthropic life whole-heartedly and re-directed the Vanderbilt fortune towards her new independence and identity.

Becoming ever more concerned about the lives of women, Consuelo continued her philanthropic quest in Britain. Her next project, the Mary Curzon Lodging House for Poor Women, provided a recreation home for working girls and a hospital staffed by female physicians for women only. Mary Curzon, née Mary Leiter, was another American-born, British-wed woman who had married George Nathaniel Curzon in 1895 and tragically died in 1906 at thirty-six. Along the same line, Consuelo identified potential donors for the Young Women’s Christian Association and Sunderland House in an effort to curtail the traffic of women as “white slaves” to overseas brothels.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to her philanthropic on behalf of women, the Duchess accepted the post of Honorary Treasurer of Bedford College, a women’s college in London. As a supporter of higher education for women, Consuelo became the college’s primary fundraiser and quickly secured a “magnificent donation of 100,000 guineas . . . [,] which enabled the college to be moved from its cramped quarters in Baker Street to a beautiful site in Regent’s Park.”<sup>81</sup> Consuelo felt that educating girls would result in women being better mothers, and thus produce and care for healthier children. When asked why she believed that Englishmen objected so strongly to the education of their daughters and sisters, she replied, “There must be some secret fear that, hard as they found it to understand a woman now, it would be absolutely beyond their ken were she highly educated.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 293.

<sup>80</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 188.

<sup>81</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 152.

<sup>82</sup> Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 195.

Continuing her fight to improve women's lives, Consuelo made an attempt in 1913 "to do something about the shameful conditions under which women worked in the sweated industries."<sup>83</sup> Using her relationship with Winston Churchill, Consuelo and Churchill sought a minimum wage for these women, a personal-political strategy illustrative "how she used her status at the top of the ladder to combat social evil at its foot."<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, she organized a conference in November and invited a number of influential Britons who likely thought that they would spend an afternoon lamenting the terrible lives such women lead, make a modest donation to the cause, and be on their way. Little did they know that Consuelo had invited twelve women who worked in such industries to give their testimony regarding their lives "bearing the yoke of industrial slavery in its cruelest form."<sup>85</sup> Rather than allow her fellow aristocrats to talk blindly about such tragedies, Consuelo brought the victims to the forefront and demanded that their inequitable lives receive the attention from the very people who could force change in Britain. As a result of the so-called Sunderland House Conference, eight more sweated industries became eligible for the trade boards in London.

In the midst of the Duchess's many charitable activities, she wrote an article titled, "Hostels for Women," which was published in a leading journal of the period. In the editorial, the Duchess called Britons' attention to "the necessity of providing clean and respectable lodgings for working women . . . and they suggested an extension of the system of municipal lodging-houses at present provided for men of a similar class."<sup>86</sup> She decried the fact that in the entire country of England, only Manchester provided "respectable

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<sup>83</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 168.

<sup>84</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 188.

<sup>85</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 169.

<sup>86</sup> Consuelo Marlborough, "Hostels for Women," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 69 (1911), 858.

accommodation for women.”<sup>87</sup> Knowing from her own experience the value of independence, she argued that providing women the opportunity to live on their own, work, and pay for their own lodging gave women “the pride of decent self-support—the love of liberty—the satisfaction of standing alone—unaided.”<sup>88</sup> She ended her article by asserting that the most critical years in a young woman’s life, between thirteen and twenty, determined the course of the rest of her life. She pressed national and local agencies to come together in an effort to provide “respectable lodgings . . . so that the self-respecting woman worker shall be at least as fairly treated as the self-supporting man.”<sup>89</sup> Thus, Consuelo’s philanthropic activities had taken on another trait—the pursuit of women’s rights and later, woman’s suffrage. Like many women before her, the Duchess used the traditional avenue of philanthropy to make a political statement.<sup>90</sup> In the years to come, she took on an increasingly prominent role in British politics.

In 1913, Consuelo served as a delegate to the International Woman Suffrage Alliance Convention in Budapest, Hungary. The conference had a significant effect on her views of suffrage. Following the conference, she traveled to the United States and participated in a meeting hosted by the Political Equality Association. Alva, Consuelo’s mother, had now become an outspoken leader of the suffrage movement. Alva viewed suffrage in term of human rights while Consuelo considered the right to vote as an appendage of citizenship and “a privilege for which women should prepare and educate themselves.”<sup>91</sup> The *New York Times* quoted the “Former Consuelo Vanderbilt,” in New York on yet another trip to support

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<sup>87</sup> Marlborough, “Hostels for Women,” *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 858.

<sup>88</sup> Marlborough, “Hostels for Women,” *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 861.

<sup>89</sup> Marlborough, “Hostels for Women,” *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 866.

<sup>90</sup> The connection between philanthropy and politics has been utilized by women in many countries. For more on the role of upper-class women, philanthropy, and politics in Mexico, for example, see Víctor Manuel Macías-González, “The Mexican Aristocracy and Porfirio Diaz,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Christian University, 1999).

<sup>91</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 329.

the suffrage movement, as supporting suffrage though not militant suffragists.<sup>92</sup> While many people saw her activities strictly in terms of her efforts as a woman helping other women, she quickly corrected them, answering, “This is the age of feminism . . . [but] not so much feminism as humanism.”<sup>93</sup>

Due to all of these efforts, the American Duchess endeared herself to her new countrymen and yet maintained an admiring public in the United States, relying on a “wide circle of aristocratic and American friends in her philanthropic ventures,” which allowed her to “reinforce friendships and open up new vistas.”<sup>94</sup> In the approximate decade since her marriage, she had spent approximately \$2 million of her own inheritance supporting her charitable interests.<sup>95</sup> Through her personal and philanthropic efforts, she managed to win over the hearts and minds of the British people. She had earned the love and respect of the Blenheim tenants while making the palace itself livable. She had hosted a number of weekend parties, “which are never wholly American and never wholly English, but a blending of the two,” which met with great success.<sup>96</sup> According to Mary Curzon, the American wife of George Nathaniel Curzon, Consuelo Marlborough “is a triumph & she must be a nice woman for her girl is the best brought up young woman we’ve seen for many a day. She is and her simplicity and brightness have won her a great position.” Curzon praised Consuelo as, “she never pushes herself and everyone tries to know her & entertain her. . . . she is everything that is nice.”<sup>97</sup> Based on American and British perceptions,

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<sup>92</sup> *New York Times*, June 27, 1914. The article title read, “American Duchess Here: Former Consuelo Vanderbilt for Suffrage, but not Militants.”

<sup>93</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 335.

<sup>94</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 354.

<sup>95</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 189.

<sup>96</sup> Anglo-American, “American Women in English Society,” *Harper’s Bazaar* XXXIX, no 7, part 2 (July 1905), 607.

<sup>97</sup> Mary Curzon to her mother, June 22, 1896, MSS Eur F 306/5, ff143, Mary Victoria Curzon Papers, India Office, British Library.

Consuelo had succeeded Lady Churchill as the leader of the American-born, British-wed women in London. But her growing notoriety grated on her husband's nerves. Bewildered by her popularity, he asked, "Philanthropist, Patriot Yank, Beauty, the used wife, what else!!!"<sup>98</sup> Even her in-laws took her side over the Duke in their very public separation.<sup>99</sup> Based on all of her efforts in English communities, a contemporary magazine remarked of Consuelo, "The Duchess? Oh, she's a *credit* to her country."<sup>100</sup>

#### AMERICAN WOMEN'S WAR RELIEF EFFORT

Consuelo learned a great deal from her philanthropic projects, and she needed this sort of knowledge after World War I began in the fall of 1914. She led three different groups during the war, all composed of women and all aimed at relieving Great Britain from the strains due to the war. On August 15, 1914, the American Woman's War Relief Committee held its first meeting, and Consuelo served the chairwoman.<sup>101</sup> Several other American-born, English-wed women volunteered with the organization, included Lady Randolph Churchill, Mrs. Whitelaw Reid (wife of the former American ambassador, and the Honorary Chairman of the Committee), Lady Ward (Reid's daughter, who had married an Englishman), Viscountess Harcourt (also married to an Englishman), and Mrs. Walter Burns, the most active member.<sup>102</sup> Also significant to this organization was the fact that several American

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<sup>98</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 247.

<sup>99</sup> *New York Times*, May 30, 1909. To some degree, Consuelo received support from the monarchy due to her close friendship with King Edward's wife, Alexandra.

<sup>100</sup> Anglo-American, "American Women in English Society," 603.

<sup>101</sup> Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, Lou Hoover Papers, Subject Files, American Women's War Relief Fund, Reports of Activities, 1914, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> For her efforts through the American Woman's War Relief Fund, Lady Harcourt was made a Dame of the Order of the British Empire. Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 174. The "American Women's War Relief Fund, as it was renamed, listed as its executive committee: Lady Paget, Mrs. John Astor, Mr. Walter Burns, the Duchess of Marlborough, Lady Lowther, Mrs. Harcourt, Mrs. Walter Burns, Lady Randolph Churchill, Lady Henry, Mrs. H. C. Hoover, Mrs. Reginald Owen, Mrs. W. Hines Page, Mrs. Robert Strawbridge, Hon. Mrs.

women living in London, such as Mrs. Walter Hines Page, the wife of the American ambassador to England, volunteered as well; thus, unlike previous Anglo-American women's groups, both American citizens and former American citizens made up this collection of women. This organization served as an opportunity for American women to work collectively in order to aid the British war effort, fully three years before the United States entered the war.<sup>103</sup>

The organization collected more than \$300,000 from American donations during its first year. Consuelo used the money to organize an American-sponsored military hospital of four hundred beds in Devonshire.<sup>104</sup> Consuelo also arranged for a contingent of nurses from New York to staff the hospital.<sup>105</sup> Related to her supervision of the Devonshire hospital, Consuelo also became the honorary treasurer (i.e., fundraiser) for the Medical School for Women at the Royal Free Hospital in London, the only English hospital that allowed women to practice medicine.<sup>106</sup> By 1915, many people began offering their homes to the War Office as additional hospitals for the sick and wounded. Noting the need for labor and birthing wards, Consuelo also chose to transform her Home for Prisoners' Wives into an annex for the Royal Free Hospital.<sup>107</sup> Even during the war, Consuelo's interests in helping women and children earned her the nickname of the "Baby Duchess."<sup>108</sup>

Individually, Consuelo also oversaw the Woman's Emergency Corps coordinating the employment of women to fill men's jobs, in factories and in offices, as they left to fight the

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John Ward, and Mrs. Paris Singer. Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, Lou Hoover Papers, Subject Files, American Women's War Relief Fund, List of Committees, p. 1. The committees listed within the overall AWWRF were the hospital committee, economic relief committee, and the collection committee.

<sup>103</sup> Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, Lou Hoover Papers, Subject Files, American Women's War Relief Fund, Reports of Activities, 1914.

<sup>104</sup> Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 228.

<sup>105</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 195.

<sup>106</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 362.

<sup>107</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 176.

<sup>108</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 178.

war. These duties included everything from caring for horses, and feeding Belgian refugees to making toys to supplant those once imported from Germany.<sup>109</sup> A few days after the war broke out, the Duchess made a request for volunteers to fill men's tasks. Following her request, "ten thousand offers of personal service were received from doctors, dispensers, trained nurses, interpreters and others . . . while bus drivers and sportswomen who understood the care of horses volunteered to assist in transport work."<sup>110</sup>

Finally, a Committee of Mercy emerged as another way Americans could aid Britons during the war. In October 1914, the *New York Times* ran an article explaining that the "former Consuelo Vanderbilt" had requested funds to relieve women and children of Britain due to the war. By October 1, the United States had donated more than \$180,000 to this cause, to which the Duchess telegraphed, "War refugees' committee delighted to hear of movement in American to aid destitute. Your assistance gladly received."<sup>111</sup> Even though the newspapers constantly identified her as the *former* Miss Vanderbilt, Americans responded to *their* American Duchess's call for help in the midst of war.

## THE POLITICAL DUCHESS

In addition to her philanthropic and war efforts, the "former Consuelo Vanderbilt of New York" founded the Women's Municipal Party in 1913. This party attempted to interest women in municipal affairs within London and promoted the election of women local government so that they could address issues concerning women and children in London.

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<sup>109</sup> Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 228.

<sup>110</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 174.

<sup>111</sup> *New York Times*, October 1, 1914. Another *NYT* article from two weeks earlier also identified the Duchess as "formerly Consuelo Vanderbilt." *New York Times*, September 13, 1914.

Thus, her political career, albeit short, reflected her years of philanthropic interest in England. According to the party's mission statement,

We want for our women and children reform in housing, to include cheap, decent municipal hostels for women, such as are provided for men, and education reforms, to include grants for play centres and gardens and the utilization of waste spaces. We want a great number of women Inspectors in all municipal; services, supervision of women of the female wards of lunatic asylums, inebriate homes for women, day nurseries and baby farms, and better administration of children's acts.<sup>112</sup>

The Women's Municipal Party rewarded her efforts on behalf of women and children after the war asking the "Baby Duchess" to run for the London County Council. Already popular among the poor, she easily attracted large crowd to her campaign appearances, with young children singing "Vote Vote Vote for Mrs. Marlborough," to the tune of "Tramp Tramp Tramp the Boys are Marching."<sup>113</sup> Even the *Manchester Guardian* supported her candidacy, reporting that she was "the most energetic of all our duchesses," knowledgeable in issues of child welfare, working women, and local politics.<sup>114</sup> She also had earned the respect of the working class voters. Additionally, English women had earned the right to vote in January 1918, some two years before their American sisters, which came as something of a surprise to both countries. Given these two voting blocs, she successfully won the election in March 1919, making her the first woman to ever serve on the Council.<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately, her term on the Council was brief. The marriage that had first brought her to England would also end her time as the public face of Anglo-American women.

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<sup>112</sup> *New York Times*, September 16, 1913.

<sup>113</sup> Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 254; Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 180.

<sup>114</sup> Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 254.

<sup>115</sup> Stasz, *The Vanderbilt Women*, 254.

## LIFE UNDER THREE FLAGS

In 1920, the Duke and Duchess began a series of legal battles that revealed the depth of social ostracism in Britain for divorcees. Their official divorce forever placed Consuelo and Sunny outside social circles in England and ended Consuelo's political career. After receiving a divorce in May 1921, the duke and duchess later annulled their marriage in 1926 after her mother, more than twenty years after the fact, testified that she had forced her daughter to marry the Duke.<sup>116</sup> Following their divorce, both Consuelo and the Duke remarried. He married Gladys Deacon, another American woman in the summer following the divorce, but it too was an unhappy marriage. Consuelo married Jacques Balsan, a French aviator, on July 4, 1921, an ironic choice for a wedding date given the fact that her first marriage had resulted in such oppression for the American Duchess. On her second marriage certificate, Consuelo listed her profession as "Duchess of Marlborough." Few people would argue that her position in Britain was not an occupation.<sup>117</sup>

For the rest of her life, Consuelo and Jacques split their time between Paris, France, Southampton, New York and south Florida, and enjoyed a very happy marriage.<sup>118</sup> He died at the age of eighty-eight in 1956. Nearly a decade later, Consuelo suffered a stroke at the age of eighty-seven and died on December 6, 1964, in New York, where her life had started in the previous century. Her funeral in the United States was held at St. Thomas Episcopal, the same church where her transatlantic marriage had taken place some seventy years before. Making one last transatlantic journey, she was buried next to her sons at the Marlborough estate at Blenheim Palace. The fact that the Marlborough family agreed to have her buried

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<sup>116</sup> Stuart, *Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt*, 390.

<sup>117</sup> Consuelo Vanderbilt Folder, Vanderbilt Family Collection, Special Collections, University Archives. Jean and Alexander Heard Library. Vanderbilt University.

<sup>118</sup> Consuelo Vanderbilt Folder, Vanderbilt Family Collection, Special Collections, University Archives. Jean and Alexander Heard Library. Vanderbilt University.

here following such a public divorce and an autobiography critical of Britain and the Marlborough family speaks volumes about her personal character and what the British thought of the American Duchess. At her burial, one servant remarked, “She’s the best woman ever to be buried here.”<sup>119</sup>

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Consuelo Vanderbilt reluctantly entered a transatlantic marriage, as did her husband, under family pressure. Their marriage crumbled almost immediately, although they maintained the façade of matrimony for almost a decade. After dutifully producing two sons to continue the Marlborough line, the Duke and Duchess separated and pursued separate lives. Only at this point did Consuelo begin to identify herself through philanthropic works in Britain “in a decisive, demonstrated way, able at long last to take possession of her homeland and herself.”<sup>120</sup> Spending her own money and investing herself in a variety of charitable projects, Consuelo created a new identity for herself in Britain, one that did not rely on her identification as the wife of a Duke. Working to improve the lives of the poor, especially women and children, she interacted with the lower and working classes on a daily basis. Over time, her philanthropy took on an increasingly political tone as she participated in the suffrage movement in the United States and Great Britain. As her philanthropy merged with World War I, the former Miss Vanderbilt led a number of projects that relied on her transatlantic contacts and clearly placed her at the head of the Anglo-American contingent in London.

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<sup>119</sup> Brough, *Consuelo*, 246.

<sup>120</sup> Fowler, *In a Gilded Cage*, 199.

George Nathaniel Curzon, the husband of two American wives, once asked Consuelo if it had been worth the sacrifice. Consuelo did not understand his question, so he explained himself by saying, “Yes—to give up being the beautiful Duchess of Marlborough and all it meant.” She answered him, “But of course, George, I willingly gave up and have never regretted no longer being Duchess . . .”<sup>121</sup> Having enjoyed a lifetime of wealth and affluence, she only found her own identity and happiness outside of the walls of Marble House in Newport, Rhode Island, and Blenheim Palace, Woodstock. Her marriage to the Duke of Marlborough placed her in England with the name of a leading family. But her time in England, she made a name for herself—Consuelo, Duchess, American—and touched with millions of people throughout her new country.

Nevertheless, she would always be identified throughout her life by a marriage that she never wanted. The demise of the same marriage ended her career as a public servant, women’s advocate, and Anglo-American envoy. As she described, when “divorce brought complete freedom,” her life in England came to an end.<sup>122</sup> But only through her individual and collective efforts on behalf of British women and with other American women did Consuelo, formerly Miss Vanderbilt, the Duchess of Marlborough, carve an identity for herself and serve as an informal ambassador between her two countries.

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<sup>121</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, 212.

<sup>122</sup> Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, xi.

## Chapter Six

### My Two Countries: Nancy Langhorne Shaw Astor

“America’s Daughter”  
 America’s Daughter—Entwined with our race  
 Has Struck the right path for women to pace  
 The cry of the children—the sad long call  
 Will be answered with feeling at Westminster Hall.<sup>1</sup>

When Consuelo Vanderbilt’s high profile life in England came to an end in 1920, one American woman had just begun to make her impression on Great Britain. Lady Nancy Astor, wife of William Waldorf Astor, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Astor, and the first woman to take a seat in the House of Commons, made a significant contribution to the way Britons felt and thought about Americans during the first half of the twentieth century. For better or for worse, her Anglo-American marriage put her in contact with some of the leading political leaders and socialites of the period. Her candid personality and quirky sense of humor met with either howls of laughter or great disparagement from her fellow Britons. Her life functioned as nothing less than a stream of contradictions. “She was an American divorcee who married a British peer, stood for Parliament as a Conservative, was elected seven times,” explains John Halperin, “lived in a house next door to the Libyan embassy that now sports a blue plaque with her name on it, and was buried under a Confederate flag.”<sup>2</sup> Such a flood of seeming contradictions only begins to explain the life and legacy of Lady Nancy Astor.

Nancy Witcher Langhorne was born in Danville, Virginia, on May 19, 1879, the same day that her future British husband came into the world in New York City. Her parents,

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<sup>1</sup> Karen Joy Musolf, “The Angel Sings: The Rhetorical Quest of Lady Nancy Astor, November 1919.” (Ph.D. diss. University of Minnesota, 1994), 305. The allusion, “The cry of the children,” refers to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “The Cry of the Children,” in *The Literature of England*, Vol. 2 *Dawn of the Romantic Movement to the Present Day*, 710-13.

<sup>2</sup> John Halperin, *Eminent Georgian: The Lives of King George V, Elizabeth Bowen, St. John Philby, & Nancy Astor* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 173.

Chiswell Dabney Langhorne and Nancy Witcher Keene, both hailed from Virginia and held strong convictions for the Confederacy throughout their lives. Her father, known as “Chillie” (pronounced “Shilly”), had served in the Confederate Army and married Nancy Keene in 1864 in the midst of the war.<sup>3</sup> The couple had eleven children, although three died in infancy. As the fifth surviving child and third of five daughters, Nancy enjoyed as a child the company of several siblings, a happy family, and the open spaces of rural Virginia. Writing of her youth, she reminisced, “Nothing could be quite as lovely as that.”<sup>4</sup>

Following the Civil War, Chillie Langhorne held a number of jobs in an effort to support an ever-growing family amidst the financially and physically destroyed South. The one-time tobacco planter and slave owner worked in the years after the war as a hotel porter, security guard, auctioneer, and poker player. When the railroad industry materialized as a viable means of financial independence during Reconstruction, Langhorne threw himself into the enterprise, making valuable contacts to win bids for various railroad projects and taught himself about the engineering side of the business along the way.<sup>5</sup> The family experienced numerous financial ups and downs over the next several years. By 1892, Chillie managed to attain a level of fiscal stability that allowed the Langhornes to move from the state capital of Richmond to Mirador, a sprawling and traditionally southern estate outside Charlottesville near the Blue Ridge Mountains.<sup>6</sup>

Nancy relished her years at Mirador, spending many hours a day on horseback with her four sisters: Lizzie, born in 1865, Irene, born in 1873, Phyllis, born in 1880, and Nora,

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Sykes, *Nancy: The Life of Lady Astor* (Chicago: Academy Chicago, Publishers, 1972), 12.

<sup>4</sup> James Fox, *Five Sisters: The Langhornes of Virginia* (New York: Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 2000), 21. For a concise biography of the Astor family, see Richard Kenin, *Return to Albion: Americans in England, 1760-1940* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1979), 195-219.

<sup>5</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 173.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Masters, *Nancy Astor: A Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 10.

born in 1889. Nancy also had three brothers: Keene, born in 1869, Harry, born in 1874, and William, always known as Buck, born in 1886. The three brothers all had drinking problems. As the oldest sister, Lizzie acted as a second mother to all of the children. Irene, often considered the last great Southern Belle, married the artist Charles Dana Gibson, creator of the Gibson Girl. Closest to her immediately younger sister and fiercely protective of Phyllis throughout her life, Nancy became very jealous of anyone or any relationship she perceived to challenge her position in Phyllis's life. Phyllis remained the only person Nancy loved throughout her life.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Nora remained the little sister throughout her life. Following the untimely death of their mother in 1903, Nora became lost among her patriarchal father, indolent brothers, and sisters who had all married and moved away.<sup>8</sup> All of the children spent their days and nights doing little but riding horses at Mirador. The girls never received any form of formal education as the position of and expectations for women presented little reason for schooling. Throughout her life, Nancy lamented her lack of education and spoke openly about her own ignorance.<sup>9</sup>

The only education Nancy ever received fell into the category of "finishing schools." At the age of seven, she attended a school in Richmond run by Julia Lee. Her parents may have chosen this school based on the fact that Lee was a relative to the Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Two years later, Nancy attended another school in Richmond. Finally, at seventeen years old, Nancy left the South to attend Miss Brown's Academy for Young Ladies in New York City. Learning for the first time that "damnyankee" was two words, Nancy did not react well to life in the North.<sup>10</sup> Surrounded by rich northern girls who

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<sup>7</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 11; Sykes, *Nancy*, 71.

<sup>9</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 174.

<sup>10</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 38.

seemed obsessed with their wardrobes and father's fortunes, Nancy responded by playing up her Virginian roots and acting like a country bumpkin. She overemphasized her southern accent, wore unflattering clothes, and told exaggerated stories about her family and home, including bogus tales of her mother washing other people's clothes for money and her father's drunken rages. She quickly developed a reputation as an entertaining personality but a notorious creature. She later recalled, "I nearly finished the school instead of it finishing me . . . and I have never forgotten how it horrified me."<sup>11</sup> Her parents quickly removed her from the school, and Nancy gladly returned home to her beloved Mirador.<sup>12</sup>

Upon her return home, Nancy began visiting elderly and disabled persons in her community. She enjoyed spending time with such people and helping them with small tasks around the house or reading to them. She took pleasure from these good deeds and even considered becoming a missionary. Her mother, a very religious person, encouraged her daughter to pursue this endeavor since it gave her such joy. But her mother may have wished Nancy to pursue something different from her own life. During this time, Nancy closely observed her parents' relationship. Although her mother had the stronger temperament of the couple, her father controlled the finances and thereby held the power in the marriage. At the age of seventeen, Nancy had received sixteen proposals of marriage but had not accepted any of them. She began questioning her role in the world as a woman and wondered what kind of man and marriage she would have in her life. Remembering her mother's dependence upon her father, Nancy felt that if her "Mother had had independent means she would not have had to stand for that . . . I felt that men put women in this position for this very reason, that it rendered them helpless." She continued, "They had no kind of independence. It seemed to

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<sup>11</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 34; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor's Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.

<sup>12</sup> Masters, *Nancy Astor*, 15.

me wrong.”<sup>13</sup> This sentiment remained central to Nancy’s life in the United States and abroad.

While Nancy did not want to replicate her parents’ marriage, she had watched her older sisters marry well and hoped to do the same. Upon visiting her sister Irene, now married to the artist Charles Dana Gibson, in New York in 1897, Nancy met Robert Gould Shaw at a polo match. Shaw boasted a prominent Bostonian family. As the great nephew of Robert Shaw Gould, the Union colonel who led the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, a regiment of all-black troops, and the son of Alexander Agassiz, a leading Harvard zoologist, Shaw appeared to be an ideal match for a beautiful and outgoing young woman from the South. Nancy described him as a “rather spectacular young man,” and her parents encouraged the match.<sup>14</sup> He and Nancy became engaged, but she soon realized that she did not love him and that they shared little in common other than their passion for horses. Under pressure from her family, Nancy agreed to renew the engagement and set a wedding date for that fall. Writing of her impending marriage, Nancy remembered that “the engagement of any Langhorne was a sensation, and mine was announced with the usual enthusiasm and excitement.” Yet Nancy was frustrated that she “was supposed to be making a brilliant match, but noticed that I was alluded to, still, as ‘the beautiful Irene Langhorne’s sister.’”<sup>15</sup>

Shortly before the wedding, Chillie heard troubling rumors concerning his son-in-law’s personal habits. He traveled to Boston and met with Shaw’s parents. Out of concern for his daughter, Chillie bluntly asked if there was any reason why his daughter should not marry their son. Shaw’s parents assuaged his fears and assured him that their son had done nothing that other young men did not do. They explained that marriage to Nancy would

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<sup>13</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 175.

<sup>14</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 175.

<sup>15</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 65.

settle him down. Chillie promptly returned to Mirador and advised his daughter *not* to marry Shaw. But Nancy never responded to situations where she perceived someone pushing her into a corner. Her father's controlling relationship with her mother, Nancy's perspective on his attempt to do the same with her, and her inability to shake her identity as Irene's sister combined to make Nancy determined to marry Shaw. The ceremony took place on October 27, 1897, in the drawing room of Mirador. Her younger sister, Phyllis, served as the maid of honor and later remembered the wedding "only for its gloom."<sup>16</sup> At the age of eighteen, Nancy Langhorne became Mrs. Robert Shaw of Boston.

The marriage between Nancy and Shaw lasted only a few years. As it turned out, Chillie's concerns were valid. Shaw had a terrible alcohol addiction and physically abused Nancy in his drunken rages. He also kept a mistress on the side. Nancy left her husband several times in the early years of their marriage. Nonetheless, the two did conceive a child, a boy they named Robert (always known as Bobbie), born in 1898. Nancy left Shaw for good in 1902 at the age of twenty-three and returned to Mirador with her son. Upon her arrival home, she announced to her father, "Your beautiful daughter is back again, unwanted, unsought, and partly widowed for life."<sup>17</sup> A Charlottesville court finalized the divorce in early 1903 on the grounds of adultery. No proud southern man would marry Nancy because she had married a Yankee. No northern man would take the same risk of married with a woman who had divorced and humiliated the son of a prominent family. Believing that her failed marriage and divorce had ostracized her from public life completely, she settled in to

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<sup>16</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 65.

<sup>17</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 176; Michael Astor, *Tribal Feeling* (London: Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1963), 28.

her solitary existence as a divorcee with a child. But, as her mother predicted, “Somehow I don’t think the world has heard that last of Nancy yet.”<sup>18</sup>

#### FROM MIRADOR TO CLIVEDEN

Following Nancy’s divorce, Chillie felt that a trip to England would help Nancy work through her sadness. He sent Nancy and his wife to England in February 1903, along with a family friend named Alice Babcock, who had also recently ended an unhappy love affair. Together Nancy and Alice condemned all men on the ship to England and had a grand time ignoring them at every opportunity. The trio traveled first to Paris and then on to England. Nancy loved England and later wrote that the country “always gave me a peculiar feeling of having come home, rather than of visiting a strange land.”<sup>19</sup> During this visit, the women met up with Nancy’s sister Irene and her husband, who had lived in London for some time. Nancy made the most of Charles and Irene Gibson’s British friends and contacts. One of the people Nancy met during this trip was Ava Astor, the wife of John Jacob Astor IV, a cousin of Nancy’s future father-in-law. Astor took an immediate shine to Nancy and asked Nancy and Alice to stay for an additional month. Mrs. Langhorne returned to care for her grandson, Bobbie, while Nancy and Alice stayed with Mrs. Astor. But Nancy did not meet her future husband on this particular transatlantic journey.<sup>20</sup>

Nancy returned to Mirador with a renewed spirit, but her recent happiness ended quickly with the sudden and unexpected death of her mother in the summer of 1903. At the age of fifty-five, Mrs. Langhorne suffered a heart attack, and Nancy never truly recovered

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<sup>18</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 55; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor’s Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.

<sup>19</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 66; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor’s Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.

<sup>20</sup> Masters, *Nancy Astor*, 19; Fox, *Five Sisters*, 72-73; Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 176.

from the loss of her mother. Nancy later wrote, “The light went out of my life. I was ill for months, in a wretched, nameless fashion.”<sup>21</sup> Some twenty years later, Nancy still grieved for the loss of her mother. She wrote to her sister Irene, “Mother Oh [sic] how I long to see that woman, mother, mother the one love of my life, no one will know how I miss her, she dwarfed all other love for me.”<sup>22</sup> At the age of seventy-two, she wrote of her mother’s passing, “The memory of those days is like a shadow on the heart still.”<sup>23</sup>

Nancy continued to openly grieve for her mother throughout the next year. She tried to take her mother’s place as the matriarch of Mirador, but her attempt met with little success. Since England had cheered her up previously, Chillie suggested that Nancy take another trip to England. Nancy and Phyllis returned to England in the winter of 1904-05, along with their children, and Irene oversaw their interaction with English society. Nancy enjoyed three months of the hunting season in Leicestershire. Having spent the better part of their childhoods on the back of horses, the Langhorne women relished this experience immensely and proved themselves excellent horsewomen among their British compatriots. As James Fox maintains, “To be praised on the hunting field was the highest accolade, which also absolved you of any other sin.”<sup>24</sup> Nancy did take a serious fall once during the season after riding the biggest horse, well over sixteen hands, she could find. As the horse jumped to miss a branch, Nancy fell and landed in a ditch. A British gentleman rode up and asked her, “Can you mount from the ground? Shall I get down to help you?” Nancy snapped at him, “Do you think I’d be such an ass as to come out hunting if I couldn’t mount from the

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<sup>21</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 176.

<sup>22</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 76.

<sup>23</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 176.

<sup>24</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 79

ground?”<sup>25</sup> Clearly, this American woman was not nearly as docile as some of the American women Britons had previously encountered. Nonetheless, the Langhorne’s Virginian upbringing meshed well with the leisure class in England. The Virginian gentry and British rural aristocracy held much in common: a high opinion of one’s self-worth, a love for the outdoors, and a disdain for the working classes.<sup>26</sup> As Nancy remembered this period in her life, she recalled, “I began to live again.”<sup>27</sup>

During this trip to England, Nancy began making a name for herself among the English elite. Her boldness and attractiveness impressed the men. British women, however, were less taken with this new American beauty. The initial excitement surrounding the arrival of American women in Britain had passed. British women regarded Nancy as yet another American girl with daddy’s money who had come to steal one of their British men and titles. During a hunt one day, Edith Cunard, the wife of the industrialist Sir Gordon Cunard, haughtily accused Nancy, “I suppose you have come over here to get my husband.” Nancy answered her candidly, “If you knew the trouble I had in getting rid of mine, you would know I don’t want yours.”<sup>28</sup> The two became instant friends, and Edith gave Nancy a degree of protection from the other still suspicious wives.

Nancy began mixing with the same elite social and political circles patronized by her American compatriots, Lady Churchill and the Duchess of Marlborough. But Nancy fiercely protected her personal privacy and reputation in England. She stayed away from gossipy circles and avoided being on a first-name basis with anyone. Although she attended numerous dinners and dances, she never drank, she did not play cards, and she attended

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<sup>25</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 80.

<sup>26</sup> Astor, *Tribal Feeling*, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 81.

<sup>28</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 67; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor’s Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.

church regularly. She later reminisced, “I had suitors to spare, but with wisdom beyond my years I kept them all at bay and I had my own way of doing it.” She always had her maid chaperone her to and from parties. One interested gentlemen remarked on her ever-present maid, “Poor Mrs. Shaw. Not much fun, a maid to see you home.” Nancy curtly countered, “If I had known who I was going to meet, I would have called a policeman.”<sup>29</sup> Another man confessed to Nancy that he wanted to kiss her but that he feared she would tell his wife. She bluntly explained to him, “I would not tell your wife. . . . I would tell the whole hunting field.”<sup>30</sup> But overall, the conduct of men and women in England matched Nancy’s upbringing in Virginia. The same chivalrous behavior of men and courting practices existed among the upper-classes of Virginia and England. Nancy increasingly felt at home in England.

Despite her best efforts to keep men at bay, Nancy had become increasingly interested in one English gentleman in particular. At the age of forty-one, John Baring was the chairman of his family’s merchant bank, Baring Brothers. His family position bestowed upon him the title of Lord Revelstoke, but Nancy referred to him as “Apollo.”<sup>31</sup> Lord Revelstoke was both spectacularly handsome and incredibly rich. Unfortunately, he was well-aware of his attractiveness to women and acted like an arrogant British snob. Although the two never became engaged, they did discuss a future together. But Lord Revelstoke ruined any chance of marrying the proud Virginian when he openly asked her, “Do you really think you could fill the position that would be required of my wife? You would have to meet

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<sup>29</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 81.

<sup>30</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 69; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor’s Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.

<sup>31</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 81.

Kings and Queens and entertain Ambassadors. Do you think you could do it?"<sup>32</sup> As Nancy later recollected, "That was the death blow to my love for him. I said promptly I was quite certain I never could. That was the end of it, although he wrote to me for some time after I went back to Virginia."<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, Nancy was capable of anything to which she set her mind, a fact she later proved in her marriage to another British lord. Without a doubt, her later life and position in England demonstrated her ability to meet royalty, entertain diplomats, and impress others with her capabilities as a hostess, not only as the wife of a leading British man but also in her own right as an American woman. Lord Revelstoke clearly did not know Nancy very well and did not understand how to approach this American woman with a proud and defensive personality. Otherwise, he would never have phrased his questions in such a way. Other American women had proven their social and political worth as the wives of many leading British peers. And Nancy was more than competent of meeting the bar that her American-born, British-wed sisters had set in England.

Nancy returned to Virginia with another serious relationship having ended. Lord Revelstoke wrote to her and tried to continue their courtship, but Nancy would not hear of it. He had offended her proud Virginian and American identities, and no amount of apologies or gifts would mend her wounded heart. She did not return to Britain for nearly a year, but she maintained her personal contacts in Britain by actively writing to her English friends, both men and women. One gentleman she had befriended was Herbert Asquith, the future prime minister. He knew of her situation with Lord Revelstoke, and she asked him if she should

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<sup>32</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 74; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor's Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.

<sup>33</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 74; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor's Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.

ever marry again and, if so, who he had in mind. Asquith did not send a quick reply, which further injured her already sensitive spirit. She wrote to Asquith again and scolded him for not having written to her prompt manner. He then responded:

You must not reproach me, my dear Mrs. Shaw;  
It's not a like a Redskin selecting a squaw;  
For there's no tougher problem, in logic or law  
Than to find a fit mate for the lady called Shaw.<sup>34</sup>

Asquith had summed up what many Britons thought about the latest addition to their fashionable circles. Nancy Langhorne Shaw was beautiful, funny, witty, and a simply splendid person with whom to spend time. She knew how to ride, enjoyed hunting, and fit easily with the London Season crowd. But her sensitivity to her Virginian and American identities made her a prickly person to deal with at times. She could be moody, spiteful, and distinctly outspoken to a fault. While she regarded England as much home as she did Virginia, in many ways she seemed to be a woman out of place in two countries. The hey-day of Anglo-Americans marriages had begun its decline, and few American men wanted to marry a divorcee with a child and an impulsive personality. Little did Nancy know that her next transatlantic voyage would serve as the most important trip she had taken across the Atlantic.

In December 1905, Nancy sailed back to England with her father. Lord Revelstoke still thought that he would marry Nancy, believing himself the front-runner of the five proposals Nancy received that winter. Lord Revelstoke planned to meet Nancy at the dock in Liverpool. But a competitor had chosen not to wait for Nancy's next trip to England. Instead, William Waldorf Astor traveled to the United States and sailed back to England under the guise that his presence on the ship on which she traveled was merely coincidental.

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<sup>34</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 178.

But, as James Fox explains, “in those days of competing steamships, the first-class passenger lists were available to any good travel agent.”<sup>35</sup> Waldorf asked to meet Nancy aboard the ship, but she put him off for several days. Undeterred by her rebuff, Waldorf took the opportunity to woo her father. Nancy remembered, “He [Waldorf] knew what he wanted. A clever man can always find more ways than one of getting what he wants. Waldorf knew all the ways. He was very good looking, and he had immense courtesy and very great charm. He soon had Father eating out of his hand.”<sup>36</sup> By the time they reached England, Nancy had at least considered Waldorf as a potential suitor. Writing home to her sister Phyllis, Nancy approvingly noted that Waldorf was “the fourth richest man in the world.”<sup>37</sup> Clearly, Nancy wanted to marry again, but any husband would have to bring a considerable fortune in addition to acting as a father to Bobbie. Nancy judged Waldorf as being able to meet both of these requirements.

The Astor family had led prominent lives on both sides of the Atlantic. John Jacob Astor had been the first to make the Astor name well-known in the United States by great success in the fur business and trade with China in the early nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> When he died in 1848, his fortune was estimated at \$25 million, which amounted to one-fifteenth of all the personal wealth in the United States.<sup>39</sup> Additional profits from real estate in New York and shrewd investments only increased the Astors’ wealth. The family fortune remained intact for three generations but was split in 1875 between John Jacob Astor III and his brother William Backhouse Astor, Jr. The larger share went to John Jacob, making him the

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<sup>35</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 85.

<sup>36</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 86.

<sup>37</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 86.

<sup>38</sup> Years after she married Waldorf, Nancy would often refer to the Astor family as “those skunk skinnin’ Astors” when she was upset with her husband’s family. Fox, *Five Sisters*, 136.

<sup>39</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 86.

richest man in the United States. His son, William Waldorf Astor, moved to Britain in 1893, along with his wife and fourteen-year-old son, William Waldorf II. Always known as Waldorf, this transplanted American attended Eton and Oxford, like the other Anglo-American grooms. In 1899, he became a naturalized British citizen, at the age of twenty.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to sharing the same birthday, Waldorf and Nancy had many common interests. They both enjoyed high-class leisure activities such as hunting; raising, riding, and racing horses; and service to the public. But they did have very different personalities. “Restless, intuitive, relying on instinct, impatient with argument,” Nancy was a force of nature. Few people dared to meet her head on in any sort of disagreement. Waldorf, a kind and gentle soul, avoided confrontation with Nancy except in rare cases. One friend later described their marriage as, “like watching an animal trainer with a rather dangerous animal.”<sup>41</sup>

In any case, Waldorf courted her throughout the winter and showered her with letters and gifts. He proposed, she accepted, and the two announced their engagement in March 1906.<sup>42</sup> Nancy feared that Waldorf’s father might object to their union. Since he had left the United States and become a British citizen, she felt that he might prefer his son to marry an Englishwoman. But Waldorf’s father raised no objections, and he became quite fond of Nancy and she of him. Waldorf and Nancy wed on May 3, 1906, at All Souls Church, at Langham Palace, in England. Notably, neither Nancy nor Waldorf’s father attended the ceremony as both gentlemen were suffering from gout at the time of the nuptials.<sup>43</sup> After she

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<sup>40</sup> Axel Madsen, *John Jacob Astor: America’s First Multimillionaire* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001), 6, 283, 284.

<sup>41</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 97

<sup>42</sup> *New York Times*, March 9, 1906; *New York Times*, March 10, 1906.

<sup>43</sup> *New York Times*, May 4, 1906. Both gentlemen were widows. Mrs. Langhorne died in 1903, and Mrs. Astor died in 1894.

married Waldorf, Nancy called her father-in-law “Old Moneybags.” But he apparently found this amusing, as he chose to give her the Astor family diamonds, which included the Sancy diamond, a fifty-five carat stone. Owners of the diamond prior to Nancy included Elizabeth I, James II, and Louis XIV. The couple also received from William the family estate, Cliveden, as a wedding present, in addition to an annual income of \$100,000 from Waldorf’s father.<sup>44</sup> Nancy and Waldorf honeymooned in Italy and Switzerland before returning to home to England.<sup>45</sup>

Nancy threw herself into her new role as a wife to one of the best-known men in England. Fine-tuning her skills as a hostess, Nancy made Cliveden an “international social center.”<sup>46</sup> The guest book at Cliveden included some of the most prominent Anglo-Americans of the period: James Arthur Balfour, Charlie Chaplin, Winston Churchill, Lord Curzon, Henry Ford, Henry James, Rudyard Kipling, Lady Mountbatten, Sean O’Casey, Bernard Shaw, Edith Wharton, Edward VIII, George V and Queen Mary, the Queen of Rumania, the King of Sweden, and the Archduke Franz Ferdinand.<sup>47</sup> “In inviting guests to Cliveden the only policy Nancy Astor seems to have followed in these days,” according to John Halperin, “was that of exposing as many Englishmen to as many Americans as she possibly could, believing as she did that the peace and happiness of the world depended in part on Anglo-American friendship.”<sup>48</sup> As an example, when Nancy hosted a dinner with Winston Churchill a guest, she always placed an American on either side of him.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *New York Times*, March 21, 1906.

<sup>45</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 180; Fox, *Five Sisters*, 88; Karen J. Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament: A Rhetorical History of Nancy Astor’s 1919 Campaign* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 8.

<sup>46</sup> Courtney Wilson, “Our Nancy: The Story of Nancy Astor and Her Gift to the University of Virginia,” Astor Collection, University of Virginia.

<sup>47</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 182; Wilson, “Our Nancy,” Astor Collection, University of Virginia.

<sup>48</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 181.

<sup>49</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 181.

Although Nancy had failed at running Mirador after her mother's death, she excelled at Cliveden by blending her knowledge of southern hospitality and her husband's riches.<sup>50</sup> In traditional British fashion, Nancy hosted elaborate dinners and intimate teas. Guests knew that when they attended a dinner at Cliveden they would enjoy delicious food, "a blend of French cuisine and traditional Virginia fare such as corn bread and beaten biscuits."<sup>51</sup> Rather than push specific people into conversations, Nancy took a seemingly hands-off approach to discussions between her guests. She simply allowed everyone to mingle and chat at their leisure. But in addition to these time-tested social strategies of dinners and teas, she kept Cliveden open to friends and family at all times. Her buoyant personality and candid tongue attracted people to her and to Cliveden. She did not schedule her guests' visits but rather encouraged them to move freely within the house and around the Cliveden grounds. Through her Anglo-American marriage and a blending of American and British entertaining, Nancy became "one of the leading hostesses in England."<sup>52</sup> As her neighbor Julian Grenfell once wrote to Nancy, "You will go to heaven for keeping people cheerly."<sup>53</sup>

In many ways, Nancy did not fit into the stereotype of American heiresses buying their way into the British aristocracy. Her family, though comfortable, did not enjoy wealth to the same degree as the Jeromes or the Vanderbilts. In this marriage, the husband held the riches instead of the wife. Nancy hailed from the South and not the North like the large majority of American heiresses. Finally, when Nancy married Waldorf, her husband held no title. They genuinely married for love and enjoyed a life "full and fascinating, if not always

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<sup>50</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 9.

<sup>52</sup> Wilson, "Our Nancy," Astor Collection, University of Virginia.

<sup>53</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 9.

happy.”<sup>54</sup> Ironically, Nancy never placed herself in the same category as previous Anglo-American brides and despised the so-called “dollar princesses.” She once wrote to Phyllis about these women in general and Consuelo Marlborough in particular, saying, “they have the form, the taste the desires of everyone single one of those rich N.Y. soulless sort of women, May Rox[burghe] the same, also Consuelo M.”<sup>55</sup> Nancy had especially harsh words about Consuelo, writing, “Her life has been spent with the smartest & fastest set England & I don’t believe she has a single friend who’s worth ‘twopence’ as a Thinker or a Reformer.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, while Nancy falls into the category of American-born, British-wed women, she was no heiress and clearly did not see herself as one of them. Nevertheless, she did marry a leading British man whose eventual title bestowed a title upon her as well. As a result, the British and American publics watched her actions, activities, and associations just as closely as previous American women who had married into the aristocracy.

While she shared many similarities with her Anglo-American sisters, Nancy’s presence offered something very different from her American compatriots. During meals at Cliveden, Nancy often performed for her guests, her quirky sense of humor shining through. She often popped in an oversized set of false teeth, chewed gum, and impersonated various people. Her favorite characters included a “horsey, profane, toothless, shrewish, upper-class Englishwoman who hated Americans and a Southern belle telling stories about ‘her’ Negroes.”<sup>57</sup> Sometimes Nancy pushed back her tiara as if it were an old hat or fanned herself with a dinner plate. Many friends knew Nancy well enough to find these escapades entertaining. When a British ambassador and his wife visited Cliveden, the wife explained

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<sup>54</sup> Madsen, *John Jacob Astor*, 284.

<sup>55</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 113. May Goelet married the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Roxburghe in 1903.

<sup>56</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 113.

<sup>57</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 182.

that Nancy simply “didn’t care what anybody thought. She was a southern prima donna. She would do *cartwheels* in the hall at Cliveden.”<sup>58</sup> But over time, her sense of humor and performances more often offended her fellow Britons. For better or for worse, Nancy Astor had made a name for herself in England.

In addition to becoming a well-known hostess in England, Nancy and Waldorf began a family. Shortly after the wedding, Nancy and Waldorf welcomed a son, William Waldorf Astor III, born in 1907. Though she enjoyed a large family with Waldorf, much like her family in Virginia, Nancy’s son Bobbie always held a special place in her heart. Writing to Phyllis five days after the birth of her first English son, she confided to her sister, “He’s not so nice as Bobbie . . . . We can never love any children like one’s [sic] first borns, can we?”<sup>59</sup> Nancy’s first daughter, Nancy Phyllis Louise, followed in 1909. The family added three more sons: Francis David Langhorne, born in 1912, Michael Langhorne, born in 1916, and John Jacob Astor, always known as Jackie, born in 1918. Throughout this period in her life, Nancy continued to hunt “regularly, between babies.”<sup>60</sup> Commenting on her large family, Nancy explained simply, “Babies are my hobby.”<sup>61</sup>

As Nancy practiced her hand at motherhood, Waldorf began to test the political waters. He had expressed an interest in standing for Parliament, and the Conservative Association of Plymouth adopted Waldorf in 1908. In order to run for the House of Commons, he needed to meet the residency requirements by living in Plymouth. The Astors bought a house there in 1909, and Waldorf began his political campaign. Also significant to Plymouth was its connection to the United States as “the Pilgrim Fathers had set sail on the

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<sup>58</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 115.

<sup>59</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 105.

<sup>60</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 114; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor’s Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.

<sup>61</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 9.

*Mayflower* from the harbour at Sutton Pool.”<sup>62</sup> Nancy even held “a romantic notion of herself as the pilgrim returning to the place from which [Sir Francis] Drake had set off to reach Virginia. She even felt there might be divine inspiration at work in the choice of constituency.”<sup>63</sup>

Plymouth had a large working-class constituency, thereby making the city a Liberal stronghold. When Waldorf started campaigning in earnest in the fall of 1909, he and his wife canvassed the city. Like Lady Churchill, Nancy visited hundreds of working-class homes and talked individually with hundreds of people in an effort to help her husband secure election to Parliament. Nancy enjoyed the opportunity to “go out to people in a friendly spirit,” believing that “that is how they will receive and listen to you.”<sup>64</sup> But Nancy found English people at times difficult to reach and form a rapport with. She explained this difficulty by saying, “The trouble with so many English people is that they cannot, however hard they try, be quite natural with other people. It is difficult for them not to be just a little patronizing,” she mused. “I don’t know why that is. Maybe it has something to do with the climate over here.”<sup>65</sup> Waldorf lost to the Liberal candidate. But another election followed in December 1910, and Waldorf won this race. He won reelection several times to the House and even served as Prime Minister David Lloyd George’s parliamentary secretary. Thus, Nancy added Lloyd George to her list of prominent guests at Cliveden. More importantly, Waldorf’s entry to the House of Commons began thirty-five years of the Astors’ representing Plymouth.

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<sup>62</sup> Masters, *Nancy Astor*, 59. Sutton was a division of Plymouth.

<sup>63</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 138.

<sup>64</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 183.

<sup>65</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 183.

Between their family and political duties, Nancy and Waldorf remained busy. They attended a dinner party in July 1914. During a conversation with the German ambassador, Nancy boldly asked him, “Have you come to admire the very country I hear you intend to invade shortly?” According to Nancy, “it just popped out before I knew anything about it.”<sup>66</sup> Of course, the ambassador feigned horror. A month later, World War I began. As custom dictated, many wealthy aristocrats opened their homes to the government for use as hospitals as their contribution to the war effort. Following this tradition, the Astors offered Cliveden in November, 1914. The house “was considered unsuitable,” but Nancy oversaw the transformation of the covered tennis courts and bowling alley into a hospital for soldiers. Three months later, the renovation was complete and the Cliveden hospital held over one hundred patients. By the end of the war, the Astors’ estate housed over six hundred patients and functioned as a convalescent home. By the end of the First World War, more than 24,000 men had been treated at Cliveden. Nancy worked non-stop in both wings of the hospital and brought a unique style of nursing to the soldiers. But Nancy’s personality and bedside manner were unconventional to say the least. She often told men who had given up that they were “going to die because they had no guts. If you were a Cockney, or a Scot, or a Yank, you’d live. But you’re just a Canadian, so you’ll lie down and die.”<sup>67</sup> When she heard that one Canadian soldier has lost the will to live after being badly burned, she leaned over his bed and whispered, “You’re going to die, and I would too, rather than go back to Canada.” The soldier responded by making a full recovery.<sup>68</sup> She used this technique on a number of badly wounded soldiers. Once she asked a soldier where he came from. When he

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<sup>66</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 114; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor’s Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.

<sup>67</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 132; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor’s Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.

<sup>68</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 185.

answered Yorkshire, she replied, “No wonder you don’t want to live, if you come from Yorkshire!”<sup>69</sup> The enraged soldier made a complete recovery and did return to Yorkshire.

While Nancy tended to soldiers, her father-in-law donated what he could to the war effort: his money. In 1914, he gave \$100,000 to the Red Cross, \$175,000 to various funds, and \$125,000 to aid the dependents of officers. In 1915, he gave another \$100,000 to the Red Cross. Every \$100,000 William Waldorf Astor donated amounted to approximately \$1.7 million today.<sup>70</sup> As a result of William’s financial support of the war, King George V bestowed upon William a barony, and he became Baron Astor and then Viscount Astor in 1916. As a result of these titles, Waldorf’s father now sat in the House of Lords, and Waldorf automatically became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Astor. Nancy and Waldorf did not approve of the title, feeling that the aristocracy was unseemly. Nancy especially felt that a former American should never have become a titled British aristocrat. Nonetheless, Nancy now became Lady Astor. Her husband’s seat in the House of Commons and her father-in-law’s presence in the House of Lords portended great changes and opportunities for her in the coming years.

## LADY OF THE HOUSE

On October 19, 1919, Waldorf’s father died of a heart attack. His death made Waldorf Viscount Astor and subsequently ended his career in the House of Commons. Waldorf now took his father’s seat in the House of Lords, thus inheriting the title of Lord Astor, and he left his seat in the House of Commons vacant. For almost a decade, Waldorf had represented the people of Plymouth. Both he and his wife felt much attached to the

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<sup>69</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 131; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor’s Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.

<sup>70</sup> Madsen, *John Jacob Astor*, 289.

people, and neither one wanted to give up his or her position and relationship with the constituents. As a result of their leadership in the community, the local Conservative party proposed substituting Lady Astor in her husband's place.<sup>71</sup> At first, Lord and Lady Astor agreed that she would retain his seat in the House of Commons while he found a way to drop his peerage title and seat in the House of Lords through legislation. Thus, Lady Astor's entry into the House of Commons was not initially an attempt to push a woman into the British Parliament or advance a feminist agenda in England but merely a stopgap to hold Waldorf's seat until he could terminate his position in the House of Lords. Little did Lord and Lady Astor realize they had begun a new chapter in their lives.

Lady Astor's entry into the House of Commons was fraught with obstacles. Legally, she could run for a parliamentary seat. The Enabling Act of 1918, which gave British women thirty years old and over the right to vote, permitted women to stand for the House of Commons but not the House of Lords. But Lady Astor had a number of issues working against her. She was a wealthy divorced American, with little or no education, and no political experience, running for a House seat in a working-class district as a Conservative and a woman. As the *Sunday Evening Telegram* argued, "the first woman member [in the House of Commons] really should be a native of the kingdom."<sup>72</sup> The *Saturday Review* suggested that Lady Astor could not take a seat in Parliament because she was an "American by birth."<sup>73</sup> Without a doubt, "Lady Astor had enough personal liabilities to make any

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<sup>71</sup> Ruth Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses: Sagas of Upward Nobility, 1870-1914* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1980), 162-63.

<sup>72</sup> *Sunday Evening Telegram*, October 26, 1919, as cited by Musolf, "The Angel Sings," 8.

<sup>73</sup> Musolf, "The Angel Sings," 8.

thoughtful voter pause.”<sup>74</sup> Few people believed that Lady Astor’s campaign would end in success.

On the other hand, Lady Astor answered her opponents’ every criticism. When a woman attempted to disparage Nancy for her divorce and asked her if she would make a divorce as easy to achieve in England as it was in the United States, Lady Astor leaned forward and asked, “Sister, are you in trouble too?”<sup>75</sup> When crowds told Nancy to “Go back to America,” she answered “I am pleased to do my duty in the State which it has pleased God to call me.”<sup>76</sup> In an attempt to emphasize her America and British identities in a positive light, Lady Astor explained, “I am of Virginia blood and come of good old Anglo-Saxon fighting stock.”<sup>77</sup> When attacked on the grounds of her wealth, Lady Astor put her critics on the spot. “Would you be doing what I am doing if you had what I have?” Other times she retorted, “I represent the working man. My husband was not elected by 17,000 millionaires living on the Hoe.”<sup>78</sup> Lady Astor showed throughout her campaign that she had an answer for every liability. The experience “greatly strengthened her sense of the tie between her native and her adopted lands.”<sup>79</sup>

Lady Astor had lived in Plymouth for ten years and had met thousands of its constituents through her husband’s campaigns and political career. Over the past decade, she had acted as a Lady Bountiful to Plymouth and had “won the heart of the West county.”<sup>80</sup> She had demonstrated her ability to meet people individually and in groups and speak with members of the working-class candidly and without the typical attention to class-

<sup>74</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 282.

<sup>76</sup> Musolf, “The Angel Sings,” 86.

<sup>77</sup> Musolf, “The Angel Sings,” 86.

<sup>78</sup> Musolf, “The Angel Sings,” 86.

<sup>79</sup> Gail MacColl and Carol McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1989), 208.

<sup>80</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, October 25, 1919, as cited by Musolf, *The Angel Sings*, 15.

consciousness. She gave rousing speeches, excited people to her side, and was determined to earn every Plymouth woman's vote—a total of 17,175—more than enough to win the election. Many of her efforts during Lord Astor's tenure in the House dealt with helping women and children, a cause that she continued to work for throughout her own political career. While Lord Astor had represented Plymouth, Lady Astor had pushed her husband and his fellow members of Parliament to fight for pure milk, improved working conditions, and shorter hours for women and children. She now told fellow mothers, "I want for your children what I want for my children. I do not believe in sexes and classes."<sup>81</sup> Flyers with Lady Astor's picture appeared all around Plymouth with the message, "Vote for Lady Astor and Your Babies Will Weigh More."<sup>82</sup>

In typical Nancy fashion, she took political advice from no one and merely acted on instinct throughout her campaign. She made no lofty promises but rather candidly told her constituents, "I am not one of those *asses* who tell you're going to have a new heaven on earth."<sup>83</sup> In another speech, Lady Astor announced to the crowd gathered in front of her,

I am not standing before you as a sex candidate. If you want an MP [Member of Parliament] who will be a repetition of the 600 other MPs, don't vote for me. If you want a lawyer or if you want a pacifist don't elect me. If you can't get a fighting man take a fighting woman. If you want a Bolshevik or a follower of Mr. Asquith don't elect me. If you want a party hack don't elect me. Surely we have outgrown party ties. I have. The war had taught us that there is a greater thing than parties, and that is the State.<sup>84</sup>

Newspapers everywhere followed Lady Astor's campaign. Reporters from the United States followed their "American" peeress throughout her run for the House.

Newspapers such as the *Chicago News*, *Boston Globe*, and the *New York Times* all carried

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<sup>81</sup> Elizabeth Langhorne, *Nancy Astor and Her Friends* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 89.

<sup>82</sup> Langhorne, *Nancy Astor and Her Friends*, 89.

<sup>83</sup> Musolf, *The Angel Sings*, 20.

<sup>84</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 281.

reports of how their American daughter's campaign was progressing. Additionally, newspapers from all over Britain covered Lady Astor's campaign: *Western Morning News*, *Birmingham Gazette*, *Liverpool Courier*, *Manchester Daily Despatch*, *Yorkshire Observer*, *Glasgow Herald*, and the *South Wales Daily News*. The possibility of the first woman taking her seat in the House of Commons was major news. The fact that she was an American made the story even more interesting. Newspapers in the United States maintained a degree of objectivity that the British papers did not. Americans were happy simply to read about Lady Astor's pursuit of the House, while British newspapers were highly partisan. But both American and British newspapers, according to Karen Musolf regarded Lady Astor as one of their own.<sup>85</sup> Both the American and British publics were yet again following the life of another American woman who had taken a prominent role in Great Britain.

The night before the election, Lord Astor excited the Plymouth constituents when he told them, "In the past Plymouth sent out the Pilgrim Fathers. Tomorrow I believe Plymouth is going to send in the first Pilgrim mother."<sup>86</sup> After the final tally, Lady Astor had earned 14,495 votes, a margin of more than five thousand votes over the second place candidate and ten thousand over the next candidate. In her acceptance speech, she admitted to the Plymouth constituents that the thought of running for Parliament had "knocked me out for a week."<sup>87</sup> But her husband believed in her ability to serve the people, and she came to agree with his assessment: "I am a Virginian, so naturally I am a politician."<sup>88</sup> When Lady Astor took her seat in the House of Commons on December 1, 1919, now known by the British

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<sup>85</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 103.

<sup>86</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 131.

<sup>87</sup> Langhorne, *Nancy Astor and Her Friends*, 87.

<sup>88</sup> Langhorne, *Nancy Astor and Her Friends*, 87.

public as “our Nancy,” she became the first woman to take a seat in the British Parliament.<sup>89</sup> Her son Bobbie and sisters Nora and Phyllis watched from the spectator’s gallery. Former prime ministers David Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour served as Lady Astor’s sponsors as ceremony required the formal introduction of new MPs to the House by another MP. Despite repeated attempts, the three never quite bowed in unison, as custom dictated. Instead of taking a seat in the House silently, Lady Astor turned and began talking with the various people she knew in the House. Her entry into the House lacked the degree of solemnity and dignity many had anticipated.<sup>90</sup>

Many members of the House perceived Lady Astor’s lightheartedness and attempt to make small talk as an apparent disregard for the prestige of the parliament. From the all-male British parliamentary perspective, the American woman had no desire to uphold the decorum fitting an MP. Like Anglo-American grooms, the large majority of British MPs were Oxbridge men. Having attended the finest schools in England and maturing in the absence of women, they did not welcome a woman into their territory. “They call it the best club in Europe,” Nancy later recalled, “but it didn’t seem like the best club to me. I can’t think of anything worse than being among six hundred men none of whom really wanted you there.”<sup>91</sup>

One member in particular resented Lady Astor’s presence in the House. Sir Winston Churchill had known Nancy for years and had never gotten along with her. The son of American Lady Churchill deeply resented Lady Astor’s entry into the House of Commons

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<sup>89</sup> Lady Astor was not the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons. In 1918 Constance Georgine Gore-Booth, better known Countess Markiewicz was elected to the House as a Sinn Fein candidate. She refused the oath of allegiance to the king, rejected British jurisdiction over Ireland, and was thereby ineligible to take her seat in the House. Fox, *Five Sisters*, 279.

<sup>90</sup> Barbara Ann Knoles, “Orphans of the Storm”: The Integration of Women in Parliament, 1918-1988,” (Ph.D. diss. Northern Arizona University, 1988), 26.

<sup>91</sup> Langhorne, *Nancy Astor and Her Friends*, 90.

and chose to ignore her and any speeches she gave, believing that the men “could freeze her out and be rid of the female sex for good.”<sup>92</sup> When she pressed him on the matter, Churchill described his feelings on Nancy’s presence in the House. “I find a woman’s intrusion into the House of Commons as embarrassing as if she burst into my bathroom when I had nothing with which to defend myself, not even a sponge.” Nancy quickly replied, “Winston, you’re not handsome enough to have worries of that kind.”<sup>93</sup> In another case, the two exchanged harsh words over a petty issue. Nancy spat at Winston, “If I were your wife, I’d poison your coffee,” to which Winston snapped, “If you were my wife, I’d drink it.”<sup>94</sup> During a particularly heated exchange, Lady Astor bellowed at Winston, “The trouble with you is that you have the worst blood of two continents in your veins.”<sup>95</sup> The two remained rivals for years.

At the age of forty, Lady Astor entered the House of Commons and donned the sober costume she sported for the next twenty-five years. Wearing “an elegantly cut black suit, long in jacket and skirt, her white shirt collar spread across her shoulders, and a three-cornered hat,” Nancy appeared solemn and yet stylish.<sup>96</sup> If she ever varied her outfit, the gentlemen in the House rose to their feet upon her entrance to Parliament and shouted, “Bravo, Nancy!”<sup>97</sup> Her fellow MPs treated her differently because she was a woman, but this humorous gesture demonstrated her ability to win over her colleagues during her tenure in the House.

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<sup>92</sup> Langhorne, *Nancy Astor and Her Friends*, 90.

<sup>93</sup> Knoles, “Orphans of the Storm,” 27.

<sup>94</sup> Halperin, *Eminent Georgians*, 184.

<sup>95</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 210.

<sup>96</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 284.

<sup>97</sup> *New York Times*, May 3, 1964.

Lady Astor gave her maiden speech in February 1920, and opposed a bill to ease the wartime drinking restrictions. Her early life had taught Nancy a sincere hatred of liquor, but she also understood that she could not impose a personal belief on the British public. “I am not pressing for prohibition. I am far too intelligent for that.” Lady Astor remarked on her presence in the House. “I know it was very difficult for some honourable members to receive the first lady MP,” to which the House answered, “not at all.” She continued, “but I assure you that it was difficult for a woman to come in. To address you now on this vexed question of drink is harder still. It takes a bit of courage to dare to do it. But I do dare.”<sup>98</sup>

Lady Astor’s maiden speech set the tone of her career in the House. For the next twenty-five years, her efforts fell into one of several categories dealing with women, children, and Anglo-American relations: improved maternity care and infant welfare, women’s labor conditions, health and sanitation, improved educational opportunities, marriage and divorce laws, and international politics.<sup>99</sup> In explaining her approach to politics, and women and children specifically, Lady Astor declared, “I don’t like people I can’t do anything for.”<sup>100</sup>

Lady Astor did not feel the need to show the same kindness and concern toward her fellow MPs. She rarely followed the rules of exchange in the House of Commons. She typically addressed her fellow members directly, instead of the Speaker of the House, and frequently interrupted members when they gave speeches. When a fellow MP once said, “My opinion, for what it’s worth . . . ,” Nancy interrupted, “Well, what do *you* think it’s worth?” When another MP addressed the House, “When I was walking in my garden, this is the question I asked myself . . . ,” when Nancy interrupted, “And I bet you got a silly

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<sup>98</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 284.

<sup>99</sup> Musolf, *The Angel Sings*, 294; Knoles, “Orphans of the Storm,” 32.

<sup>100</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 290.

answer.” When a fellow Conservative MP opposed Lady Astor’s drink bill, she verbally attacked him. “You’re the village donkey and the House of Commons is the village where you bray.” The Speaker of the House of Commons forced her to retract her remark.<sup>101</sup> Lady Astor’s behavior in the House taught her fellow MPs and Britain as a whole that a woman could hold her own in the House and that Americans were bold, brash, and outspoken to a fault.

Although she had been elected in Britain, Lady Astor maintained strong ties to Americans. In 1920, she wrote an article titled, “What Women Can Do in Politics That Men Cannot Do,” published by the *Woman’s Home Companion*. The article’s appearance in September was quite timely considering the fact that Congress had passed the Nineteenth Amendment, guaranteeing American women the right to vote, on August 18, roughly two weeks before the magazine published Lady Astor’s article. In her first contribution to any American magazine, Lady Astor attempted to draw out the commonalities faced by both American and British women. “American women also may be interested in the problems which we have faced in the British House of Commons, and which, after all, are universal to the whole Anglo-Saxon race—for England and America,” she wrote. “I believe we cherish the same ideals of liberty, conscience, and clean upright living that are synonymous with the language we both speak.”<sup>102</sup> Lady Astor called on women to exercise their right to vote, arguing that “women hold the balance of power.” She expressed her disdain for alcohol, discussed her desire for peace, and encouraged American women to support the League of Nations and the United States’ membership in the organization. Finally, she encouraged the United States and Great Britain to pursue Anglo-American relation regardless of problems

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<sup>101</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 288.

<sup>102</sup> Viscountess Astor, M.P., “What Women Can Do in Politics That Men Cannot Do,” *Woman’s Home Companion*, 47 (September 1920), 7-8.

resulting from the League of Nations. Calling on both countries to extend their “hands across the sea,” she pleaded with Americans to “realize that England’s desire for American cooperation [with the League of Nations] is a genuine one, without ulterior or imperialistic motives.” At the heart of her essay, Lady Astor appealed to her fellow American women from a British perspective.<sup>103</sup> In the upheaval following World War I and the Versailles treaty, Lady Astor stood as an ideal person to reach out to the United States and Great Britain, and to women in particular, in an effort to bring the two countries together after a devastating world war.

After becoming the first woman to sit in the House of Commons, Lady Astor received an invitation in the spring of 1922 to speak at the Pan-American Conference for Women in Baltimore, Maryland, and another meeting sponsored by the English Speaking Union, knowing that she was a supporter of Anglo-American relations. She decided to visit Virginia during this visit. On her journey back to the United States, Lady Astor received numerous requests “to speak, appear, lunch or banquet in every part of the country,” and in Canada.<sup>104</sup> Lord and Lady Astor arrived in New York on April 18, 1922. She rearranged her transatlantic visit and accepted invitations to various engagements in Chicago, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia, Ottawa, Toronto, and Washington, D.C., and planned an extended stay in Virginia. Before she returned to England on May 26, 1922, Lady Astor gave approximately forty speeches.<sup>105</sup>

During her time in Virginia, Lady Astor visited large crowds in Richmond, Danville, Scottsville, and Charlottesville. Bands entertained the throngs with songs such as “Carry Me

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<sup>103</sup> Astor, “What Women Can Do in Politics That Men Cannot Do,” 7-8.

<sup>104</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 154.

<sup>105</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 154.

Back to Old Virginia,” “Dixie,” and “Home Sweet Home.”<sup>106</sup> In her hometown of Danville, she received a loving cup and a Confederate flag, and the city renamed her home street, “Lady Astor Street.” When she addressed a crowd of five thousand people, Harry C. Ficklen, a childhood friend, introduced her as “the sweetheart of two nations.” He described Lady Astor as “an angel with a flaming sword cutting the right of way for the mothers of men, dove of war and eagle of peace . . . [,] the first woman ever to sit in the British Parliament and last woman in the world ever to forget the sacred soil of Virginia that bore her.”<sup>107</sup> During her visit to Scottsville, Lady Astor charmed the mayor, who later expressed his hope that she would return to Virginia and run as a Democratic candidate for president.<sup>108</sup>

Throughout her tour of the United States, Lady Astor continually stressed several themes in her speeches. First, she always opened her speeches by saying that she was not there to speak to the people as a Briton/American/Virginian, but then went on to do just that. However, she always found a way to juggle her dual identities. During a speech in New York, she explained to her audience that she was there as “proof to all countries that England and America will give you a chance if you can prove to either of them that what you are striving for is something which will hurt no man, woman, or child of any country, but which you earnestly feel is going to help all countries.”<sup>109</sup> Like the Anglo-American brides before her, Lady Astor negotiated her national identity depending on the situation and audience before her. Second, she always made some sort of false deprecation statement about not being up to the task but doing her part. In a speech to the League of Women Voters in New York, she said that her time the House of Commons had given her “courage and strength. I

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<sup>106</sup> *New York Times*, May 5, 1922.

<sup>107</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 155.

<sup>108</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 155.

<sup>109</sup> Lady Nancy Astor, *My Two Countries* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1923), 41.

won't say too much about wisdom.”<sup>110</sup> Third, she constantly brought up the fact that the United States desperately needed to join the League of Nations. She appealed to a New York audience by saying, “I feel sure the fathers and mothers of America [feel] that the safest and sanest way to get out of wars is to join some sort of association of nations for peace.”<sup>111</sup> Lady Astor also encouraged women to take their part in politics and influence their home, city, or state. When speaking to the Convention of the League of Women Voters in Baltimore, Lady Astor encouraged them by saying, “We must put into public life those qualities which women have had to put into their home life.”<sup>112</sup> Finally, she consistently stressed the power of the joint Anglo-American world and the necessity of Anglo-Saxons to remake the world through Christian civilization. Before the English Speaking Union in New York, Lady Astor described herself as “a symbol—a sort of connecting link between the English-speaking people!”<sup>113</sup> During another speech in New York, she emphasized the need to build a “civilisation based on Christianity.”<sup>114</sup>

Lady Astor's trip to the United States came at an opportune time. Just before Nancy's visit to the United States, Margot Asquith, wife of former Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, had made a disastrous lecture tour. Asquith told Americans how ridiculous they had been not to join the League of Nations. Advertising her ignorance of North American history, she told a Canadian crowd about their president Abraham Lincoln. “Margot Asquith's demolition of Anglo-American relations,” maintains Anthony Masters, gave Nancy a chance to offset the “appalling impression Margot had made.”<sup>115</sup> Lady Astor's

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<sup>110</sup> Astor, *My Two Countries*, 3.

<sup>111</sup> Astor, *My Two Countries*, 24.

<sup>112</sup> Astor, *My Two Countries*, 27.

<sup>113</sup> Astor, *My Two Countries*, 16.

<sup>114</sup> Astor, *My Two Countries*, 8.

<sup>115</sup> Masters, *Nancy Astor*, 117.

American tour met with great success and served as the high point in her first parliamentary term. A Virginian newspaper praised her saying, “An accomplished and highly trained orator could hardly frame an address to a general audience with finer effect.” The *New York Telegraph* wrote, “Her gifts are remarkable; her faculty for saying the right thing at the right time amounts to genius.”<sup>116</sup> Supporting these comments, the *New York Times* wrote, “Lady Astor already symbolizes a condition of things that time has modified. . . . She was born in Virginia. And she sees England, not as a Parliament, but as a home. Let us concede to her then, as to any other Queen, the divine right to do no wrong.”<sup>117</sup> The American daughter had long considered herself “a symbol and embodiment of Anglo-American unity,” but even she could not have asked for a better opportunity to act as an informal ambassador between her two countries or a more successful reception on her transatlantic journey.<sup>118</sup> Upon her return to Plymouth, she published her speeches from her transatlantic tour in 1923, aptly titled *My Two Countries*.

Lady Astor returned to the House of Commons in 1922 with a newfound sense of confidence. Continuing her fight on behalf of the women and children of Britain, Lady Astor fought for the expansion of suffrage for women. The 1918 Enabling Act made approximately eight million women eligible to vote in Britain. Nancy wanted to drop the voting age for women from thirty to twenty-one. She had hoped to achieve such a goal during her first term in office, but this increase in women voters did not occur until 1928. She found a political soulmate in Margaret Macmillan, a Labour party member elected to the House in 1926. Together the women advocated the establishment of nursery schools across

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<sup>116</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 156.

<sup>117</sup> *New York Times*, April 30, 1922.

<sup>118</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 158.

England.<sup>119</sup> Nancy's new project interested Waldorf so much that he purchased some land that eventually became the home for the Rachel McMillan College, which opened in 1930.<sup>120</sup> Much like Consuelo Vanderbilt before her, Lady Astor, as the American woman in Parliament, used her political career to improve the lives of British women and children.

When Lady Astor stood for reelection in 1929, she reminded her constituents of the various measures she had achieved in the House: equal votes for women, pensions for the aged, widowed, and orphans, a national electrical system, and European reconciliation on Locarno lines.<sup>121</sup> She also told Plymouth that her representation in the House of Commons actually offered voters "double representation in Parliament," because they had both Lord and Lady Astor working for the people of Plymouth. She also pledged to her supporters her continued efforts toward "Peace, Production, and Prosperity."<sup>122</sup> She ended her open letter by reminder the people that while she was a Conservative, she worked with MPs of all parties and worked for all Britons regardless of class.

I appeal for support to men and women of all parties, and of no party; and in particular to the new Women Voters. I have proved that I am ready and able to work for the general welfare, and not for any sectional interest. You took a risk when first you elected me. Since then I have taken many risks on your behalf. Let us once more stand by each other.<sup>123</sup>

Following her reelection in 1929, Lady Astor hosted a luncheon for all of the women now sitting in the House of Commons. She acknowledged to her fellow female MPs how exasperating it must be for an American pioneer to blaze the trail in Parliament. She then proceeded to announce to the women gathered for a seemingly innocent lunch that they were

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<sup>119</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 158; Masters, *Nancy Astor*, 139.

<sup>120</sup> Rachel McMillan was Margaret's sister who had died in 1917. Masters, *Nancy Astor*, 140.

<sup>121</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, Mss1 As885 a 49-50, Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>122</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, Mss1 As885 a 49-50, Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>123</sup> Nancy Astor Manuscripts, Mss1 As885 a 49-50, Virginia Historical Society.

to drop their political loyalties at once and join her proposed Women's Party. The newly elected women MPs received her command with a mix of surprise and anger that she would place such demands on them immediately following their swearing in ceremony at St. Stephen's.<sup>124</sup> Lady Astor's attempt to embrace a feminist cause failed miserably and foreshadowed her future years in the House of Commons.

Lady Astor enjoyed the pinnacle of her political career during the 1920s. She achieved many of her highest goals during this period by improving the lives of women and children and increasing her overall popularity in the United States and Great Britain. But she did not enjoy the same level of success or esteem during the 1930s and 1940s. In the summer of 1931, Lord and Lady Astor took a trip to Russia, along with friend George Bernard Shaw, to see for themselves Communist Russia.<sup>125</sup> Shaw, a professed communist, described the trip as "a bit of an accident. . . . The Astors suddenly took it to their heads to see for themselves whether Russia was really the earthly paradise I had declared it to be; and they challenged me to go with them."<sup>126</sup> Shaw recalled Nancy saying at one point, "I am a Conservative. I am a Capitalist. I am opposed to Communism. I think you are all terrible." During one dinner with Stalin, the interpreter refused at first to translate Lady Astor's comments and questions. She reportedly asked Joseph Stalin, "When are you going to stop killing people?" Stalin answered, "When I think it is necessary to do so."<sup>127</sup> Needless to say, Lady Astor returned to Britain with a terrible impression of the country. Stalin shared the same sentiment of the brash American-born, British-wed wife. As far as he was concerned, she had confirmed his worst impressions of Anglo-Americans.

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<sup>124</sup> Masters, *Nancy Astor*, 149.

<sup>125</sup> Hesketh Pearson, *The Marrying Americans* (New York: Coward McCann, 1961), 256.

<sup>126</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 368-69.

<sup>127</sup> Langhorne, *Nancy Astor and Her Friends*, 117; Fox, *Five Sisters*, 375.

In the years immediately preceding World War II, the Astors became known as pro-Nazi, pro-Hitler, and “friends of the Third Reich.”<sup>128</sup> Lady Astor’s fellow MPs referred to her “the honourable member for Berlin.”<sup>129</sup> Lord Astor’s visit to Hitler in 1937 abruptly became suspect. Suddenly, Cliveden became known as a hotbed of communism, fascism, and appeasement. The Astors did everything in their power to avoid war, but their efforts were largely due to their horrific experiences during World War I. Nevertheless, even American newspapers accused them of being “responsible for a new policy of determined efforts to make friends with Hitler and Mussolini.”<sup>130</sup> But a British journalist’s decision in 1937 to equate the “Cliveden Set” with appeasement hurt Lady Astor’s political career and her reputation as an ambassador between the United States and Great Britain.<sup>131</sup> Over the next several years, “the term Cliveden Set [became] a symbol . . . of not just appeasement but a failure to evaluate the world situation as it really was.”<sup>132</sup> Lord and Lady Astor denied such a set existed for the rest of their lives but never completely rid themselves of the albatross.<sup>133</sup>

Although she had lost her popularity in both the United States and Great Britain, Lady Astor remained a heroine in Plymouth after the outbreak of World War II. She split her time between the military hospital at Cliveden and serving as Mayoress of Plymouth. Even at the age of sixty-two, Nancy appeared “immensely brave, outwardly fearless . . . she walked the street tirelessly and climbed the rubble often in highly dangerous circumstances,” explains James Fox, “arranging shelter, food, clothing, evacuations, bullying the local

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<sup>128</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 423.

<sup>129</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 161.

<sup>130</sup> *New York Times*, March 6, 1938.

<sup>131</sup> Claud Cockburn was a Marxist and the journalist responsible for coining the term “Cliveden Set.” Fox, *Five Sisters*, 423.

<sup>132</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 423.

<sup>133</sup> *New York Times*, April 28, 1938; *New York Times*, May 6, 1938; *New York Times*, November 25, 1945; Viscountess Astor, “Lady Astor Interviews Herself,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, 211 (March 1939), 5-6, 76-79.

authorities, talking to the remaining residents, the soldiers and sailors.”<sup>134</sup> She seemed to work day and night and remained visible to her loyal constituents. But she had lost the love and support of the rest of Britain. A popular anti-Nancy song during World War II, “The D-Day Dodgers,” sung to the theme of “Lili Marlene,” follows:

Dear Lady Astor  
 You’re pretty hot  
 Standing on the platform  
 Talking bloody rot  
 You’re England’s sweetheart and her pride  
 We think your mouth’s too bleeding wide  
 We are the D-Day dodgers  
 In Sunny Italy.<sup>135</sup>

By 1944, the Astor family—everyone except Nancy—agreed she should not stand for reelection in Plymouth—everyone except Nancy. She saw her family’s request that she step aside as a male conspiracy. She announced to her Plymouth constituents, “I have said I will not fight the next election because my husband does not want me to. Isn’t that a triumph for men?”<sup>136</sup> The truth was that Nancy had not only lost her base, but she had become increasingly senile. Her notoriously candid personality had taken on a degree of maliciousness and a bitter tone to even those closest to her. In 1942, during a debate at the House of Commons that was broadcast to the British public, Nancy calmly warned everyone about the dangers of Catholic influence. According to Lady Astor, “the Foreign Office . . . was riddled with Catholics and there were far too many of these sinister zealots in active communication with Nazi-dominated Europe.”<sup>137</sup> In a speech in February 1942, she

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<sup>134</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 444.

<sup>135</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 446.

<sup>136</sup> Fox, *Five Sisters*, 456.

<sup>137</sup> Masters, *Nancy Astor*, 209.

appeared incoherent and rambling, and her fellow MPs dismissed her as a “conspiracy scaremonger.”<sup>138</sup>

Visibly upset, Lady Astor announced her retirement on December 1, 1944. One newspaper responded by stating the obvious: “The House will lose its most historic figure.” The *Daily Mail* wrote, “Maybe there will never be another quite like her.”<sup>139</sup> On her last day in the House of Commons, June 14, 1945, a fellow MP told her how much she would be missed. Lady Astor replied, “I will miss the House: the House won’t miss me. It never misses anybody. I have seen ‘em all go—Lloyd George, Asquith, Baldwin, Snowden, MacDonald—and not one of them missed.” She lamented, “The House is like a sea. MPs are like little ships that sail across it, and disappear over the horizon. Some of ‘em carry a light. Others don’t. That’s the only difference.”<sup>140</sup>

#### AN EXTINCT VOLCANO

After Nancy grudgingly left the House of Commons in 1945, she became a very bitter and unhappy person. She blamed Waldorf and her sons for forcing her to retire from the House. She turned on her family and accused them of making her quit something she loved so much because she was a woman and as men, wanting to limit her life. Clearly, nothing could have been further from the truth. But at this point in their marriage, according to their son Michael, Lord and Lady Astor “fell out with each other.”<sup>141</sup> The two took a trip to the United States in 1946. When they arrived in New York, a throng of reporters met Nancy at the gangplank. When asked for a statement, she announced, “I am an extinct volcano.” Her

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<sup>138</sup> Masters, *Nancy Astor*, 209.

<sup>139</sup> Musolf, *From Plymouth to Parliament*, 165.

<sup>140</sup> Masters, *Nancy Astor*, 213.

<sup>141</sup> Astor, *Tribal Feeling*, 217.

statements during her trip throughout the east did not improve. After her visit to Savannah, Georgia, the press asked her what she thought of the city. She complimented the city and described it as one of the most beautiful cities in American. But she went on to say, “But the way y’keep it. It’s revoltin’. Never seen anythin’ so revoltin’ in m’life. Wherever y’go, there’s litter. I’ll tell you what I think of Savannah. I think it’s a beautiful woman with a dirty face. One of the loveliest women in th’ world who’s forgotten to wash.”<sup>142</sup> While in Washington D.C., she visited an all-black high school. She told the students that as a southerner, she learned to appreciate “colored people through her black mammy.” She denounced Harlem culture and told the students that “no race can develop beyond its moral character,” and urged them to return to the simple faith of their ‘Aunts and Uncles.’”<sup>143</sup> Neither the students nor the press, some of whom were African American, responded well to Lady Astor’s advice. Her objective in this trip, as with previous trips to the United States, was to act as an Anglo-American ambassador. Clearly, this trip did not succeed as prior transatlantic journeys had for Lady Astor. Her time as an informal ambassador had passed.

Lady Astor turned on her husband of nearly forty years after leaving the House of Commons. He died in 1952 at the age of seventy-three. Nancy did not grieve in front of anyone and remained convinced that he had been wrong to force her to resign her position as MP. In 1959, the city of Plymouth made Lady Astor a Freeman of the City, and she seemed happier for a time. But Nancy never really accepted her absence from the House of Commons and began to mourn her husband’s death only years after his passing. At the age of eighty-five, she suffered a stroke at Grimsthorpe, her daughter Wissie’s house. When the doctor asked her how she felt, she candidly answered, “Considering that I am dying, I am

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<sup>142</sup> Sykes, *Nancy*, 568.

<sup>143</sup> Sykes, *Nancy*, 570.

very well.” Slipping in and out of consciousness, she lifted her arms and cried out, “Waldorf.” She died in the early morning of May 2, 1964. A memorial service followed on May 13, and the current Prime Minister, Sir Alex Douglas Home, attended. But Lady Astor’s friends—Lloyd George, Asquith, and Balfour—had all died long before. Nancy had truly become an extinct volcano.<sup>144</sup>

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Lady Nancy Langhorne Astor left behind a mixed legacy. Like the other American-born, British-wed brides of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, she married into the British aristocracy and took on a very public role because of her marriage to a leading British man. Like Lady Churchill, Nancy supported her husband’s political career by hosting numerous dinner parties and making valuable contacts that advanced his career. Like Consuelo Vanderbilt, Lady Astor showed a keen interest in improving the lives of British women and children through a variety of projects, both philanthropic and political. But unlike her Anglo-American predecessors, she entered the world of British politics and forged a career in the British Parliament. Her entry into the House of Commons was significant not only because she was the first woman to ever take a seat as a Member of Parliament but that an American woman earned this honor before a British woman. She worked tirelessly for women, children, and improved Anglo-American relations. At the same time, Nancy’s candid personality cost her friends, family, and constituents over the course of her life. Her once-entertaining comments wore thin over the years and eventually brought her political career to an end. Throughout her life, the American and British public followed her evolution from wife, to mother, to campaign manager, to political candidate, to civic leader.

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<sup>144</sup> Langhorne, *Nancy Astor and Her Friends*, 260.

Her position in Great Britain gave her the opportunity to work for an amelioration of Anglo-American relations, but her decision to pursue this goal with her own particular style and personality made her an invaluable informal ambassador between her two countries for the first half of the twentieth century.

Upon Lady Astor's death, former Prime Minister Lord Clement Attlee recorded his thoughts about Nancy, published in *The Observer*. As Attlee recollected,

Nancy Astor could be bold as brass; but she was in fact a kind and compassionate woman with, especially where women were concerned, a great sense of justice. She was no respecter of persons, and would take you down a peg as soon as look at you, but not if you were getting a raw deal or down on your luck. . . . Her most valuable work was to make it possible, often behind the scenes, for able and worthy people, welfare workers and social reformers, to get a hearing and a chance to act. She was amongst the impresarios of the Welfare State . . . People like Nancy Astor, quite apart from their good works are atmospheric. They make things hum.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> *The Observer*, May 3, 1964.

## Chapter Seven

### The American Invasion

It may with justice be said that it is by  
the American girl that we have been  
conquered . . .

— Lady Dorothy Nevill<sup>1</sup>

Transatlantic marriages began in earnest in the 1870s after the wedding that united Lord Randolph Churchill and Jennie Jerome. Often regarded as the pioneer in the Anglo-American marital market, Lady Churchill married into the British aristocracy when the American and British public regarded such nuptials as something new, exciting, and symbolic of the growing friendship between the two countries. When such marriages took place at the outset, one observer maintained, “the average American citizen is . . . pleased when he hears that another American girl had entered the exclusive circle of the British aristocracy.”<sup>2</sup> Anglo-American marriages became something of a local-girl makes good story. But the very nature of such unions being discussed as the Anglo-American marital market implied that “materialistic motives were necessarily present in most marriage choices.”<sup>3</sup> As Sondra Herman contends, the mere use of the word *market* “suggested a terrible impersonality in the exchange of love for support. The harshness of the business world was invading the home itself. Home was no longer a refuge from the cold world, but rather its extension.”<sup>4</sup> According to her assessment, ambitious marriages, motivated by financial and social advancement, encouraged husbands and wives to engage in adultery.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard W. Davis, “‘We Are All Americans Now!’ Anglo-American Marriages in the Later Nineteenth Century,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 135 (1991), 142.

<sup>2</sup> Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 153.

<sup>3</sup> Sondra R. Herman, “Loving Courtship or the Marriage Market? The Ideal and its Critics, 1871-1911,” *American Quarterly* 25 (1973), 237.

<sup>4</sup> Herman, “Loving Courtship . . . its Critics,” 237.

## A TITLED AMERICAN IS NOT AN AMERICAN

As the Anglo-American marital market continued to grow throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the novelty of such nuptials began to wear off. Both Americans and Britons began to view such matches as suspect and loveless unions that exchanged capital for class.<sup>5</sup> Americans became increasingly convinced that transatlantic marriages betrayed innocent democratic daughters from the land of opportunity into the hands of financially and morally bankrupt dukes. Britons viewed such unions as socially hungry Americans buying their way into the centuries-old British aristocracy and ruining the prestige of such an establishment due to the increasing numbers of American ladies and duchesses living in Britain. Throughout Anglo-American marriages, Americans focused on the transference of money and the question of citizenship while Britons expressed their disdain for *American* women holding *British* titles. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the American colony had given way to an American invasion.<sup>6</sup>

Although the movement against such marriages began fervently after 1895, some sentiment against Anglo-American marriages existed earlier. When Lady Churchill's sister

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Hitchens, *Blood, Class, and Empire: The Enduring Anglo-American Relationship* (New York: Nation Books, 1990), 121.

<sup>6</sup> *New York Times*, September 14, 1902. Several authors have used the term "American invasion" in reference to Anglo-American marriages. See Kathleen Burk, "Anglo-American Marital Relations, 1870-1945," presentation given at Barnard's Inn Hall, Holborn, London, England, February 3, 2004; R. H. Heindel, *The American Impact on Great Britain, 1898-1914: A Study of the United States in World History* (New York: Octagon, 1968), 346; David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven: Yale University, 1990), 358; Maureen E. Montgomery, "*Gilded Prostitution*": *Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 32; Hesketh Pearson, *The Marrying Americans* (New York: Coward McCann, Inc., 1961), 66; Jane Abdy and Charlotte Gere, *The Souls* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984), 159. Other scholars, diplomatic historians in particular, have used the same term to refer to the "American invasion" of Europe in terms of American-made good and products. See Walter LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913*, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, Volume II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 21; David Dumbleby and David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1988), 39. The combination of American women and products invading Britain served as a decisive factor in the movement against such marriages.

Clara married Moreton Frewen in 1881, Lord Stafford, heir to the Duke of Sutherland and a good friend of Frewen, attended the wedding in New York. Following the service, the mayor of New York City boldly asked Lord Stafford, “Did the pretty service not incline you to carry off some daughter of our Republic?” Lord Stafford answered brashly, “But no, my brother Francis is married and has children.”<sup>7</sup> From his view, why would Lord Stafford sacrifice his own independence if his brother’s children could inherit the family title? Thus, Lord Stafford’s answer to the New York mayor’s accusatory question revealed that the titled Briton viewed himself as the prey of rich American heiresses.

Money played a central role in spurring the trend of Anglo-American marriages, and money played a role in making such unions distasteful on both sides of the Atlantic. When George Charles Spence-Churchill, the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough and Lord Randolph Churchill’s brother, married Lillian Price Hammersley, the wedding brought attention again to New York heiresses and the Churchill family. Lillian’s own family was quite wealthy, and following the death of her first husband, Louis C. Hammersely, she received a fortune estimated at \$6 million.<sup>8</sup> When she married the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough in 1888, she reportedly changed her name to Lily since her birth name, Lillian, rhymed too easily with million.<sup>9</sup> Granted, her decision to change her name was a personal choice, but it reveals that transatlantic marriages had become negatively associated with money.

Money continued to taint Anglo-American marriages through end of the nineteenth century. When Miss Cornelia Bradley-Martin married the Earl of Craven in 1894 at the age of sixteen, many Americans raised a disapproving eyebrow at the wedding. Elizabeth

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<sup>7</sup> Anita Leslie, *Mr. Frewen of England: A Victorian Adventurer* (London: Hutchinson & Co., Publishers, Ltd., 1966), 61.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Times*, November 10, 1892.

<sup>9</sup> Leslie, *Mr. Frewen of England*, 114.

Cameron, the wife of the senator from Pennsylvania, wrote to Cecil Spring Rice, “The wedding of Miss Bradley-Martin, aged sixteen, to the Earl of Craven has been one of the most disgusting exhibitions of American snobbery I have ever seen. Even New York was disgusted at such a palpable sale.”<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, Bradley-Martin’s marriage to a titled Briton transferred a marriage settlement in the amount of \$1,000,000 from one side of the Atlantic to the other. Shortly after the wedding, the *New York Times* published an article titled, “American Women Who Have Given Their Hearts and Money to Foreigners.” The article estimated “that English noblemen alone have captured by marriage with American women in round numbers \$50,000,000 of enviable American cash.”<sup>11</sup> In the *New York Journal*, an article appeared in 1909 with the title, “How Titled Foreigners Catch American Heiresses.”<sup>12</sup> Americans appeared most distressed about the financial resources of wealthy Americans going to Great Britain, and this became the most important factor in the gradual turn against such marriages.

A key indicator of the increasing resentment Americans felt toward Anglo-American marriages came in 1896 when Gertrude Vanderbilt married Harry Whitney. The *New York Journal* announced that “from an American standpoint [this is] the greatest wedding this country has ever known. Money will marry money next Tuesday. Broad acres will be wed to broad acres. Railroads will be linked to railroads. But it will be an American wedding. There will be no foreign noblemen in this—no purchase of titles. The millions all belong in America and they will all remain here. . . . An American boy, an American girl, [and] an

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<sup>10</sup> Cecil Spring Rice Papers, CASR 1/6/91, April 3, 1893, Churchill Archives Center, Churchill College, Cambridge. Spring Rice served as the British Ambassador to the United States from 1912 to 1918.

<sup>11</sup> *New York Times*, April 19, 1893.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Eliot, *Heiresses and Coronets: The Story of Lovely Ladies and Noble Men* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, Inc., 1959), 254.

American courtship.” At the wedding reception, the bandleader could not restrain himself from playing the Star-Spangled Banner.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, many Americans had become increasingly frustrated by the traffic of money from the United States to England via Anglo-American marriages. In 1895, a founder of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) expressed a perspective shared by many other Americans. He asserted that the British “come over here every day and trade us a second-class duke or third-class earl for a first-class American girl, and get several million dollars to boot. And the very next day the entire outfit goes back to Liverpool on a British vessel. We didn’t even get the freight back to Liverpool on the earl, the girl, or the money.”<sup>14</sup> As an example of this sentiment, upon the arrival of the Marquess of Stafford to the United States, the *New York World* asked its readers, “Attention, American heiresses, what will you bid?”<sup>15</sup>

But at the same time, first-class American girls advertised themselves in such a way that made it difficult for them to later feel offended by British accusations of buying their way into the British aristocracy. In February 1901, an unnamed American heiress placed the following advertisement in the *Daily Telegraph*. “Will any dukes, marquesses, earls, or other noblemen desirous of meeting, for the purpose of marriage, young, beautiful *and* rich American heiresses communicate with . . .” The advertisement followed with the name and address of a marital broker in New Orleans.<sup>16</sup> Americans seemed to send two different messages about Anglo-American marriages. American men accused British men of heiress hunting even as American heiresses made themselves more than available for the hunting.

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<sup>13</sup> Ruth Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses: Sagas of Upward Nobility, 1870-1914* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1980), 49; Gail MacColl and Carol McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1989), 316.

<sup>14</sup> Albert K. Steigerwalt, “The National Association of Manufacturers: Organization and Policies, 1895-1914,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1952), 71-72, as cited by LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913*, 112.

<sup>15</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 126.

<sup>16</sup> Hitchens, *Blood, Class, and Empire*, 122.

As the number of British-American unions increased noticeably during the twentieth, Americans observed the marriages with mixed feelings. The love-hate relationship that Americans had for Anglo-American marriages mimics the dual sentiments of Anglophilia and Anglophobia that many Americans held toward Great Britain during this period. In the late nineteenth century, most Americans regarded marriages between American daughters and British sons with excitement along with a latent hostility toward the nuptials. But after 1900, an increasing number of Americans considered such weddings with overt antagonism in spite of the fact that they maintained ideas supporting the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. President Theodore Roosevelt, for example, deemed such unions as purely “mammonistic” arrangements that had no moral or emotional backbone to support the bond. He declared that “the American citizen who deserved the least respect was the man ‘whose son is a fool and his daughter a foreign Princess.’”<sup>17</sup> President Roosevelt, and likely many others, considered “those who whored after titles abroad ‘a might poor lot of shoats,’ and traitors to republican principles.”<sup>18</sup> Ironically, Roosevelt acted as one of the leading proponents of assumed Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, believing that the race was destined to rule the world. Yet, the president did not support transatlantic marriages. He was not alone. Reverend R. S. MacArthur, a pastor in New York City, held a disapproving view of the unions and particularly of British men and described the unions as “a matter of sale and purchase.” He avowed that, “American girls have sold their womanhood, their country, their language, and their religion for husbands who are peculiarly contemptible cads.”<sup>19</sup> Likewise, United States Representative Charles McGavin also condemned these marriages and felt

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<sup>17</sup> Candice Lewis Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own: Women, Marriage, and the Law of Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 62.

<sup>18</sup> Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement*, 153.

<sup>19</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 62-3.

such were guilty of “sacrificing their souls and honor upon the altar of snobbery and vice,” and hailed their decision to marry foreigners as insulting to the founders of the United States. He continued: “While I have engaged in some criticism of those particular women who have made a mockery of the most sacred relations of life—of those not satisfied with any other name than Countess Spaghetti or Macaroni, I want to say one word in tribute to those true American women who spurned the wiles of earls, lords and counts for the love of His Majesty, an American citizen.”<sup>20</sup>

While not a public office holder, one U.S. citizen espoused strong opinions against transatlantic marriages based on his socialist political views. In 1918, Eugene V. Debs, a four-time presidential candidate for the Social Democratic Party, gave a speech in Canton, Ohio. While his dialogue focused on his antiwar position regarding World War I, he presented the following views on British-American unions.

To whom do the Wall Street Junkers in our country marry their daughters? After they have wrung their countless millions from your sweat, your agony and your life's blood, in a time of war as in a time of peace, they invest these untold millions in the purchase of titles of broken-down aristocrats, such as princes, dukes, counts and other parasites and no-accounts. [Laughter.] Would they be satisfied to wed their daughters to honest workingmen? [Shouts from the crowd, "No!"] To real democrats? Oh, no! They scour the markets of Europe for vampires who are titled and nothing else. [Laughter.] And they swap their millions for the titles, so that matrimony with them becomes literally a matter of money.<sup>21</sup>

#### MORE THAN A SYMBOLIC PUNISHMENT

While American women gained a great deal socially through Anglo-American marriages, they lost a great deal individually. In 1907, the United States federal government passed the Expatriation Act, which declared that any American woman marrying a foreigner

<sup>20</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 63.

<sup>21</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Writings and Speeches of Eugene V. Debs* (New York: Hermitage Press, 1948), 417.

had to assume the nationality of her husband and, as a result, forfeit her American nationality. During the 59<sup>th</sup> Congress, U. S. Representative James Breck Perkins of New York introduced the act as Public Law 193. The act was consistent with immigration restrictions during the period aimed at maintaining the homogenous characteristics of an American nationality based on western and northern European heritage.<sup>22</sup> Under the law, transatlantic marriages meant that American women who married British aristocrats lost their American citizenship.<sup>23</sup> According to Nancy Cott, “placing the woman who married a foreign national outside the American political community . . . entailed more than a symbolic punishment.”<sup>24</sup>

Before the Expatriation Act, the United States government had not addressed various questions related to the question of American nationality and citizenship. Prior to 1855, marriage in the United States did not affect citizenship or nationality. In 1855, the United States government passed the Nationality Act, a law declaring that “Any woman who might lawfully be naturalized under existing laws, married, or who shall be married to a citizen of the United States shall be deemed and taken to be a citizen.” Thus, marriage between an American man and an alien woman provided her with American nationality and citizenship. The law did not address the opposing situation of marriage between an American woman and an alien man.<sup>25</sup>

Not until the Expatriation Act of 1907 did the U.S. Congress address the question of marriage between an American woman and an alien man. This law codified derivative

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<sup>22</sup> Library of Congress, 59<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1905-07.

<sup>23</sup> Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Nancy Cott, “Marriage and Women’s Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1934,” *American Historical Review* 103 (1998), 1461.

<sup>25</sup> Waldo Emerson Waltz, *The Nationality of Married Women: A Study of Domestic Policies and International Legislation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1937), 23.

citizenship—a woman’s citizenship being contingent on a husband’s citizenship.<sup>26</sup> Though the Expatriation Act did not directly terminate her American nationality and citizenship, the law stated that an American woman who married a foreigner took the nationality of her husband. But since one state cannot force another state to grant citizenship to an individual based on the first state’s decision to deny citizenship, transatlantic marriages left some women stateless. As Candice Bredbenner explains, “choice of a spouse was the overriding legislative determinant of a married woman’s nuptial contract.”<sup>27</sup> Not until the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act of 1914 did British law address the legal question of American wives. Under this act, “the wife of a British subject shall be deemed to be a British subject and the wife of an alien be deemed to be an alien.”<sup>28</sup>

Nations have enforced expatriation, or the loss of citizenship, as a severe form of punishment most typically in the case of treason. Thus, the decision to retract an American woman’s citizenship following her marriage to a titled foreigner essentially labeled her a traitor to the United States.<sup>29</sup> In discussing the decision to marry an American man or a foreign man and the subsequent categorization of nationality, Congressional officials posed the question “whether a woman shall be penalized for marrying a foreigner?” While one House member answered, “yes,” another representative expressed the perspective of many other Americans. “That is a question for her to decide. She knows that will be the result

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<sup>26</sup> Ann Marie Nicolosi, “We Do Not Want Our Girls to Marry Foreigners”: Gender, Race, and American Citizenship,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 1999), 12; Ann Marie Nicolosi, “We Do Not Want Our Girls to Marry Foreigners’: Gender, Race, and American Citizenship,” *National Women’s Studies Association Journal* 13 (2001), 14. See also Blanche Crozier, “The Changing Basis of Women’s Nationality,” *Boston University Law Review* 14 (1934), 129-153.

<sup>27</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 4; Norma Basch, *In the Eyes of the Law: Women, Marriage, and Property in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 225.

<sup>28</sup> Virginia Sapiro, “Women, Citizenship, and Nationality: Immigration and Naturalization Policies in the United States,” *Politics and Society* 13 (1984), 7; British National Archives, FO 115/3401.

<sup>29</sup> Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligation of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 41.

when she considers marrying a foreigner.”<sup>30</sup> During another hearing concerning women’s citizenship and marriage, one committee member remarked that the hazards of such marriages were “a good lesson to our American girls to marry American boys.”<sup>31</sup> When a woman challenged the committee members on the grounds that men formed such laws from the perspective of a man, safe in his citizenship because of his sex, a congressman declared, “You have your citizenship; we love ours.”<sup>32</sup> Throughout the House hearings on citizenship, the “dukes and counts” argument prevailed. Representative Dickstein of New York testified, “They brought it about themselves, did they not? . . . The women who married these foreign dukes and counts, these duchesses and countesses and that sort of stuff, when there are enough Americans for them to choose from.”<sup>33</sup> From the perspective of the federal government, a woman’s choice to marry a non-American was un-American.

In a period of “100 percent Americanism,” the question of equal and independent citizenship of men and women became a secondary concern behind the effort to restrict American citizenship during a period of rising immigration numbers. Gaining and retaining American citizenship became ever more difficult, and Congress deemed the decision by women to marry a foreigner as an un-American act equivalent to “voluntary forsak[ing] [of] their allegiance to the United States.”<sup>34</sup> As James G. Blaine had explained years earlier, “every woman who leaves the duty and decorum of her native land and prostitutes her

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<sup>30</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, *Relating to the Expatriation of Citizens, Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives on H.R. 21358* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 8.

<sup>31</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 73.

<sup>32</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 73.

<sup>33</sup> Sapiro, “Women, Citizenship, and Nationality,” 17.

<sup>34</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 6.

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.”<sup>35</sup>

American women dealt with their expatriation after marriage to a British subject. When President Ulysses S. Grant’s daughter, Nellie, married Briton Algernon Sartoris in the White House in 1874, she lost her citizenship. After their divorce in 1893, the U.S. Congress reinstated her citizenship by a special act in 1898.<sup>36</sup> In the case of Consuelo Vanderbilt, her mother became frustrated when she perceived her duchess daughter’s indifference to having lost her American nationality.<sup>37</sup> On the contrary, Consuelo was quite upset upon losing her American citizenship but she could do little given the legal circumstances. Many years after divorcing the Duke of Marlborough and leaving Britain, she wrote in her autobiography, “and now, back in my native land, having regained a citizenship I would never have resigned had the law of my day permitted me to retain it, I look back on a long life under three flags.”<sup>38</sup> In another case, Ethel Mackenzie married Gordon Mackenzie, a British subject, in 1909. As a leader of the women’s suffrage movement in California, she tried to register to vote in the San Francisco voter registration drive in 1911, but the Board of Election Commissioners rejected her application on the grounds that upon her marriage to a Briton she “ceased to be a citizen of the United States.” Mackenzie appealed her case to the United States Supreme Court, asserting that her citizenship was a “privilege and immunity which could not be taken away from her except as a punishment for crime or by her voluntary expatriation.” Nonetheless, Justice Joseph McKenna rejected her case, arguing that the

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<sup>35</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 16.

<sup>36</sup> Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies*, 41.

<sup>37</sup> Doris Steven Unprocessed Papers, Box 9, Folder 290, p. 1-20. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University.

<sup>38</sup> Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold* (First published, 1953; second edition, Maidstone, England: George Mann Books, 1973), xi.

“marriage of an American woman with a foreigner . . . is as voluntary and distinctive as expatriation and with its consequences must be considered as elected.”<sup>39</sup> Finally, Ruth Bryan Owen, the daughter of three-time presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, married British officer Reginald Altham Owen in 1910. Following the passage of the Cable Act in 1922, Owen regained her citizenship through naturalization in 1925. When she announced her candidacy in 1926 for the U.S. House of Representatives from Florida, she faced two major obstacles due to her Anglo-American marriage. She fought once to run for the House, the very entity that had terminated her American citizenship in the first place, to which she was successfully elected in 1928, and again once she took her seat in the nation’s capital. In both cases, her opponents attacked her on the grounds that her marriage to a foreigner disqualified her from running for public office. From 1926 until 1930, Owen fought a battle of public and political opinion based on her decision to marry a Briton.<sup>40</sup> In her testimony before fellow House members, Owen explained, “The law had taken my citizenship away at the time of my marriage.” When Representative Johnson countered, “You left the country and abandoned your citizenship by marriage to a foreigner,” Owen quickly answered, “I did not abandon my citizenship.” Johnson replied, “You took on the citizenship of another country,” to which Owen retorted, “I did not take it. It was forced upon me by an unjust law, now repealed. A woman who married a foreigner was not a loyal citizen, despite her view of the matter.”<sup>41</sup> Owen retained her House seat and served as a Florida representative from

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<sup>39</sup> Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies*, 42; Linda Kerber, “The Meanings of Citizenship,” *Journal of American History* 84 (1997), 840.

<sup>40</sup> Sarah Pauline Vickers, “The Life of Ruth Bryan Owen: Florida’s First Congresswoman and America’s First Woman Diplomat,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1994). Owen worked with the American Women’s War Relief Fund in London during World War I alongside Lady Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough, and Lady Astor, all of whom lost their American citizenship when they married British men.

<sup>41</sup> Sapiro, “Women, Citizenship, and Nationality,” 17.

1928 to 1932, but she was not reelected in 1932. Without a doubt, American women faced dire circumstances if they decided to marry a foreigner, particularly a Briton.

The United States Congress clearly sent a message to American women with the Expatriation Act that marriage to a foreign man was a despicable decision and attempted to influence such decisions through negative reinforcement. Likewise, American women received messages advocating the decision to wed American men through stories in popular magazines. The *Woman's Journal* published an article titled, "Warning to American Heiresses." The essay begged American women to consider the "suicidal folly of abandoning the cheerful freedom and rational simplicity of our democratic social life for such a fate!" The editor continued saying, "Let us hope that the higher education of women may gradually wean the daughters of our millionaires from the worship of titles and aristocracy, and bring them to an intelligent appreciation of the nobility and value of American citizenship."<sup>42</sup> Thus, American heiresses now received encouragement *not* to marry foreign men in many forms.

The Expatriation Act remained the rule by law, deciding the status of American women's citizenship until 1922 when John L. Cable of Ohio introduced a new law. The Married Women's Act, also known as the Cable Act, partially repealed the Expatriation Act by declaring American women "subject to the same presumption as a natural citizen."<sup>43</sup> The law finally gave each woman a citizenship in her own right. No marriage since this law has granted American citizenship to any alien woman nor taken it from any American born woman who married an alien eligible to naturalize. Under the new law, a woman became

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<sup>42</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 61.

<sup>43</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 98. The law dictated that an American man or woman would lose their American citizenship if they lived in the country of their spouse or any foreign territory for five or more years.

eligible to naturalize on essentially the same grounds as men. The only difference affected those women whose husbands had already naturalized. If her husband was a citizen, the wife did not need to file a declaration of intention. She could initial naturalization proceedings with a petition. If a woman's husband remained an alien, she had to start with a declaration of intention. Notably, women who had lost their citizenship by marriage regained it under the Cable Act provisions after filing the proper paperwork in any naturalization court, regardless of her residence.<sup>44</sup>

By the time of the Expatriation Act in 1907, most Americans had turned against Anglo-American marriages due to a sense of national pride, which reflected the increasing nationalism of the period. For many Americans, "a titled American was an affront to American ideals, a blatant repudiation of democratic tradition."<sup>45</sup> As marriage to a British aristocrat required an American woman to leave the United States, her choice often received criticism as it signified her "indifference toward, if not contempt for, the virtues of democratic society."<sup>46</sup> For these reasons, even elite Americans strongly condemned transatlantic marriages, and Americans of all classes strongly disapproved of the American girls' renouncing their heritage in favor of the "Old World."<sup>47</sup>

## GILDED PROSTITUTION

Just as Americans turned away from Anglo-American marriages, so did Britons. Like their American counterparts, the transference of money served as a key reason to view such unions with scorn. When aristocratic Tories harassed Irish leader John Redmond for

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<sup>44</sup> Library of Congress, 67<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1921-23; Gladys Harrison, "The Nationality of Married Women," *New York University Law Quarterly Review* 9 (1932), 457.

<sup>45</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 62.

<sup>46</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 62.

<sup>47</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, 62.

receiving funds from Americans, David Lloyd George came to his defense. “Since when,” he boldly demanded of his colleagues, “have the British aristocracy started despising American dollars[?]” The crowd in Parliament responded with laughter and a voice was heard saying, “Marlborough.” Lloyd George responded, “I see you understand me.” From this point of view, Briton considered such financial exchanges as loveless matches.

According to contemporary journalist William T. Stead, “it is not too much to say that when there is no love in the matter, it is only gilded prostitution. . . .”<sup>48</sup> Such a negative label reflected the widespread sentiment Britons held toward the American heiresses but begs the question, who was the prostitute? The American women, who were paid with a title, or the British aristocrats, paid with American dollars from the “land of the Almighty dollar.”<sup>49</sup>

The American invasion had diluted the distinction between classes in Britain, a development the aristocracy found distasteful. One contemporary journal decried this change by explaining, “The main distinction between aristocracy and trade has been founded on money. The landowning classes inherited their money and did not make it. The commercial classes earned it by traffic. The recognition of trade at once weakened this distinction, and has practically destroyed it by now.”<sup>50</sup> While British aristocrats welcomed American dollars to restore the country estate and renovate the family palace, they did not appreciate the fact

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<sup>48</sup> William Thomas Stead, *The Americanization of the World, or the Trend of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harce Markley, 1902), 323. Maureen E. Montgomery is quick to point out that this phrase “has never been used other than a figure of speech, and neither suggests that a transatlantic marriage was an act of physical prostitution, nor imputes that any of the transatlantic marriages partners was a prostitute.” Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, ix.

<sup>49</sup> *Punch*, December 5, 1906.

<sup>50</sup> H.B. Marriott-Watson, “The Deleterious Effect of Americanization Upon Women,” *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 54 (1903), 785.

that the American plutocracy now served as the financial backbone of the British aristocracy.<sup>51</sup>

Even as American heiresses renovated castles and estates across Britain with daddy's American dollars, one particular group of Britons met their American sisters with a frosty reception: British women. Titles were few, money was tight, and female members of the British aristocracy considered every American woman in England a potential husband stealer. Furthermore, American heiresses had "an unfair advantage over British girls because of their bank accounts."<sup>52</sup> In some cases, the British did not hold a definite grudge against Americans in general but simply preferred them to stay on *their* side of the Atlantic. Lady Dorothy Nevill once explained, "I like the Americans very well, but there are two things I wish they would keep to themselves—their girls and their tinned lobster."<sup>53</sup>

A contemporary magazine published an article in 1908 expressing many of the views of British women as a British woman authored the essay. She questioned the motivations of American women in pursuing British aristocrats, and specifically their titles. "The American women who are looking for foreign titles don't stop to weigh whether the marriage will be happy or otherwise, do they—provided they make the title?"<sup>54</sup> From a British perspective, American women cared nothing for their marriage, their spouse, or their position in Britain as long as they attained an impressive title and proper castle. By this estimation, American women bore their fair share of responsibility when their transatlantic marriages became unhappy or failed entirely. Following that line of thought, the author posed the question,

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<sup>51</sup> Jaime Camplin, *The Rise of the Plutocrats: Wealth and Power and Edwardian England* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1978), 180.

<sup>52</sup> Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement*, 153.

<sup>53</sup> Ralph G. Martin, *Jennie: The Life of Lady Randolph Churchill*, Volume 1, *The Romantic Years, 1854-1895* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1969), 261.

<sup>54</sup> Abby G. Baker, "International Marriages," *The Independent*, 65 (1908), 750.

“Doesn’t it stand to reason that an American girl’s best chance of happiness is in marrying one of her own countrymen?”<sup>55</sup>

After criticizing transatlantic marriages for the transference of money and acquisition of hereditary title, British women began to disparage Anglo-American brides as “titled Americans.”<sup>56</sup> In 1905, an anonymous author contended, “The American may become French, Italian, and even German, but she seldom, if ever, becomes English. Hence she is in society, but not of it.”<sup>57</sup> After further critiques of the American girls’ behavior, education, and training, the author boldly demanded, “take away their millions from Americans and how much would one hear of them in the great world?”<sup>58</sup> Finally, the author presented her deepest and perhaps most personal disparagement: the inability of American women to produce children, specifically boys. “Since 1840 thirty peers or eldest sons of peers have married in the United States. Of these, thirteen have no children at all, five have no sons, and five have an only son. The total number of peers’ children with American mothers is thirty-nine, of whom eighteen are sons.”<sup>59</sup> The author went on to discuss the number, or lack thereof, of children by American mothers in the lower ranks of the aristocracy. “Colonial” claimed that these numbers “are proof, if any were needed, of the growing sterility of American women, a fact which presents a serious problem . . .”<sup>60</sup> Thus, according to “Colonial,” an American woman either could not or would not produce children for her British husband. Members of the British aristocracy were well aware of the need for children, and specifically male heirs, to inherit the family estate and carry on the family title. In the absence of

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<sup>55</sup> Baker, “International Marriages,” 758.

<sup>56</sup> Colonial, “Titled Colonials v. Titled Americans,” *Contemporary Review* 87 (1905), 861-869.

<sup>57</sup> Colonial, “Titled Colonials v. Titled Americans,” 861.

<sup>58</sup> Colonial, “Titled Colonials v. Titled Americans,” 862.

<sup>59</sup> Colonial, “Titled Colonials v. Titled Americans,” 865.

<sup>60</sup> Colonial, “Titled Colonials v. Titled Americans,” 866.

children, and sons in particular, no amount of American dollars could sustain the British aristocracy. As Colonial concluded, “Anglo-American marriages have no sound basis whatever. Broadly speaking, they are an alliance between title and dollars. . . . American influence is feminine, frivolous, and fleeting.”<sup>61</sup>

#### THE END OF ANGLO-AMERICAN MARRIAGES

For all of these reasons related to public opinion, Anglo-American marriages began to fall out of favor in the United States and Great Britain. Another factor working against such unions was World War I. During the war, Americans did not travel to London or Europe for leisure and lost many contacts necessary to enter the highest social circles abroad.<sup>62</sup> Also, wealthy Americans rarely traveled outside the United States during this period due to safety concerns. By 1919, after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, the war had tied together the economies of the United States and Great Britain but in a way different from the transatlantic exchange of money prior to 1914. The growth of new money in the United States had all but ended with the onset of World War I, and the once popular attraction of American women to British titles and of British aristocrats to American dollars did not exist in the same manner or to the same degree.<sup>63</sup> In many ways, the long nineteenth century came to an end when World War I began, and Anglo-American marriages belonged to the nineteenth century ideals of womanhood, marriage, and Anglomania.

In addition to World War I, two specific events resulted in a significant lack of royal support of such unions. On May 6, 1910, King Edward VII died, and his passing seemed “to

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<sup>61</sup> Colonial, “Titled Colonials v. Titled Americans,” 869.

<sup>62</sup> Montgomery, “*Gilded Prostitution*,” 3.

<sup>63</sup> Kathleen Burk, “The House of Morgan in Financial Diplomacy, 1920-1930,” in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, edited by B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 126, 130.

herald the end of the social sway of American women at the British court.”<sup>64</sup> A long-time ally of Anglo-American marriages and admirer of American women in their own right, Edward had welcomed Americans into his circle decades before he ever took the throne. His inclusion of American women and support of Anglo-American marriages gave the unions a regal stamp of approval for approximately forty years. His parents, Victoria and Albert, did not back such marriages, and Edward’s son, George V, favored his grandparents more than his father. Thus, in the absence of the “Marlborough Set,” American women no longer received a hospitable greeting from the royal family upon their arrival in London.

A final factor working against transatlantic marriages in the twentieth century was the abdication of Edward VIII in 1936. When this royal family member chose to marry an American divorcee rather than serve as the King of Britain, he in many ways chose an American woman over his fellow Britons. His resignation of the crown left a sour American taste in the mouths of millions of Britons. Lady Astor, a good friend of Edward VIII, tried to convince her American friends that the decision against Wallis Simpson stemmed from the fact that she was a divorcee, not because she was American. She convinced few people with this argument, but it mattered little. Too many factors had come together in the first half of the twentieth century to deliver the death knell to Anglo-American marriages.<sup>65</sup>

Yet, not all Britons resented the Anglo-American connection represented by transatlantic marriages. The son of Sir William Harcourt and an American woman declared, “I am not ashamed of the American blood in my veins. I am proud to be the son of the Englishman who led this House, and I am no less proud to be the grandson of the American who wrote the ‘Dutch Republic.’” He continued, “There is talk of American dollars.

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<sup>64</sup> Montgomery, “*Gilded Prostitution*,” 2.

<sup>65</sup> See Francis Donaldson, *Edward VIII* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1974); Charles Higham, *The Duchess of Windsor: The Secret Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1988).

America is not peopled only by those who buy the pictures and the first-born of the British aristocracy at a price somewhat higher than the figure in the Home market.” Even in an era of transatlantic resentment, he eloquently summarized the British-American connection by asserting, “America is a sister whose pulse beats with our own.”<sup>66</sup> As the son and grandson of American blood, Harcourt had good reason to endorse his Anglo-Saxon blood. But he and other sons of American mothers, such as Winston Churchill, were in the minority in Parliament and throughout Britain.

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Just as a whole host of factors occurred to court transatlantic marriages, an equal number of developments followed to bring the trend of Anglo-American marriages to an end. Over time, public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic turned against these unions but for different reasons. Americans initially resented bankrupt British dukes’ stealing away American daughters of democracy from the United States during the nineteenth century whereas American public opinion resented the choice by American women to marry British titles in the twentieth century. Likewise, British public opinion resented the American invasion of Great Britain and London in particular. They also blamed American heiresses for diluting the prestige of the British aristocracy. Specific events including World War I, the death of Edward VII, and the abdication of Edward VIII also worked to increase the resentment of Anglo-American marriages by Britons and Americans. Perhaps the 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough, once married to Consuelo Vanderbilt, best summarized the era:

It was a period when many of the daughters of America elected to marry and identify their lives with Europeans and notably Englishmen—They exchanged the home life of America for that of England, and the new

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<sup>66</sup> Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement*, 151-53.

angles of vision with which they perceived the old world enabled them to leave an imprint on the customs of a society which hitherto had grown up sheltered in its insular tradition. This period of social intercourse, this period of international relation is not likely to recur because Europe and its traditions no longer appeal with the same force and vigour to the American feminine mind as they did in the closing years of the Victorian era.<sup>67</sup>

Thus the age of Anglo-American marriages came to an end, as the “Lord of Position and the Lady of Cash . . . each the price and treasure of a nation, each the center of a thousand hopes, saturated with a sense of distinction, superior by divine right,” faded into history.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> MacColl and McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 320.

<sup>68</sup> George Barr Baker, “Dollars vs. Pedigree: The Truth about International Marriages,” *Everybody’s Magazine* 16 (1907), 175.

## Conclusion

### The Social Climbing Heiress from New York

In a year, or so, when she's prematurely grey,  
 And the blossom in her cheek has turned to chalk.  
 She'll come home, and lo, he'll have upped and run away  
 With a social-climbing heiress from New York.  
 ——— “I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face,”  
*My Fair Lady*<sup>1</sup>

When transatlantic marriages became fashionable in the years after the American Civil War, the contemporary media—newspapers, magazines, journals, and periodicals—sensationalized the lives of American heiresses who lived in Great Britain. Newspapers glamorized these women’s engagements, weddings, and alleged marital bliss. British and American newspapers printed lengthy obituaries, following the death of these individuals, presenting the activities and accomplishments of American-born, British-wed women who had taken an aristocratic title and foreign identity with the exchange of vows. What more could an American girl hope for—extreme wealth, aristocratic title, and participation in the best social circles for the rest of her life?

As transatlantic marriages increased significantly in the 1870s, these unions gained notoriety not only through the printed media but also through other forms of popular culture during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These marriages were depicted in a number of forms, but the most popular types of exposure came in musicals, fictional books, and eventually television. Anglo-American marriages continued to receive attention in popular culture well after the demise of Anglo-American marriages in the 1920s, a fact that demonstrated a continued interest in such unions even after the transatlantic marital market had ended.

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<sup>1</sup> *My Fair Lady*, videorecording, Burbank, California: Warner Home Video, 1998.

## ANGLO-AMERICAN MARRIAGES IN POP CULTURE: STAGE, SCREEN, AND PRINT

Anglo-American marriages first appeared in popular culture in works of fiction. The first book to deal with the phenomenon of transatlantic marriages appeared in 1882, *A Transplanted Rose*, written by Mrs. M. E. W. Sherwood. Lawrence Oliphant's *Altiora Peto* followed a year later in 1883. W. F. Rie wrote two books, *Miss Bayle's Romance* (1887) and a sequel, *An American Duchess* (1891), based on the life of Jennie Chamberlain. Socialite and novelist Mrs. Burton Harrison's *Anglomaniacs* (1890) was the wittiest book dealing with the transatlantic marriages thus far, and Sara Cotes's *An American Girl in London* was published a year later. Californian Gertrude Atherton wrote several books about Anglo-American marriages, but her best-known works were *His Fortunate Grace* (1897) and *American Wives and English Husbands* (1898).<sup>2</sup> In the latter book, Atherton explained that American women were the most successful in the world "because they know how to be beautiful."<sup>3</sup>

A continuous stream of novels dealing with Anglo-American marriages appeared throughout the twentieth century. Two popular authors during at the turn of the twentieth century, Henry James and Edith Wharton, wrote numerous books about the union between American heiresses and British aristocrats. James's books dealing with Anglo-American marriages included *An International Episode* (1878), *Daisy Miller* (1878), *The Siege of London* (1883), *The Golden Bowl* (1904), and *The American Scene* (1907). In his early publications, James claimed that "there appeared to be a constant danger of marrying the American girl; it was something one had to reckon with, like the railway, the telegraph, the

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<sup>2</sup> Gail MacColl and Carol McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1989), 238.

<sup>3</sup> Gertrude Atherton, *American Wives and English Husbands* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1898), 12.

discovery of dynamite, the Chassepot rifle, the Socialistic spirit; it was one of the complications of modern life.”<sup>4</sup> Wharton’s works included famous titles such as *The House of Mirth* (1905), *The Custom of the Country* (1913), *The Age of Innocence* (1920), *A Backward Glance* (1934), and an unfinished work, *The Buccaneers* (1938). Most of the titles give some indication of what stand the author takes on Anglo-American marriages, but James and Wharton gave remarkably balanced fictional assessments of such unions. They tended to blame both sides for their deeds: Americans for title hunting and Britons for fortune hunting.

British and American publishing houses continued to print books dealing with Anglo-American marriages throughout the twentieth century. Evelyn Waugh’s *The Loved One* (1948) enjoyed some sixteen printings, a successful publication by any standard. Around 1950, the fictional depiction of Anglo-American marriages gave way to non-fiction, although still somewhat sensationalized, accounts of the unions. Elizabeth Eliot published *Heiresses and Coronets* in 1959, which was quickly followed by Hesketh Pearson’s *The Marrying Americans* two years later. Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan finally wrote her autobiography, *The Glitter and the Gold*, which appeared first in 1953 and earned a second printing in 1973. When Ralph G. Martin published a two-volume biography of Lady Randolph Churchill, the book stayed on the *New York Times Bestseller List* for seven months. While Americans and Britons had long turned away from Anglo-American marriages, they still demonstrated an interest in the marriages.

Books with an Anglo-American marriage theme continue today. In recent years, many books have appeared dealing with the genre: *Flight of Fancy: American Heiresses* (2002), *The Accidental Duchess* (2003), *To Marry the Duke* (2004), *The Runaway Duke*

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher Hitchens, *Blood, Class, and Empire: The Enduring Anglo-American Relationship* (New York: Nation Books, 1990), 121.

(2004), *The Corset Diaries* (2004), *What an Earl Wants* (2004), *Lord Stanhope's Proposal* (2005). The locations of the publishing house, New York City or London, generally determined how the book portrayed Americans and Britons, as predators or prey in Anglo-American marriages. Even in the twentieth-first century, published works still send messages about Anglo-American marriages and Americans and Britons in general.

Stage portrayals of Anglo-American marriages began in 1897 with Abel Hermant's *Les Transatlantiques*, followed by American playwright Winston Churchill's *Title-Mart*, Victor Herbert's *Miss Dolly Dollars*, and George Edward's *The Dollar Princesses* (1907). Among the songs in Edward's play was the title song, which contained the following lines. "She is, she is, she is the Goddess of Gold! Princess of Dollar Princesses/ All made of the purest gold/ Whom fortune ever blesses/ Whose pleasure is theirs to hold."<sup>5</sup> Other European nations produced Edward's play including an Austrian version, titled *Die Dollarprinzessin* and a Spanish version, *El Imperio del Dollar*. A final play dealing with Anglo-American marriages produced in the twentieth century was *The American Girl*. Lines from one of the songs declared, "The almighty dollar will buy, you bet/ A superior class of coronet/ That's why I've come from over the way/ From New York City of the U.S.A."<sup>6</sup>

Various movies and documentaries have depicted Anglo-American marriages on the screen. *Lord John in New York*, an early Anglo-American marriage book, was made into a movie. In 1984, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) produced an eight-episode biography of Nancy Astor. Masterpiece Theater presented a film version of Wharton's unfinished novel *The Buccaneers* and is perhaps the best docudrama portraying Anglo-American marriages. In the story, four American girls married into the British aristocracy with varying degrees of

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<sup>5</sup> A. M. Willner and F. Grünbaum, "The Dollar Princess," A Musical Play in three acts. American Version by George Grossmith Jr., music by Leo Fall (New York: T. B. Harms & Francis, Day & Hunter, 1907).

<sup>6</sup> MacColl McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord*, 89.

marital and personal happiness. Wharton appeared to base each girl upon an actual American who married a British aristocrat. For example, the character named Conchita Clawson seems to follow the life and personality of Consuelo Yznaga, Alva's Vanderbilt's best friend who married the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Manchester in 1876. In the film, various British characters address the American girls as Buccaneers because "the English invaded America—and now it's your turn."

Given the widespread interest in Anglo-American marriages on a fictional level—stage, screen, and print—it is somewhat surprising that a corresponding interest has not grown as popular on a non-fictional level. If Anglo-American marriages transpired in the past, and occurred against the background of a modernizing world, and inspired passionate beliefs from Americans and Britons, why have historians not looked at the marital market through a historical lens? Why have journalists, authors, directors, and publishing houses dealt with Anglo-American marriages time and time again? Why did this topic become largely the territory of English literary scholars and not academic historians?<sup>7</sup> The story of Anglo-American marriages is a difficult story to tell from a historical standpoint. While many biographies about individual Anglo-American brides exist, utilizing a narrative approach, the larger picture of Anglo-American marriages and Anglo-American relations is a much more challenging project in terms of placing these marriages in a specific context. Historians may find such work difficult while authors sensationalize the same stories and lives for fictional consumption.

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<sup>7</sup> Numerous English dissertations have analyzed the practice of Anglo-American marriages through literature. For recent works, see Wen-Po Kevin Ko, "The Motif of Fortune Hunting in Three of Henry James' Major Novels," (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2000); Joselyn M. Almeida, "Literary Crossings: Britain and the Americas in the Nineteenth Century," (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston College, 2001); Kristen Kommers Czarnecki, "A Grievous Necessity: The Subject of Marriage in Transatlantic Modern Women's Novels—Woolf, Rhys, Fauset, Larsen, and Hurston," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 2004); Jean Clark Dubro, "Purchasing Power: Transatlantic Marriage Novels in American Literature," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2004).

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Between 1865 and 1945, American heiresses married British aristocrats in significant numbers. As a result of their Anglo-American marriages, young women left their American families and American identities behind when they took the title of Lady or Duchess. By virtue of her marriage and position in the British aristocracy, an American woman entered a foreign country and foreign cultural experience despite a shared history and language. She had a decision to make. She could crumble beneath the incredible pressure and stress of her position as the wife of Lord Lambert or the Duke of Devonshire, or she could make the most of her position in Britain and mold a new identity by blending her American past and her British future.

As the wife of Lord Randolph Churchill, Jennie Randolph Churchill took full advantage of her position in British society. She hosted dinner parties and pursued powerful contacts, just as any diplomat would do when assigned to a foreign post. She supported her husband's political career and managed his political campaigns by using a distinctly American style of politics. After her husband's early death, she retained her leading social and political position in Great Britain by founding a journal and becoming a literary editor. She also established herself as an Anglo-American advocate through philanthropic activities. When her son Winston came of age, she used her social and political contacts and experience to advance her son's political career. Called the most powerful Anglo-Saxon woman of her time, Lady Churchill demonstrated through her life in Britain one woman's ability to represent two countries at the same time and work toward one goal: the amelioration of Anglo-American relations.

When Consuelo Vanderbilt married the 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough in 1895, she became the Duchess of Marlborough, thus fulfilling her mother's dream but not her own. Given her situation, she chose not to wallow in self-pity but rather pursued a life of philanthropic works in Great Britain focusing on the needs of the poor, women, and children. Throughout her life in Britain, and particularly after her separation from the Duke, she remained steadfast in her dedication to improving the lives of those around her. As the "Baby Duchess," Consuelo became an American Lady Bountiful to thousands of British women and children. She constantly negotiated her national identity on both sides of the Atlantic as Britons defined her as the Duchess of Marlborough and American newspapers identified her as the former Miss Vanderbilt. Consuelo chose to be herself and used her time, money, and personal devotion to improve the lives of the neediest people in Britain. The identity she created for herself in Britain started through philanthropy and ended with a brief career in politics.

Lady Nancy Astor's marriage to William Waldorf Astor II in 1906 does not fit the stereotype of title-hunting American heiresses of the period. But like Lady Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough, and other American-born, British-wed women living in Britain, she pursued her life abroad as she felt appropriate. Her marriage to Waldorf Astor later provided her the title of Lady, and her Cliveden estate afforded her the time, servants, and money to become a leading hostess in the social and political circles of Britain, in much the same manner as Lady Churchill. She eventually pursued a political career, following in the footsteps of her husband, and sought to improve the lives of women and children much like Consuelo Marlborough. Lady Astor, affectionately known to her constituents as "our Nancy," became the first woman to take a seat in the British House of Commons and retained her seat for twenty-five years.

Collectively and individually, American women who married British subjects during this period left their homes and typically lived the rest of their lives abroad, much in the same way as a career diplomat. Both Americans and especially Britons followed the activities and acquaintances of the American-born, British-wed women and made conclusions about the people on the other side of the Atlantic based on their interactions with the newly titled American women. For better or for worse, through successful or unsuccessful marriages, these women served as informal ambassadors between their country of birth and country by marriage. They constantly negotiated their own national identities based on the time, place, and circumstances of their surroundings and learned from experience when to emphasize their American or British nationality.

The existence of marriages between powerful British policymakers and American heiresses raises several questions about the evolution of Anglo-American relations. The disagreement among scholars as to the significance of Anglo-American marriages makes further research even more intriguing. Whether or not historians feel these marriages influenced diplomacy remains debatable, the significance of these unions to Americans and Britons of the period remains the core issue. The consideration of transatlantic marriages through a lens of cultural diplomacy contributes to the traditional field of diplomatic history by incorporating new ideas and fresh research possibilities. Analyzing the influence of British-American marriages, combined with the realization that historians have not studied the connection among foreign policy, gender roles, and transatlantic marriages despite the importance attached by contemporaries to Anglo-American marriages, one realizes that further research of this thus-far-disregarded area of diplomacy offers a unique study of

international relations. In many ways, this project intersects the areas of race, class, and gender though diplomatic history.

Diplomatic representation abroad, neither in the past nor in the present, has been limited to clerks with pens or men with titles like “the honorable” or ambassador. In shaping foreign relations—not necessarily foreign policy—a whole host of factors must be seen and must be considered in compiling the comprehensive history of diplomacy. In assessing the overall gradual rapprochement of the United States and Great Britain, a number of developments must be considered—including Anglo-American marriages. While these unions are not the key to unlocking the mystery of British-American relations, historians omit a serious factor in overlooking these marriages as little more than a martial trend over a century ago. These marriages, these women, these informal ambassadors are critically important if historians are to consider the total picture of the Anglo-American rapprochement.

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“Informal Ambassadors:  
American Women, Transatlantic Marriages and Anglo-American Relations, 1865-1945”

Dana Cooper

Between 1865 and 1945, a number of prominent marriages united American heiresses and members of the British aristocracy. Through the lives of Lady Jennie Jerome Churchill, Duchess Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan, and Lady Nancy Astor, this dissertation analyzes the lives and marriages of American-born, British-wed women within the context of diplomatic service and the Anglo-American *rapprochement* as they demonstrated a keen ability to demasculinize the traditionally male world of diplomacy. These women surprised their families—both British and American—and often themselves—as they exhibited an extraordinary degree of agency in a period that clearly placed women outside the boundaries of politics and diplomacy. Their positions as the wives of leading members of the British aristocracy provided them with unprecedented access to the eyes and ears of individuals at the highest level in Great Britain, the very decision-makers who formulated and implemented foreign policy with their home country. During the period under consideration, Americans and Britons began to view one another less as adversaries and more as allies. Through their marriages, these women skillfully and successfully blurred the lines of public politics and private lives in a period that did not afford women the right to vote. Without formal educations in politics or foreign policy, without the title or staff provided to a diplomat or ambassador, these women created an unprecedented degree of agency within a world that would have undeniably recoiled at the idea of a female diplomat or politician. Collectively and individually, these women informal ambassadors who worked to improve relations at the turn of the twentieth century and served an important role in terms of influencing foreign relations as the United States and Britain moved toward the “special relationship.”