

Will the Queen Dare to Snub the New American Duchess?



Royalty Ostracized Plain Gladys Deacon Because of a Scandal---But NOW She Is a Marlborough

VICTORIA, Queen of England, snubbed the rich American girl because she was the daughter of a convict, who had confessed killing a man.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Queen. And so the millionairess wasn't invited to the wedding of her dearest friend to the Duke of Marlborough. But Time, the jester, sometimes plays mad pranks. . . . The snub was a quarter of a century ago. Victoria died. The Duchess of Marlborough divorced the Duke. Then the Duchess quarreled with her friend, the slayer's daughter. And the slayer's daughter, recently, married the Duke herself!

English society gasped—and wondered. It wasn't only the topsy-turvy swap in the Duke's wives; the question on every lip to-day is "What will the Queen do?"

"Will she," asks the gossips, "snub her as her mother-in-law, Queen Victoria, did? Or will she receive the Duchess at court?" "And what will the Duchess do?" speculate others. "She got part of her revenge when she married the Duke. Will she wreak it to the full by snubbing, in turn, even though the snubbed one be a Queen?"

The story has its beginning thirty years ago in the boudoir of a beautiful woman in the fashionable Hotel Splendide at Cannes, France. . . .

Edward Parker Deacon was a scion of one of Boston's most exclusive families. His grandfather was Commodore Deacon, of the United States Navy. His father was Edward Deacon, Michigan lumber king. In 1852 Deacon married a daughter of Admiral Charles Baldwin. She was twenty, he was thirty-two. Their friends approved it as a love match. They went to Paris on their honeymoon and, fascinated with the French capital, decided to stay there. And then the serpent entered Eden. Emilie Abelle, suave and handsome, with a reputation as a bon vivant and a heart breaker, saw the beautiful Mrs. Deacon and straightaway desired her. He was a diplomat who "had a way with women," and she was past thirty then, the mother of four children.

The explosion came at Cannes on February 18, 1882. Deacon, guided by the clerk of the Splendide, a man named Baumann, smashed in the door of his wife's room on the first floor at 3 o'clock in the morning. For a second the anguished husband, his pride outraged, his world crashing around him, paused to take in the scene—his adored wife with lace gown hardly covering her white shoulders; the frightened man crouched behind a chair. Then he fired thrice. Abelle crumpled into a lifeless heap.

Evidence at the trial left no doubt of Deacon's guilt—or of his wife's. She contended that Deacon knew of her conduct, and actually sanctioned it for business reasons. But the court gave this excuse scant credence, advising Mrs. Deacon that, if it

The First Wife of the Present Duke of Marlborough, Formerly Consuelo Vanderbilt.



The Marlborough Coat of Arms.

was a question of divorce, Deacon had the better grounds, not she. At the same time the husband was not allowed to go altogether unpunished. He confessed and was sentenced to a year in prison.

asylum. American society exonerated him of any blame, but the stigma of the scandal did not die with him. Gladys was eleven when her father killed her mother's admirer. After the tragedy Mrs. Deacon brought her daughters back

The New Duchess of Marlborough, Formerly Gladys Deacon.

Deacon was pardoned a few months later by President Carnot. Returning to Boston, heart-broken and health-shattered he died in the most exclusive homes of America's aristocracy.

One of these was the villa of William K. Vanderbilt and his wife, the lovely Mrs. Alva Smith Vanderbilt, a Southern beauty from Mobile, Alabama. Their daughter was Consuelo.

Consuelo Vanderbilt became the chum of pretty Gladys Deacon in the playtime of youth at Newport. To Consuelo, whose own mother and father separated soon afterward, the skeleton in the Deacon family closet was a matter of small moment. She snapped her fingers at it. But in England, where the Vanderbilt heiress soon was besieged by a score of suitors, society was not so forgiving.

This Consuelo realized forcibly when her engagement was announced to the Duke of Marlborough. In making her plans for the wedding, Consuelo, of course, assigned Gladys to a prominent role. But Vanderbilts and Marlboroughs alike registered horror.

"What will the Queen say?" For Victoria ruled Britain, its high society as well as its government—and Victoria, a sterner, straight-laced, Puritan, had to be considered above all else. The Queen had been reluctant to approve the Vanderbilt-Marlborough match to begin with, because of the break between William K. Vanderbilt and his wife, and she had let it be known frankly that the presence of Gladys Deacon and this additional breath of scandal would be, to say the least, entirely too much.

Society of that day—it was 1895—found the tidbit a rich morsel. Miss Deacon, huffed, looked to Con-

The Duke of Marlborough.

Society would have given much to know. But society was denied the privilege. On the surface the rift had not disturbed the chumminess of Consuelo and her friend. No sooner was she entrenched in the inner circle of British society than the new Duchess of Marlborough "look up" Miss Deacon again. The Queen might continue to snub her, but under the wing of the Duchess, Gladys was a brighter flame than ever at the fringe of Victoria's court.

It wasn't long before Miss Gladys Deacon was the "most engaged girl" in the society columns. Titled aristocrats pursued her by the score. Rumor had her the fiancée of the then Crown Prince of Germany, next of the Marquis de Charette of the ancient French house of that name; then to the Earl of Warwick; to Lord Francis Hope, ex-husband of May Vohs, erstwhile owner of the hoodooed "Blue Diamond"; Prince Carl of Liechtenstein and Lieutenant Reginald Ollivant, of the Royal British Navy, were others in her train.

But to them all the American heiress, still beautiful, though the years were trooping fast, turned a deaf ear.

The reason for her refusal to marry often puzzled the gossips. Could it have been that, beneath her laughing acceptance of Queen Victoria's affront, Gladys Deacon hid a sore heart? Could it have been that, despite her reinstatement in Consuelo's affections, she never forgave her friend for the wedding invitation that did not arrive? Did Gladys Deacon brood, plot, wait years for her revenge?

Certain it is that something finally jarred the friendship of Consuelo and Gladys. But the smart set already had begun to mention in the same gossip the names of the Duke of Marlborough and Gladys Deacon before Gladys suddenly stopped speaking to Consuelo, and Consuelo suddenly stopped speaking to Gladys. The snubs were open—and tongues wagged faster than ever.

After the Duchess secured her divorce a year ago, society was rocked with a genuine bombshell—

Gladys Deacon, at forty-five, became the bride of the Duke of Marlborough, former husband of her whilom friend, Consuelo!

And then all eyes turned toward the Queen, the mentor of the elite. Victoria had snubbed Gladys Deacon. What would be the course of George, her son, and Mary.

London still is waiting for that question to be answered when Buckingham Palace is opened for the Winter functions. Knowing Queen Mary's avowed moral principles, many predict that she will flout the new Duchess as her royal predecessor flouted her.

But friends of the new Duchess of Marlborough declare she is not worrying. She knows she does not advance to battle unarmed. One of her sisters is the Princess Radziwill, who can be of no small help.

She herself wearing the lineage of the Marlboroughs, whose dukedom dates back to the seventeenth century, and whose ancestry is far older and more imposing than Queen Mary's or that of Victoria, herself, she, the new Duchess, is a powerful opponent even for a Queen.

And, no matter what the outcome of her brush with royalty, Gladys Deacon, Duchess of Marlborough, may hug to herself one satisfaction—she had her revenge.



The New Duchess of Marlborough in Her Wedding Gown.

suelo to prove their friendship. Consuelo, beset by the Marlboroughs on the one side and on the other by her mother, the present Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, raged despairingly and—gave in. How did Gladys feel?