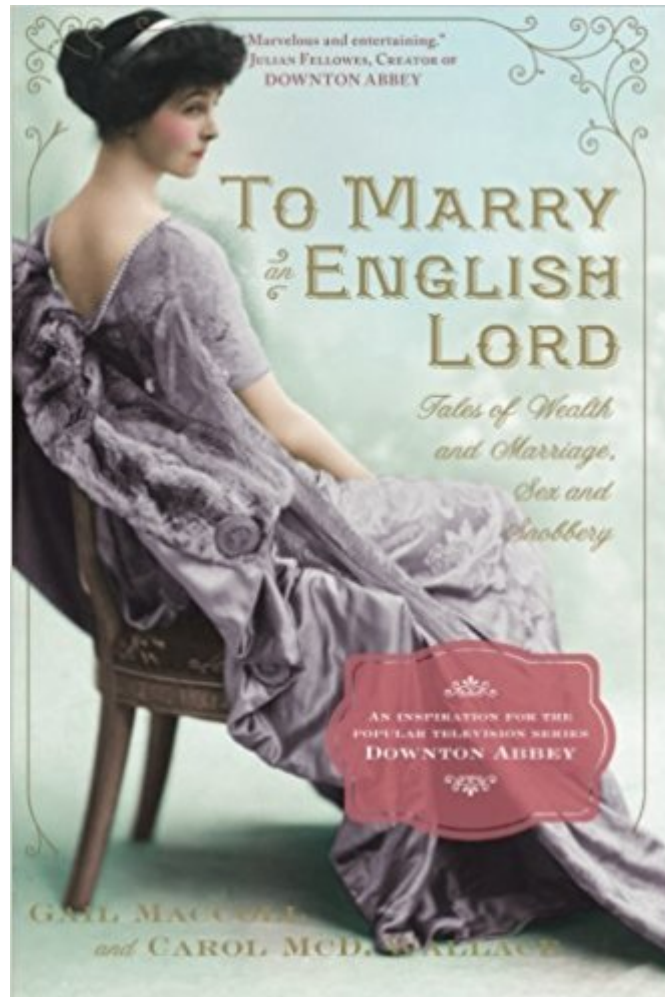


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To Marry An English Lord: Tales Of Wealth And Marriage, Sex And Snobbery



Synopsis

From the Gilded Age until 1914, more than 100 American heiresses invaded Britannia and swapped dollars for titles--just like Cora Crawley, Countess of Grantham, the first of the Downton Abbey characters Julian Fellowes was inspired to create after reading *To Marry An English Lord*. Filled with vivid personalities, gossipy anecdotes, grand houses, and a wealth of period details--plus photographs, illustrations, quotes, and the finer points of Victorian and Edwardian etiquette--*To Marry An English Lord* is social history at its liveliest and most accessible.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Those few of us who have wondered why in the world a comfortable, cosseted American girl would want to marry an Englishman and live in a cold climate in an even colder stone castle will find answers here, even if the answers aren't satisfactory to the modern ear. Think of it: wealthy American society girls, products of generations of men and women who gave lives and fortunes to escape a Royalist society, thought it a worthy investment of their lives, loves and wealth to buy an English title in the form of a husband. It's understandable that men who have no money and are saddled with huge estates and titles with no way to support themselves "in the manner to which they have become accustomed" would search out these women. It's another matter to understand the women, especially if they were bright and energetic (like the fabled Jenny Jerome). Of course the first women to get involved in this weird method of social climbing didn't realize what was involved. (Though why American society decided that an English title was important in the United States, especially if it could be bought with money, still escapes me.) The problems included loveless

husbands who paid little attention to their wives and carried on affairs; cold and drafty castles into which Papa sank tons of money to no avail as far as comfort was concerned; families who refused to accept them in spite (or because) of the fact that they provided the money to keep the lifestyle intact; servants who often were sulky and rebellious ("but we've ALWAYS done it that way"); children they handed over to nannies. The first brides must have kept the hardships and loneliness from the succeeding generation, for the rage for English titles prevailed from the mid-19th century almost through the mid-20th century.

On November 6, 1895 at St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in New York City, a groom waited at the altar for a bride who appeared to be delayed. The groom was no ordinary groom, but Charles Spencer-Churchill, 9th Duke of Marlborough; the bride he waited for was the American railroad heiress, Consuelo Vanderbilt. The wedding was considered a triumph for both families, since the Duke would be delivered from his debts by Consuelo's millions, while Consuelo would gain a noble title. It was all the work of Consuelo's mother Alva, who coerced her teenage daughter into agreeing to marry the Duke. Now there have been many arranged marriages between well-to-do people in the history of the world, but usually they were intended to form necessary political alliances. The Marlborough-Vanderbilt marriage had as its main purpose the exaltation of Alva's vanity by enhancing her social status. As for Consuelo, she kept her groom waiting at the altar for twenty minutes as she cried her eyes out in sheer misery. In the re-release of their book *To Marry An English Lord*, Gail MacColl and Carol Wallace include the stories of many wealthy American girls who went to England in pursuit of a titled husband. Unlike Consuelo Vanderbilt, most were eager to marry into British high society and some, like Jennie Jerome, who married Lord Randolph Churchill with whom she had fallen in love, were very eager indeed. The book traces the tendency of American heiresses to marry abroad to the rigidity of the old New York Knickerbocker aristocrats who would not tolerate new money families like the Vanderbilts, the Jeromes, the Leiters, the Iznagas to join the ranks of the established Four Hundred. All the money in the world could not force certain exclusive doors to open.

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