



"Baby Croesus" grown up. . . . John Nicholas Brown, Jr. . . . Newport's designing dowagers with debutante daughters insisted on having the heir. . . . This year he gave them the air. (U. and U. photo)

# This Wealthiest Young Bachelor

Worth Thirty Millions When He Was 21, John Nicholas Brown's Fortune Is Now Thrice That Sum, and There's More Coming . . . But Designing Dowagers With Daughters Pursued Him So Hard That His Mother Closed Up Their Newport Home and They Fleed To a Private Yacht in the Mediterranean

**S**OMEONE long ago, perhaps Cleopatra or Helen of Troy, discovered that the blue waters of the Mediterranean form an ideal background for a voyage of romance. Since then few poets and other serious candidates for the title of World's Greatest Lover have handicapped themselves to the extent of ignoring the Mediterranean completely.

But there are some things that work just as well backward as forward and this romantic Mediterranean tradition seems to be one of them. For now America's wealthiest bachelor is taking a Mediterranean cruise not in search of romance, but to avoid it. Or at least to avoid that brand which is thrust upon eligible bachelors by ambitious mothers with more or less marriageable daughters.

He is John Nicholas Brown, Jr., who not so many years ago was known as America's "Baby Croesus." On the day of his birth, February 22, 1900, he automatically fell heir to a fortune of several millions left by a recently departed relative.

Within a few months the infant's father died and willed \$5,000,000 more to the occupant of the nursery. Then, nine days later, an uncle, Howard Brown, died and left another \$5,000,000 for John Nicholas' china pig.

By the time young Brown reached the age of 21 these three bequests and others that came to him from time to time amounted to \$30,000,000. Then there was another large sum left him by his grandfather, the late John Carter Brown of Newport and Providence, who was the founder of Brown University.

Conservative estimates place John Nicholas' present fortune at \$100,000,000. Some day this will be further augmented by a considerable fortune which will pass to him from his mother.

There are no other relatives in the immediate family.

**T**o cynics this financial data would be sufficient reason for young Brown's desertion of Newport this season and it would explain his isolation on a Mediterranean cruise. But he has other social graces to make him the target of designing dowagers.

Summing them all up, his mother decided to pass up the luxurious comforts of Harbour Court, her Newport place, in order to avoid those who, by the altar route, would detour John Nicholas and a part of the Brown fortune to their own purposes.

She and son John packed bags and trunks and embarked on a steamship for Europe. Not until they had made arrangements to charter a yacht for the Mediterranean cruise did they send back word that they would not, after all, be among those present at the Queen of American watering places during the season of social activity.

And now mother and son are following an itinerary in which their personal freedom is assured, and families with daughters of marriageable age who had taken expensive Newport places for the summer determined on making an intensive campaign to obtain young Brown for their own fire-side gatherings are disconsolate and worried over the vast sums that they might just as well have tossed into the deep water off Bradley's Beach.

One young woman, who had established herself with a chaperone in an attractive rented villa, left Newport when word came that Brown would be absent, frankly explaining the cause of her departure to some of her friends.

**B**BROWN is not of the type usually associated with the term "ladies' man," but has a personality that wins friends easily—and keeps them. Ever thoughtful, gifted with a dry but spontaneous sense of humor, he is much sought after in his own circles where the matter of money does not figure. His manners are Chesterfieldian and he scores on that point alone with many of the fairer sex in these days of easy-going cavaliers.

The young multi-millionaire is not a person who would be chosen as a model for a collar ad; probably not many young women would call him "good looking." He is tall, almost to the point of lankiness, with a rolling sort of a walk. He makes no noticeable effort to flatter his outward appearance with masterpieces of the tailoring art.

From his earliest childhood Brown has been an industrious student. Nursemaids and private tutors long before he was entrusted to the ministrations of the instructors at St. George's School, found him to have a bright and retentive mind.



Cornelia Vanderbilt Cecil is young Brown's cousin. . . . She, too, inherited more than \$50,000,000.

At St. George's, which, you know, is perhaps America's most exclusive boarding school, he was one of the honor students of his time. Inasmuch as the school is located at Newport he spent most of his waking hours at home when not in classrooms.

Upon finishing his course at St. George's he took up his advanced studies at Harvard. He was graduated in 1922 but has returned for postgraduate courses upon a number of occasions since then.

**J**OHAN NICHOLAS' mother before her marriage was Natalie Dresser, a member of the Dresser family which ranks high among the moneyed clans of the land. She is a sister of the former Edith Dresser, who was a widow of George W. Vanderbilt until her marriage several years ago to Peter Golet Gerry of Washington.

The former Cornelia Vanderbilt, daughter of Mrs. Gerry, is a cousin of John Nicholas, and it was at the time of her wedding several years ago that reports spread that John himself would be the next of that camp to make a pilgrimage to the matrimonial altar. Cornelia became the bride of the Honorable John Francis Amherst Cecil.

John Nicholas and Helen Moran, then one of the most popular debutantes of the town, were seen constantly together at the various functions which preceded this notable nuptial. They seemed inseparable, and news of a probable romance made its way into some of the papers.

Later events proved that there was nothing more than a deep friendship between Mrs. Brown's son and the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Moran. She subsequently became the wife of Snowden A. Fahnestock and has taken her place as one of the foremost of the conservative matrons of New York and Newport, where with her husband she has hitherto leased a place from season to season.

The Fahnestocks, however, just recently purchased an extensive plot of ground upon which they plan to build a large villa. When they move to this place they will be close neighbors to Harbour Court, the Brown abode, which, many insist, Helen Moran could have presided over as John Nicholas' wife, had she chosen to do so.



At the sumptuous Vanderbilt-Cecil nuptial breakfast. . . . Bachelor Brown (indicated by the arrow) was the attentive escort of Helen Moran. . . . Society scented a romance, but Helen married another.



Social Registerites Mrs. and Mrs. Snowden Fahnestock. . . . Before her marriage Mrs. Fahnestock was Helen Moran. . . . the one girl to whom the boy multi-millionaire was conspicuously attentive.

**F**ROM earliest childhood religion has played a prominent part in the life of the young multi-millionaire. Certainly Emmanuel Church, Newport, would be without many of its fine furnishings had the roster of the parish been minus his name.

Any appeal from the church officers finds a ready response and the money donations, aside from many separate gifts of other sorts, have been on an exceedingly large scale. Even in Newport the extent of the devotion which he feels toward the historic Emmanuel Church is not generally known outside of the congregation. It has been young Brown's wish that his financial aid as well as the personal efforts which he devotes to the work of the institution should not be exploited to bring attention to himself.

John Nicholas inherits a deep religious sense. His aunt married the Rev. Dr. George Grenville Merrill, a distinguished clergyman, who now lives with his family mostly at their Berkshire home in Stockbridge. Others of the Brown clan have devoted much of their time and fortunes to church and religious causes of various kinds.

The debut of Miss Natalie Bayard Merrill, daughter of the George Grenville Merrill, is remembered in Newport as the outstanding social event of a season a few years back. Mrs. Brown took upon herself the responsibility of introducing her niece to Newport society and spared neither money nor thought to produce a notable entertainment.

Harbour Court, of course, was the setting for the festival. Rooms of the house were lavishly decorated with elaborate floral specimens and the grounds were lighted with a multitude of electric lights of various colors. Music and entertainment features were imported from New York and the evening was marked down as one of the most successful debutante launchings that vintage Newporters had witnessed.

Natalie Merrill, since her coming-out party, has been a frequent guest at the Brown home. The return parties have been many. Albert J. Wright, neighbor of the Browns, two years ago, gave the largest supper dance of the season in her honor. The guest list was made up mostly of young colonists, and the decorations, the feature of which was the illumination of the gardens surrounding the house, attracting attention of writers in Newport and elsewhere throughout the east.

**A**NOTABLE family connection of John Nicholas living overseas is his aunt, the Viscountess d'Osmoy, whose home is in Nice, France. The Viscountess was Susan Dresser before her marriage to the titled Frenchman the year before her moneyed nephew was born.

Directly after becoming a bride, in 1899, the Viscountess and her husband established their home in France. John Nicholas first met his aunt on one of the trips he made when yet an infant with his mother. For many years the Viscountess continued living

in Europe and made her first visit here since her departure 27 years previous, in 1926, when she visited the Browns at Newport and returned some of the other visits which her girlhood friends had paid her in her European home.

Mention of the early Atlantic crossings of young Brown brings to mind the hygienic precautions which were taken by those persons who were entrusted with his care. The father of the infant had not been exceedingly healthy and therefore extraordinary care was taken that his son should be guarded against microbes.

Steamer suites which were taken for the Brown party were consequently treated to such thorough sanitation processes as the boat authorities had never witnessed.

**A**T home the infant's food was prepared with extreme care. A part of the Newport estate was enclosed in a high fence and planted with the finest clover to be found.

Sufficient pasture ground and appetizing greenery was provided to furnish nourishment for a large herd. But only one cow was turned loose there, the pick of a great bovine collection, and this animal furnished milk for the baby which prattled in the nursery at the "big house." Astounded Newport villagers of the time estimated that milk for the youngster cost \$15 a quart to produce.

A special flock of chickens was set apart and only eggs from that approved fathery clan were served to young John. Only home-grown vegetables were used and in the winter time these were produced in large greenhouses on the estate.

But all this attention in early life failed to produce the mollycoddle that dubious villagers thought with shaking heads would certainly eventuate.

Sports occupy a considerable part of the time of John Nicholas. He never seeks to push himself forward in this field, however, and refuses to partake in contests that savor at all of the spectacular. Swimming seems to be his favorite sport.

Social shams have never held an appeal for young Brown. Pretensions are distasteful to him and he has dropped many an acquaintance whom he believed snobbish.

He has never forgotten the pony which brightened many of the hours of his earlier youth. The animal has far outgrown all usefulness, but there is nothing that any equine creature could desire in old age that is not provided for this one. To this day an attendant sees that the pony is tethered out where the grass is the richest.

St. George's has also benefited by the high esteem in which it is held by John Nicholas. A short time ago he donated a new million-dollar chapel to the institution.

**T**HE most recent undertaking of young Brown is the reconditioning of Newport's old City Hall, one of the most important structures historically on the Atlantic seaboard. Built in 1763, the edifice has passed through various generations with various results and when it was taken over this spring by Brown's agents it suggested none of the fine architectural points of its early days. Plans are under way to restore the building to its original state, making it one of the best examples of colonial architecture in the country.

But John Nicholas has entrusted the City Hall and all of his other interests for the time being to his aides. The yacht trip will not be over until fall, and before then he will visit among other places, Athens, Constantinople and perhaps make trips to points inland in Asia and to places in Africa other than those bordering on the sea.

Life really isn't altogether unattractive for a young multi-millionaire, even though he has been tagged as the "Baby Croesus." And matrimonially free young women can hardly be blamed for wishing to share his joys, sorrows and money bags, even though they do provide the pestering flea in his ointment of happiness.

