



**Antique Diamond and Silver Upon Gold Earrings, Circa 1870, Once Owned by Viscountess Gwladys Chaplin
£22,000.00**

A pair of mid Victorian diamond and silver-upon-gold drop earrings, topped with a single diamond, in a box setting, suspending pear shaped pendant, with an old-cut diamond set cluster, within an articulating frame, mounted in silver-upon-gold, circa 1870, with later screw back fittings, for non-pierced ears, with a hinged fitting, for comfort. The estimated stone weights are 2.85 carats and 2.91 carats for the smaller diamonds in each earring. Our opinion of the colour range is H to I and our opinion of the clarity range is VS1 to SI.

Provenance: These earrings previously belonged to Viscountess Gwladys Chaplin. They feature in Hungarian society painter Philip de László's (1869–1937) celebrated portrait of the Hon. Gwladys Alice Gertrude Chaplin (née Wilson), painted in 1915. The portrait was exhibited at the French Gallery in Pall Mall in 1924. The painting appears to show the earrings with their original wire fittings.

Viscountess Gwladys Chaplin is seen wearing the diamond drop earrings with a white evening dress and a shot-gold organza stole and a jade bracelet. She is holding a long pearl necklace, which, according to one of her descendants, the artist himself lent Gwladys, for the sitting. She greatly disliked the pearls however the artist did not relent but compromised, the necklace being held rather than worn by Gwladys, who was eventually delighted with her portrait.

The painting was commissioned by her husband, Eric Chaplin, 2nd Viscount Chaplin, in November 1914. The artist's correspondence reveals that de László was introduced to Mrs Chaplin by her sister-in-law Lady Edith Castlereagh, née Chaplin, who took her to his studio in November 1914.

Viscountess Castlereagh was an important patron of de László's. In a letter to de László dated 25 November 1914, she told him that Eric Chaplin, who was then fighting in the First World War with the Queen's Own Staffordshire Yeomanry, was very keen to commission a portrait of his wife: "My brother is most anxious for you to paint her and I should like to talk to you when I see you. She really is a lovely creature, and I do hope it will be possible for her to be included in your exhibition, you must refuse all the rich ugly ones!!! And the year after you can have 'a chamber of horrors!'"

Gwladys was widely admired in Edwardian and interwar society and in amateur theatrical circles. She was a keen sportswoman and motorist; she was noted as being one of the first Society women to drive her own car. At her marriage to Eric Chaplin, contemporary newspapers rhapsodised over her beauty:

"She is lustrously beautiful, a rose in its first bloom, a Lady Hamilton, only a little more opulent, a voluptuous, intensely attractive, and altogether bewitching bride," said an article in *The Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, on September 22nd, 1905. The article described her as "a bride without jewels" on account of her lack of wedding adornments.

The Honourable Gwladys Alice Gertrude Wilson was born 25 June 1881, the fourth daughter of Charles Henry Wilson, 1st Baron Nunburnholme, and his wife Florence Jane Helen Wellesley. On 3 August 1905 at Warter Priory in York, she married Eric Chaplin (1877-1949), the only son of Henry 1st Viscount Chaplin and Lady Florence Leveson-Gower, who tragically died while giving birth to her second child. In London, Eric and Gwladys made their home at 23 Chelsea Square, SW. They had two sons, Anthony (born 1906), who succeeded his father in 1949 as 3rd Viscount Chaplin, and the Honourable Niall Greville Chaplin (born 1908). Gwladys became the 2nd Viscountess Chaplin in 1923, when her husband succeeded his father. She died in 1971, aged 90.

With thanks to Roseburys and The de László Archive Trust

Image: Philip de László: Portrait of Viscountess Chaplin nee Gwladys Chaplin, with thanks to Wikimedia Commons, where it is stated to be in the public domain.

Approximate weight: 7.72 grams

Period	Pre 1900
Style	Victorian
Condition	Good
Materials	Gold
Main Gemstone	Diamond
Main Gemstone	VS1, SI