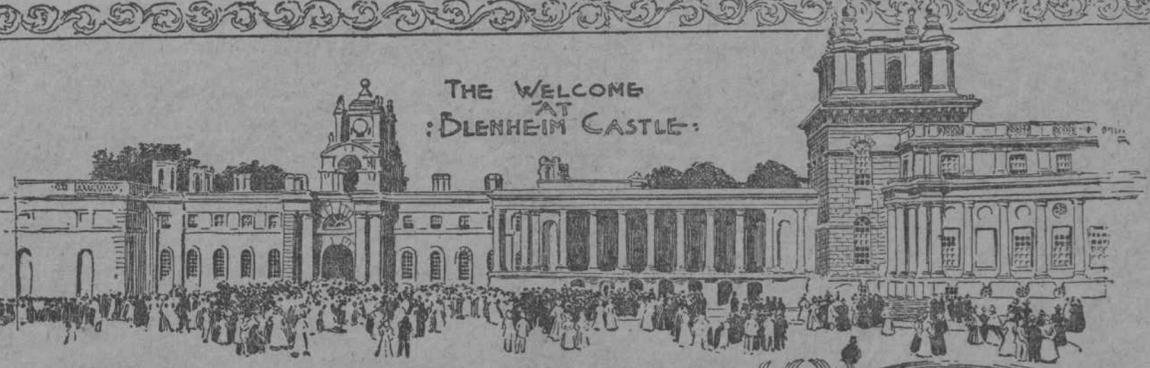


# IN ENGLAND AND WHAT THEY ARE DOING.—The Duchess of Marlborough and Her Grand Palace.



## THE AMERICAN DUCHESS.

Those who witnessed the recent home-coming of the young Duchess of Marlborough to Blenheim Palace, the ancestral home of her husband, were convinced that on this very youthful American girl there is centered more sympathetic attention than on any woman in England.

The general devotion to the young Duchess is shared by everybody who has intelligence, enthusiasm and curiosity to be interested and aroused by the combination of rank, wealth and beauty. It may be assumed that there are few persons in England or anywhere else, who are not thrilled by that combination.

London, April 24.—The Duchess of Marlborough is not only the most interesting American in England, but in all Europe. She is the youngest, the richest and the prettiest American bride who has ever been carried away by a European nobleman, and her husband bears the most famous title which has ever been shared by an American wife.

When she arrived at Woodstock station it seemed that the whole population of Oxfordshire and of one or two neighboring counties had gathered in the little town. Woodstock is a village in size, but for hundreds of years has enjoyed the dignity of a borough, and until the last reform bill had a member of Parliament all to itself.

All the townspeople were there, from the fat Mayor to the small schoolboy. Red-cheeked little country girls threw flowers into the carriage. Young men from Oxford, a few miles away, cheered uproariously. After a few moments of enthusiasm that kept everything at a standstill the crowd took the horses from the carriage and proceeded to drag the bride and the blushing bridegroom over the mile and a half journey to the Palace.

The bells of the old parish church, which have rung with one exception, whenever a Duke of Marlborough brought home a bride to Blenheim, welcomed them. They passed under arches decorated with flowers, which are so sweet and plentiful in English Spring. The triumphal arch, built under the direction of the first Duchess, the great Sarah, in honor of her lord, was covered with them.

In the court of honor of the great palace the enthusiasm reached a climax. The Duchess was so moved by it that she burst into tears. She was confused and overcome. That was not unnatural, for it must have been hard for a young American woman to understand why she was the object of so much devotion in a foreign country.

The behavior of the people was not altogether inexplicable. The young couple had come home to occupy the only palace built in England for a subject, and to share the greatest historical dignity in the land. To have such a couple for your neighbors and to have them bear their honors with credit, is no small source of pride. The Duke and the Duchess are both young, virtuous and amiable, and everybody has a right to hope the best for their future.

The name of Marlborough is one that stirs more historical pride than any in England. That country has not had many great military commanders, but Marlborough was the greatest soldier of his day. He won his victories against the armies of Louis XIV., the most powerful monarch Europe had known for centuries.

The British Government testified its appreciation of Marlborough abundantly. Honors and money were supplied to enable him to become the founder of a great family. But the Marlboroughs have hardly succeeded in living up to their origin. They have never maintained the same dignity as the Devonshires, Bedfords, and other ducal families. The late Duke, as we all know, brought the house to a very low condition, indeed, at one time.

Now a Duchess of Vanderbilt birth reigns in the house that was built for Jack Churchill, and, with a fortune to which almost the whole commerce of the United States has contributed, she may restore the social dignity of the dukedom, and even give it splendor. If her husband has any qualities of public usefulness, he has every opportunity to develop them, which birth and good fortune can afford. These are a few of the facts which explain why the arrival of a young American woman has caused such a profound sensation in England.

It may be un-American, undemocratic and snobbish to pay so much homage to a person, who has done no great service to mankind. But the English at the present stage of their civilization cannot help these things, and we should at least be glad to know that they have formed for an object of their homage on this occasion, a young and charming American woman, and not a mere European man. To an American who witnessed the demonstration it seemed quite excusable.

For the benefit of people who live and forget quickly, it may be well to repeat some information about this Duchess of Marlborough. She is twenty years old,

and is the daughter of W. K. Vanderbilt, second son of William H. Vanderbilt, and grandson of Cornelius, founder of the Vanderbilt family.

Last Summer she was married at St. Thomas's Church, New York, to Charles Richard John Spencer-Churchill, ninth Duke of Marlborough. The engagement and the marriage were the wonder of New York for several weeks, and then the young couple sailed away for the Mediterranean, and were talked of no more.

Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt has a fortune of \$100,000,000 or \$200,000,000, and he gave his daughter \$10,000,000 to aid in keeping house. There is hardly a building in Europe better calculated to absorb that sum than Blenheim Palace.

The young Duke of Marlborough, who is of secondary importance, was born in 1871, and had only been a year out of Oxford when he came to America in search of a bride. His father, who was brilliant but dissipated, married first a daughter of the Duke of Abercorn. She is the mother of the present Duke of Marlborough. From her the late Duke was divorced. He spent several years as an interesting divorcee, and also all his money. He disposed of most of the family heirlooms, and among other things sold a Raphael to the British Government for \$350,000. Toward the last he reformed and married Mrs. Hamersley, of New York. Then he died.

His son is said to take after his mother, a woman of excellent character. He is rather short, has a large aquiline nose and a pale complexion. He is very unaffected in dress, manner and speech.

His American wife is now even more attractive than when she left this country. She is about five feet eight inches high, very straight and slender. Her most charming feature is the coloring of her hair and complexion. Her hair is of the deepest black, and her cheeks have a rich, rosy coloring. To these attractions is added an amiable smile, exposing two rows of pearly teeth. Altogether she is like a beauty of that Spanish type which we hear about more than we see.

The next step in her social and public career will be her presentation at court. This will take place at the next drawing room held by the Queen. The Duchess's court dress is shown in an accompanying illustration. According to the regulations it has a train twelve feet long and is cut low in the neck. It is made of the most magnificent blue satin. With it the Duchess will wear the necklaces of pearls, probably the most valuable ornament of its kind in the world, given to her by her mother when she was married. She will have other jewels, the like of which few, if any, of the women of the English court possess.

The presentation of the Duchess will be a great event. Much as we talk of the marriages of American heiresses and English lords, she is really the first woman of one of the richest American families to make such an alliance. The dowagers of the court will hardly be as enthusiastic as the inhabitants of Oxfordshire. Some of them will reflect that another opportunity has been lost to make a duchess of one of their daughters, but there will be others, it is to be hoped, who will accept their defeat magnanimously, like British veterans.

The Duchess of Marlborough will not have to go through the rush and the crush with the common run of people who are presented at court. She is a great person and will have the entree with the wives of Ambassadors and cabinet Ministers.

After her presentation she will be seen in London society for at least a part of the season, and will no doubt be followed with unabated interest. The English do not drop the objects of their interest as quickly as Americans do.

It is expected that during the Summer the Duke and Duchess will occupy the Marble House, Newport, for a time. After their return to England the Duke will endeavor to enter political life seriously and will no doubt be regular in his attendance at the sessions of the House of Lords.

One of the first duties of a well-meaning British nobleman is to study the drainage of the country in which his family seat is situated. His Grace has already shown a praiseworthy interest in this subject, and there is every reason to believe that the humble dwellers around Blenheim Palace will continue to receive kindly attentions in this and many other ways from their great neighbor.

It is now proper to explain how noble a dwelling is Blenheim, and what importance it must necessarily confer on an owner who can maintain it with becoming dignity.

For size, magnificence and historical associations it is not equalled by the house of any subject in England.

The history of the present palace begins

with the grant in 1704 of the ruined royal manor house of Woodstock to the Duke of Marlborough, after his great victory of Blenheim. The surrounding park of 2,000 acres went with it.

There is hardly a better example of English country scenery than the gentle, undulating hills, the beautiful woods and the winding lake which form the setting of Blenheim. From every point of view the palace presents itself in a different and imposing aspect, now solid and stately, now like a miniature town with lofty gables, and again like a castle set upon a hill.

The walls have an exquisite yellow tone, which offers a striking contrast to the tints of the foliage. It is an especially charming experience to go from the garden, where all that art can do has been done, to the wider part of the park by the High Lodge, and see the oaks among which King Henry I. and his brother, and possibly even William the Conqueror himself, were accustomed to hunt the deer. Some of the trees here are said to be over a thousand years old.

Queen Anne granted \$1,200,000, an enormous sum in those days, to build a palace for the Duke of Marlborough, and Parliament confirmed the grant.

Curiously enough, Parliament made no provision as to the manner in which the work should be carried out. Sir John Vanbrugh, a man of genius, secured the appointment of architect. He felt that the opportunity of his life had come, and proceeded to build regardless of expense. It was never finished in the lifetime of the Duke, and cost altogether more than \$1,600,000.

The palace is in the midst of the park, being approached from several entrances, chief among which is the triumphal arch.

The building consists of a centre block high above the rest, with wings extending forward on each side toward the north, thus forming a semi-circle. On the south side the front is a straight line. The wings which are connected with the centre terminate in massive towers.

The east side is occupied by a range of rooms known as the private apartments, while the library stretches along the whole of the west side. From the library a corridor extends to the chapel, while a similar corridor from a tower on the east side of the palace gives access to a range of rooms on each side of the clock tower. Beyond the chapel to the north are the stables, with the stable court behind, on one side of which is the riding school, a splendid place for exercising horses in winter.

The main entrance to the palace is through the great hall, from which the saloon, depicted here, opens. The ceiling of the hall is covered by a painting by James Thornhill. It represents the great Duke, clad like a Roman general, while Victory crowns him with a laurel wreath and points to a plan of the battle of Blenheim. The hall is sixty-seven feet in height.

Turning to the left, the visitor passes along a corridor from which the doors of the private apartments open. At the end of this corridor is a room at the base of the north tower of the east wing, known formerly as the Tenthers room. It has recently been fitted up as his own private sitting room by the present Duke. It is one of the pleasantest rooms in the palace because it receives both morning and after-

noon sun. The Duke's bedroom opens off it. The whole palace is now in good repair, owing to the money lavishly expended on it by the Dowager Duchess, formerly Mrs. Hamersley.

Next to the Duke's private suite is the state bedroom, hung with light blue silk and two pieces of tapestry. The latter represents scenes from the great Duke's battles and campaigns. These and the battles of Alexander the Great are the subjects of nearly all the tapestry in the palace, which was made in the Low Countries from designs by Le Brun. Recently it has all been cleaned and repaired.

All the rooms round the Palace open into one another. The bow window room is next the state bedroom, and beyond that is the small library, which was the late Duke's study. Then comes the Reynolds room, with a balcony leading to the beautiful Italian garden.

From the Reynolds room you pass to the chief drawing room of the palace, known as the grand cabinet. It is situated in the southeastern tower, and is higher than the other rooms. Here are the best pictures now left in Blenheim.

Over the chimney piece of the adjoining room, known as the little drawing room, there formerly hung the aspidel Raphael, which the late Duke, needing to raise the wind, sold to the Government for \$350,000. It is now in the National Gallery. Its place is now occupied by a picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds, a group of the third Duke, and his family, painted in 1778.

The next room, now used as a billiard room, once contained the Van Dyck portrait of Charles I., which was sold to the nation for \$87,500. An interesting object in this room is a small white flag, edged with gold and emblazoned with fleur-de-lys, and called the banner of the Honor of Woodstock. A flag like this is the annual rent paid to the Crown for Blenheim.

The ceiling of the saloon is decorated by Laguerre, with a painting representing the original Duke in a chariot in the full career of victory. This room was used as a

dining room when the Prince and Princess of Wales visited Blenheim in 1873.

A room in the southwest tower admits one to the library, a magnificent room, occupying the whole west side. It is 133 feet long and 31 feet wide. The books were sold by the late Duke. From the north door of the library an open corridor leads to the chapel, where the first Duke and his successors are buried.

It would not be worth while to describe any more of the apartments of this vast palace. It is curious to note, however, that it is built on a system of arches and pillars, an expensive arrangement, which was not necessary but was designed by Vanbrugh, presumably for the sake of magnificence.

### THE PRESENTATION GOWN.

How the Duchess of Marlborough Will Appear When She Goes to Court.

The gown which the Duchess of Marlborough will wear when she is presented to the Queen is a most magnificent work of art. It is fashioned of rich, heavy satin in a soft ethereal blue color. The gorgeous court train measures two yards and a quarter in length. The bodice is becomingly draped and cut with a square décolleté corsage. The entire front of the corsage gleams with diamonds and is artistically trimmed with soft, fluffy white ostrich feathers, which appear as if applied to the satin. As the feathers reach the waist line they diminish in size, and are held in place there by a band of satin ribbon, which ties in a French bow at the side.

The drapery of the bodice is caught at each shoulder by two jeweled pins of great value. The short sleeves are of lace, crossed with blue satin stripes. They are met with long gloves. At the top of the corsage white Mechlin lace is draped effectively. The veil, that necessary part of a court costume, will be fastened to the Duchess's dark hair by an ostrich feather aigrette.



THE GRAND SALON.



HER COURT COSTUME.