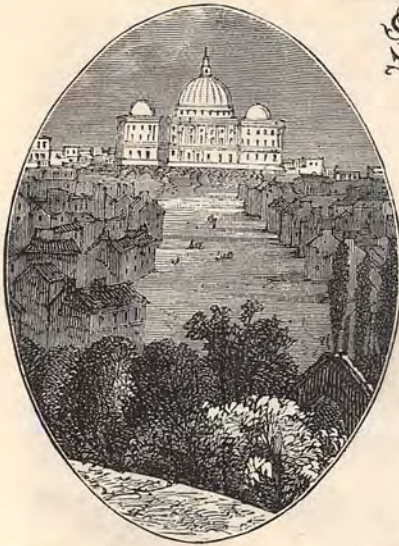


ENGLISH LADIES AT WASHINGTON.



SHOULD you ask me why it is that English ladies who visit Washington, the capital city of the United States, are as a rule so delighted with it, I will reply, in the first place, by telling you something you already know very well—which is, that in

England there are thousands upon thousands of ladies of culture, refinement, beauty, good manners, and often wealth, who are debarred by their lack of rank from ever getting a glimpse (socially speaking) of those high official personages in whom, nevertheless, they feel so keen and loving an interest. They cannot entertain the hope of ever being presented to the Queen, or the Princess of Wales; many of them, though often in London, have never had the luck of even seeing these great ladies. At home in Manchester, Birmingham, or Bristol, Mrs. A, Mrs. B, and Mrs. C may have splendid residences, an agreeable social circle by whose members they are fully appreciated; but in the *grand monde* of the metropolis they are social and financial nobodies, a fact which is none the less galling because they know that it can never be altered.

Now, let us say, one of these ladies finds herself at Washington, during the course of a pleasure-trip to the States. What is the first and pleasantest thing for her to do in Washington? Why, call on the President, of course. She requires no letter of introduction, no friend at court to present her. She has simply to wend her way to the official residence, the White House, either treading thither on foot through the broad, well-paved streets, and under the luxuriant trees of the beautiful old Southern parks, or she may prance thither in coach and four with outriders, or pull up before the classic pillars of the Executive mansion in a shabby hired hack—it will make no difference in her reception. An intelligent-looking man who acts as doorkeeper, and wears no livery, will step forward to inquire the purpose of her call; and when she states it is to see the President, another man—probably a bright mulatto, with a jovial smile disclosing his dental advantages—will say, “Would you please to step dis way, marm?” She steps this way, and after a short period of waiting finds herself, with-

out other ado than having sent in her name on a card, in the presence of the President of the United States—that is to say, of the greatest emperor, for the space of four years, the most untrammelled potentate the world knows. He will shake hands cordially with her, ask her how she likes the country, and make other such interchange of polite nothings as is usual between new acquaintances; he will probably invite her to come again to the White House. All this is very pleasant; and the most agreeable thing about it, to the English woman of sense, is that she knows an equally cordial reception would be accorded to the poorest lady of her acquaintance at home, should that poor lady find herself perchance at Washington. It is not because she is the wife of the rich British merchant that she is treated thus; it is simply because she is an English lady, using the word, as Americans always do, to indicate goodness and refinement, not the narrow boundaries of rank.

While Congress is in session the wives of the Cabinet Ministers, the Senators, and the Representatives have certain fixed afternoons upon which they receive. Here the English lady, quite unintroducted, is just as welcome as she was at the President's; and these receptions are an experience to remember. Giving her name to the servant, the English lady will find herself greeted at the threshold of the drawing-room by the wife of some great man with whose fame the country is ringing. Presently she is in the midst of an agreeable chat with a bevy of ladies, either callers like herself, or friends of the hostess, who are assisting her to receive. The toilettes worn on these occasions are often of an indescribable magnificence and amazingly costly, being paid for at the rate of £40 to £80 each, to the men-milliners in Paris, to which must be added 60 per cent. for customs duty at the American ports. Nevertheless our English lady need feel no hesitation in presenting herself even in a modest travelling costume at these gay parties; she will find plenty to keep her in countenance, and it may even be that she will encounter some earnest woman present, who will compliment her and thank her for the rebuke to extravagance which she is thus making. Very frequently at these afternoon receptions music is provided and quadrilles, waltzes, and galops are gone through with, by those who like to amuse themselves in this way. The floral decorations of the rooms are almost always exceedingly beautiful, and quite unique and peculiar to America. I suppose all the American flowers can be grown by professional nurserymen in England without difficulty; but I have never seen anywhere in Europe those charming little parasols quite made of flowers, those ships in full sail of pink and white rosebuds, those pet names fashioned with violets on a bed of tuberoses, those flags of flowers, those harps, and doves, and crowns, and I know not what besides.

Having written her address on the card which she has left at all places where she has called, our English

lady will be surprised to find that every Cabinet Minister's wife, every Senator's and Representative's, will call on her in return. Etiquette exempts the President's wife from this social duty, but the wives of other officials must at least call once during the season, or leave a card, on every lady who has called on them. This is really a task of alarming proportions in the way of fatigue, and costly too. My cousin, who is a Senator's wife, and has enjoyed official position in Washington for fourteen years, amused herself once by making an estimate of what she had paid for visiting-cards in that time. The exact figure has slipped my mind, but I remember it was nearly 3,000 dollars, or about £600 sterling.

The debates in the Capitol between the Senators in their Chamber and the Representatives in theirs can be heard by our English lady whenever she likes. She requires no order, no *laissez-passer*. She can betake herself to the galleries without fear or favour, and gaze down upon the craniums of the law-makers to her heart's content. Something that will strike her as a novelty here is the female reporters for newspapers, who are prominently installed in a tribune set apart for the use of the representatives of the press, and called the "Reporters' Gallery." Here women hurriedly take notes of what is passing, sitting cheek by jowl with the male members of the craft, between whom and themselves the best feeling exists. These women reporters are universally respected, and their comments on the proceedings in Congress are telegraphed from end to end of the vast continent. Several of the great newspapers of California are represented at Washington by women. Many of these have acquired such a reputation for ability, wisdom, and reportorial "smartness" that their services are in great demand, and splendid prices are paid for their work. An English lady who left the Isle of Man ten years ago, quite penniless, now owns a beautiful residence in Washington, grandly set upon the Capitoline Hill and overlooking the fairy-like loveliness of the Potomac Valley, the broad, historic river winding almost at the foot of her sloping lawn. She earned it, and supports it with her pen, which has never been engaged in fiction at all, but always either in thoughtful articles upon the position of women in the social economy, or in reporting the Congressional proceedings.

A class of persons of whom our English lady will hear a great deal and see but little, during her sojourn in Washington, are the so-called "female lobbyists." The term will perhaps seem vague to many readers. Its explanation is that there are certain women who wickedly use the beguilements of a pretty face and a gentle voice, to obtain the votes of certain Senators or Representatives for or against the passage of this or that bill, thus sometimes defeating the ends of justice for their own personal aggrandisement. The professional female lobbyist is as much abhorred in Washington as the woman reporter is respected. Rumour hath it that these professional lobbyists come to Washington when the session opens, take furnished houses and live in fine style, give gorgeous entertain-

ments, and never deign to haunt the lobbies of Congress at all for the purpose of button-holing the Senators and wheedling them into voting as they wish, but receive these magnates at home. In the lax period during the Civil War, such corruption may have existed, but it exists no longer. The only female lobbyists now to be seen in Washington are poor women who have, or fancy they have, some claim on the Government, and who naturally haunt the lobbies in the hope of touching the hearts of Senators with their woes. Madame Octavia Walton Le Vert, at one time the richest woman in America, who on her visit to England five-and-twenty years ago was received by the Queen at Windsor Castle, and made a round of visits in the ancestral homes of the highest aristocracy, was ruined by the Civil War, and for some years before her death came to Washington each session, in the hope of getting Congress to grant her the paltry sum of £300 or £400, as payment for the occupation of her mansion as a hospital by the United States troops when they took Mobile. Only the old lady's distinguished character—her grandfather having been one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and herself and her husband of the best families in the South—prevented the odious epithet of "lobbyist" being attached to her.

Do not leave Washington without visiting the Treasury, and seeing the feminine Treasury clerks at their monotonous work of counting endless piles of that paper money with which America is afflicted. You would be surprised could you hear the history of many of these ladies. One was born in the White House, a close relative of hers being President at that time; one—a near friend of the writer—was born a princess of an ancient Continental house, and married a handsome English attaché of embassy to a foreign court at which her father was accredited as ambassador from his country. She lived a happy and brilliant life for a time, had two lovely children, and existence was an unceasing holiday; but a change came. Both their families were ruined, and the husband lost his reason. She went to America, and obtained a situation in the Treasury, at the rate of seventy-five dollars or £15 a month. She works each day at the Treasury, has a jolly old negro "mammy" to take care of her children, and after four o'clock in the afternoon she is free to visit any house however exclusive, or receive any caller however distinguished, at her own. My first meeting with her was at the residence of a Cabinet Minister, whose wife she was assisting to "receive" on one of her at-home days. She told me she was a Treasury clerk before she mentioned that she was a princess.

I need not go into any abstruse deductions to show why in a society like this—so brilliant and so cultured, so cordial and so kind—the English lady, whether traveller or resident, soon becomes very much attached to Washington. In the States, Washington is humorously called "the woman's paradise;" and in that paradise none are made more welcome than English ladies.

OLIVE LOGAN.