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MRS. GROVER CLEVELAND AT HOME.

E. G. Dinnell in the Epoch.

When the historian of the future writes the histories of the "Ladies of the White House" he will have a bright page for Mrs. Frances Folsom Cleveland, the wife of the twenty-second President of the United States. Other Presidents have shared the honors of the Executive Mansion with wives whose personal attractiveness, accomplishments, wit, and tact have commanded admiration, but in not one of all the wives of Presidents have the whole people manifested more interest than they do in the present "Lady of the White House." Martha Washington was universally loved, and her memory is held in reverential affection. Dorothy Madison is remembered in history as one of the brightest women of her time. The wives of the two Adamses left each a distinct impress. Some of these early "first ladies" had shone in foreign courts. As wives, mothers, patriotic women, they had shared in the anxieties and vicissitudes of the revolutionary period, and the nation was and is proud of them. People know less about them now than they ought to know. None can read of them without becoming more interested in their successor. None of them, it is safe to say now, as it will have to be said in years to come, more widely and generally endeared herself to the people of the United States than has the wife of President Cleveland.

Mrs. Cleveland has been the "Lady of the White House" for a year and a half. She captivated everybody who saw her at her wedding reception, when, with the President by her side, she stood on the spot in the Blue Room where they were married to receive from diplomats and officers of the army and navy and civil service, and from many friends, wishes for her future happiness. Her youth, beauty, grace, animation, and unaffected cordiality were irresistible. These attractions have stood well the test of time. Their possession has won steadily upon the affection of the country. Every visitor to Washington acknowledges it, and it is the most grievous disappointment to any visitor to be obliged to go away without having at least caught a glimpse of her. For their pleasure and satisfaction there is not one who would not be glad to exchange the chance of seeing all the other varied and attractive sights of the showy capital.

But for Mrs. Cleveland to see and speak with everybody who would like to meet her and whom she might be glad to meet would be as impossible as it would be for the President personally to receive and listen to the never-ending procession to the White House of American citizens who desire to assert the American citizen's right to handle "his" President. If the President is careful of himself he is still more careful to protect his wife. So, except upon strictly formal occasions, during the few weeks between New Year's Day and Ash Wednesday, she is only "at home" to callers on two days in the week, and then only for an hour at a time and by appointment. In arranging the appointments for these calls the valuable services of Private Secretary Lamont are relied upon to restrict the callers to a reasonable number for the allotted time.

Those who are fortunate enough to have the chance to meet Mrs. Cleveland at home are received by her in the Red Parlor, the most homelike of the apartments on the semi-public lower floor of the White House. She meets her guests with a charming welcome, unconstrained yet dignified. She talks freely and frankly about most subjects but politics. Touch politics, and she laughingly diverts the conversation to books, or people, or perhaps to the drama, for she confesses to a liking for the theatre so strong that she is sure she must curb it. She has also a great fondness for the opera. If she knows how to be sarcastic she does not show it. She is not critical. With much of the tact of Dorothy Madison she evidently prefers to make friends rather than enemies for her husband and herself. So she seeks to win, not to provoke. While she addresses you you are the person in whom she is most interested.

Mrs. Cleveland likes the White House. She has never joined in the chorus of detraction of the building that it was once regarded as proper to raise whenever it was mentioned. She is interested in its history, in the fact that Martha Washington, who never lived in it, saw its foundations rising while her husband was yet President. When she refers to the somewhat limited privacy that she enjoys, Mrs. Cleveland recalls Mrs. Abigail Adams's written amazement, on her arrival at the house, when it was to be occupied for the first time, to find upon what "a grand and superb scale" it was constructed, her reflection that it would require "about 30 servants to keep the apartments in proper order," and her fear that to light "the great castle" would alone be "a great tax."

But Mrs. Cleveland does not have much of "the great castle" to herself, nor are 30 servants required to keep it in order. She has a boudoir and four or five other rooms on the second floor for her own use and for the bestowal of guests. Her boudoir opens upon a central corridor, comfortably furnished for and used as a family sitting room. There are some good paintings of American scenery by American artists on the walls, a portrait of the President, some bric-à-brac, a pervading air of homelikeness, and occasionally, in the evening, a little good tobacco smoke from the President's after-dinner cigar. All the bed-chambers open upon this corridor sitting room. The afternoon sun enters it through a semi-circular window filled with stained glass and screened with growing plants. In summer the fragrance from the conservatory just below ascends through this window to fill the house.

An early riser, like the President, his wife is also, like her husband, busy during the day. She does not assume the management of the house beyond such occasional supervision as may be necessary to maintain order and regularity. The morning brings to her a volume of letters that has been constantly growing. A thoughtless writer in an otherwise friendly paragraph wrote a while ago that Mrs. Cleveland personally responded to all letters received by her. An avalanche followed. She had been receiving more letters than she could answer. Now there were more than she could take time to open; most of them contained requests for scraps of her wedding dress. Distressed women, anxious to save a homestead, wrote for loans of \$5,000 to \$10,000 to "save the old place." One woman wrote to ask for a specified number of yards of velvet, that was to be Mazarine blue in color, and in addition she wished to have enough material for a wrap. Of applications for autographs and photographs there is no end.

To attempt to answer all these letters would be out of the question. To read them all is unnecessary. If Mrs. Cleveland undertook to respond favorably to all who write to her she would keep a stenographer and a photographer constantly at work, she would gradually rob herself of her wardrobe, and she would bankrupt the President. So a large part of the correspondence is turned over to one of the executive clerks to be answered with a printed form signed by Col. Lamont, Mrs. Cleveland personally responding only to letters from her personal friends.

For many months after her marriage Mrs. Cleveland did not venture out of the White House grounds except to ride. The eager curiosity of every body to see her drew crowds even to her church door. When she went shopping she passed from her carriage to a shop door between two lines of scrutinizing eyes. For the freedom of the thing she walked, avoiding the thoroughfare, taking with her Mrs. Lamont or one of her visiting friends, and latterly a great brown-and-white St. Bernard, presented to her by New-York friends and called Kay for its givers. Recently Mrs. Cleveland has tried to "shop" on the avenue without a carriage. She and Mrs. Lamont got along famously for a day or two, surprised and delighted to escape general recognition in their neat walking dresses and small bonnets. The shop clerks spoiled everything, for as soon as they learned that Mrs. Cleveland might be looked for, and she appeared, the word went abroad, all other business was suspended, and all the people in the establishment gave themselves up to learning what the President's wife was buying.

The afternoon is short at the White House, and the time is well occupied. If Mrs. Cleveland has opportunity she reads. Kind friends, authors who wish to have her see their books, and publishers send her new volumes. She gets from three to five a day. In her ambition to know something about each of them she finds that she is becoming spoiled as a reader. She reads some light literature, but she does not, as one writer has said, read "Ouida." She also finds time to read something in the newspapers, to scan a magazine or two, and to enjoy the *Epoch*. For study she has no time, much to her regret, for she finds that her German is slipping away from her, and that she can make no headway with her French.

She gives a little time each day to her pets—for she has others besides Kay, the St. Bernard. Hector, the French poodle, famous as the subject of newspaper paragraphs, does not interest her as does the newly-arrived and nobler dog. A canary, a pretty Angora cat, and a parrot have learned to expect her caresses and attentions. And at Oak View, now closed for the winter, she has a shapely little Alderney heifer, the gift of Mr. Childs, and when the President drives in the afternoon she usually accompanies him to their country home and finds opportunity to cultivate the acquaintance of the pretty creature.

Out of the season of formal receptions and dinners at the White House, the after-dinner hours are usually quiet and restful to Mrs. Cleveland. There is seldom a day that the President does not have a guest or two to dine with him. The wives of Cabinet officers frequently call later, with or without their husbands, for they are like members of the White House family. An occasional theatre party, in which the President joins, varies this programme.

By and by, when other generations shall come to look at the portraits of Mrs. Tyler, Mrs. Polk, and Mrs. Hayes, and to talk of the wives of other Presidents, they will dwell with peculiar interest upon the details of the life of Mrs. Cleveland, here merely sketched, and to speak

of her as the youngest of women to occupy the place. They may see her portrait, too, but they will miss the gleam of the eye, the animated and welcoming smile, the indescribable cordiality of manner that make her fascinating, and which no camera or brush can be expected to faithfully transmit.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20, 1887.