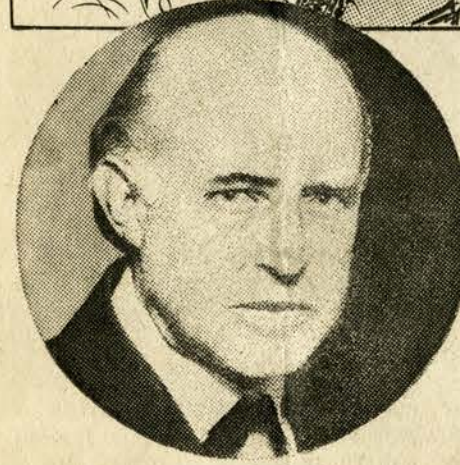


What Will Vanderbilt Reveal About Reno's Mad Revels?



Startling Inside Disclosures Forecast for the Millionaire's Book, Dealing With the Wild Divorce Mecca of the Roistering Mismated

Judge George A. Bartlett, of the Washoe County District Court, Nevada, who says when a couple asks for a divorce decree a higher court has already granted it

RENO, Nevada, international peer of divorce Meccas, has always been regarded as fairly shock-proof. But a jolt, nevertheless, is in store for the pretty little city nestling beside the murmurous Truckee River, with its populous colony of the roistering mismated.

Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., now an actual resident of that State, has written a novel about Reno's social frivolities, anti-domestic fevers, dissipations and despairs. And although the contents of the book are still a secret sealed from public scrutiny, it is surmised that its story and characters were undoubtedly inspired by actual events and people.

If this is the case, the publication of "Reno," or "Partners Change," is apt to create the most stinging sensation since Earl Russel, a British peer, got the first "international decree" there twenty-eight years ago.

The announcement that young Vanderbilt, who himself was divorced by his wife, the former Rachel Littleton, in Reno, was writing a novel about "Alimony Alley" caused people to say to one another, "Just what is Reno like today?" The following description of "The Paradise of the Pored" is a first-hand account, based on the personal impressions of a sprightly young divorcee who recently won her liberty there.

Ennui, fretfulness and jangled nerves, says this informative grass window, are the base of the most of the wild goings-on of those men and women who are awaiting decrees. The result, not unnaturally, is a range of dissipation running the scale from mere futile time-killing to alcoholic indulgence and perilous flirtations—perilous, because both husbands and wives seeking their freedom are apt to get a severe setback from the law unless their conduct is scrupulously correct.

Gambling is also rampant. But mainly love, jazz and liquor rule at the beautiful resort. Let the afore-mentioned divorcee, at this point, take up the narrative.

"Reno is sharply divided into two sections," she says. "The main street, paralleling the railroad tracks, provides the line of separation. On one side is the nice part of town, that district where the rich, near-rich and the conventional well-to-do dwell. Don't be deceived. Their antics, behind closed doors and shaded windows, can be just as hilarious as those of a Comanche on the warpath.

"On the other side of the street is the district known as the Stockade. This is frequented by the natives when they feel in the mood for wine—which is plentiful throughout Reno—and other forbidden things. Temporary residents never go there, except perhaps under cover of dusk, slumming.

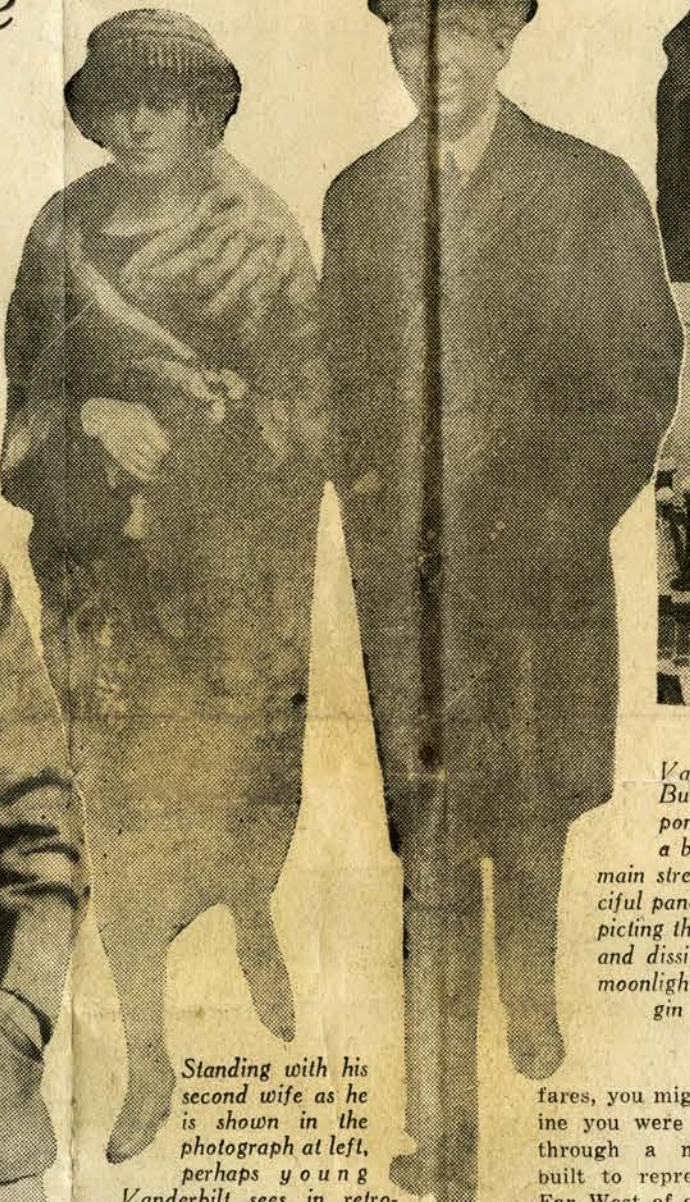
"There are in Reno two modern and comfortable hotels, the Golden and the



Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., with his second wife, the former Mrs. Mary Davidson, a Chicago divorcee, whom he married at Reno, after being divorced by Mrs. Vanderbilt No. 1 (Rachel Littleton)

Riverside, where you can get soft drinks—if you crave them. But the zest of the average visitor is for gayer entertainment, dimmer lights, louder music. For such the Willows, a smart and crackling night club, as lively as anything in New York or Paris, extends a beckoning finger. It is located in the suburbs, and is highly popular with the fat bankroll boys and girls.

"The little town of Truckee, ideally located amid gorgeous mountains, is a red spot, too. There the wine-like air, the beauty of the scenery and the rhythm of the waters, instead of inspiring peace and content in human breasts, seem to have the opposite effect. People who visit there appear to be seized by an odd sort of unnatural gayety—a gayety which expends itself on boozing and games of chance.



Standing with his second wife as he is shown in the photograph at left, perhaps young Vanderbilt sees in retrospect his first wife, Rachel Littleton, above, from whom he was divorced in Reno

fares, you might imagine you were strolling through a movie set built to represent the Far West of gold rush days. The street is lined on either side with bars and gambling points.

"The transitory populace is fantastically cosmopolitan. Cowboys in sombreroes and chaps; yellow faces from the Orient, women from the East in the latest Paris modes; negroes, Germans, Poles and Greeks—you can encounter them all.

"When you get fed up, as everyone does briefly, with the roulette and the champagne, the vingt-et-un and the 'corn' liquor, which flows unceasingly, you can take a little rest cure at Sulphur Springs, not far away. It's pretty quiet there, but if your spirits still demand adventure, you can roam around till you strike one of the adjacent ranch roadhouses, where more booze, gambling and girls await the newcomer.

"It used to be the fascinating thing to do to file your suit after establishing your three-months' residence; then take a train to Lake Tahoe across the California borderline. This is a smart summer resort established primarily for wealthy San Franciscans, but because of its elaborate hotel and the efficacy of the waters for jangled nerves and jaded stomachs, the Renoites adopted it for their own.

"But to cross the boundary is a technical violation of the divorce laws, which are strictly enforced as to the letter, if not the spirit. I was on a train bound for Tahoe one day when I noticed a pretty young wife whose decree was due on the morrow. She was accompanied by a hilarious crowd. Just behind them sat the judge who was to pass on her case. He leaned forward, tapped her on the shoulder, and said quietly, 'Young woman, this will cost you just three months more.' She fumed, but she was forced to stay the allotted period.

"I would like to correct one erroneous impression which seems to have got about; that the very rich Americans—and there are many of them—conduct themselves disgracefully in public. Of course, they booze and flirt and quarrel like their less wealthy brethren and sis-

ters. But the real parties, where sparkling burgundy flows like water and bric-a-brac is smashed and names called, take place in the careful seclusion of their apartments. The people who cut up on the streets are reckless young folks, usually, people plunged into the abandonment of despair by their confusion of the moral code engendered by falling out of love.

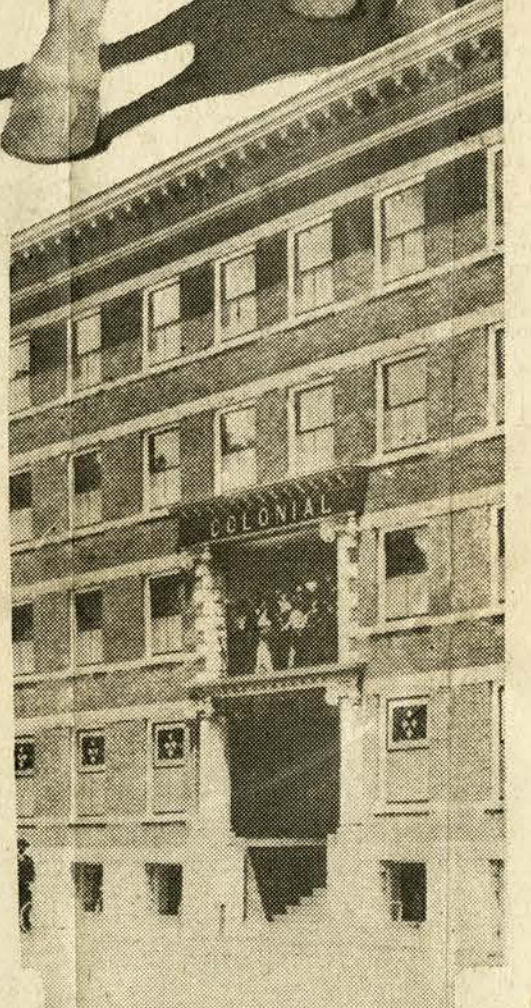
"One of the phenomenal things in Reno is the so-called Affinity Lane. Here it is that men and women eager to be off with the old love and on with the new promenade, whispering plans for the future, these perfect plans which they foolishly believe will prove permanent. You can see here, too, those not infrequent couples who have been divorced, only to discover to their astonishment that they are still in love with one another. Pretty soon, you can be sure, they will be at the registrar's office, requesting another license.

"It is a proverb in Reno that no one can stay unmarried long, and that, because of this, every attractive man in the town has been snapped up as a mate. The local doctors and attorneys are especially popular, and many a matron from Bar Harbor or Miami has shaken off her first set of shackles, looked around her, found the neighborhood pleasing and the local men handsome, then married again and either transported her husband East or settled down, content to remain indefinitely.

What will young Vanderbilt, in his novel, contribute to this detailed and surprising account of the "little Paris of America"? Will he make further revelations along similar lines? Will he condone the irregularities nam-



Vanderbilt mounted on Buster, his prize cowpony, superimposed on a background of Reno's main street, with (above) a fanciful panel impressionistically depicting the city's uncurbed gayety and dissipation, a tipsy midnight moonlight horseback ride after a gin and petting party



The smart Colonial Apartments, Reno, where many wives and husbands awaiting the granting of their divorce decrees install themselves

part beside the Truckee River? It isn't likely, for it is known that he was profoundly shocked by what he himself saw in Reno. And when a Vanderbilt is shocked, the world is apt to listen attentively. (Copyright, 1928)