

But he was hardly heeding her ; his gaze was again fixed on Miss Eastabrook.

"Philip, I wish you would fetch Miss Littledale something to throw over her shoulders. I am sure she has taken a chill."

Philip rose to do his mother's bidding, but resumed his seat next to Miss Eastabrook when Sophy offered to go for a shawl, declaring her brother would not know where to find one.

"There, dear, wrap that well round you," said Sophy, handing Mabyn a fleecy-white cloud.

"What is the matter?" asked Miss Eastabrook, crossing over to where her cousin was sitting.

"There is nothing the matter, Clare," replied Mabyn almost petulantly. "Do leave me alone, please."

Poor child ! She wanted to cry out in her distress. If only she were alone in her own little room ! Would the evening never, never come to an end ? She looked across at Ralph. Should she say she had a head-ache, and ask him to take her home ? But no ; it seemed to her fevered imagination that everyone would know why she had found the atmosphere of the Southfields drawing-room insufferable.

"Are you sure there is nothing I can do for you, Miss Littledale?" asked Philip, who had followed Miss Eastabrook across the room.

"Thank you, no ; I am perfectly well."

At that moment someone begged Miss Eastabrook to play again, and she and Philip returned to the piano.

Several had now gathered round Mrs. Dacre's couch, and so, while the performance was going on, Mabyn succeeded in effecting her escape.

Unobserved she passed out of one of the French windows. Then she stood on the verandah, looking at, although not seeing, the view around her in the quiet, sad moonlight, while the rustling of the leaves sounded like a dirge to the bright hopes which had of late made her so light-hearted.

And as she stood the forced smile which she had worn for the last hour faded from her face, giving place to an expression of mute agony.

Already she knew her fate—knew it, and resented it. "Oh ! not that, not that !" she cried in her

distress. "Anything but that. How can I bear it ? To lose them both. And it will go on for ever and ever. I shall have to watch their happiness day after day, and year after year, while I feel that I have passed out of both their lives. I must smile and congratulate them, while my heart is breaking. Shall I ever have the strength to hide my anguish ? I might have known it would be so. And yet it is so hard, so hard ! She is worthy of him, and I never was. How grand she looked as she came towards him ! Would he be the man he is if he did not love her, my beautiful Clare—the Clare of whom I have been so proud ? And she will love him too ; I can see how her heart inclines to him already. How could I ever have been so foolish as to imagine he could care for a little insignificant thing like me ? 'Mabyn, Mabyn, look up, Mabyn ; I want to read all that your eyes have to tell me.' Ah ! he will never think of those words again. They meant nothing—nothing. He has done me no harm in uttering them. I should have loved him just the same if those words had never been spoken. They only fanned the flame a little ; my heart had gone out to him long, long before. It is my own folly, not his inconstancy, that is causing me this terrible pain. Just a few sweet words, accompanied by an eloquent glance or two. Do not men utter, and girls listen, to some such words over and over again, and no harm is done ? I have been so eager to give my heart away. Do I not deserve to find the gift unappreciated ? And I am only twenty. Perhaps I may live to be eighty—sixty years, sixty years—how can I bear it ?" and in her terrible distress Mabyn failed to realise that the pain would diminish as the years glided by, until at length it would become only a sad memory of the past. "That it should be *her* ! I think I could have borne it better if it had been a stranger ; but Clare, mine own familiar friend : she whom I have loved so dearly, so dearly. Oh ! it is cruel, cruel, cruel !"

She wrung her hands in agony, striving to keep back her hot angry tears.

She started. A shadow fell across the verandah. Then she looked up, to find she was not alone. There, at a few yards' distance, was the tall figure of a man coming towards her.

END OF CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

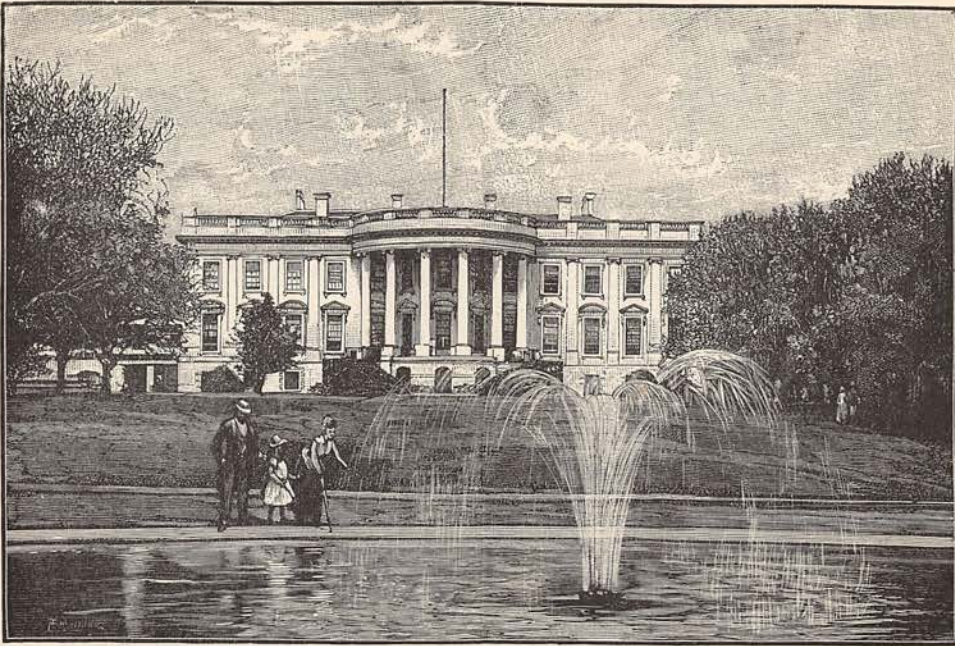
THE MISTRESS OF THE "WHITE HOUSE."

BY AN ANGLO-AMERICAN.

FEW people appreciate the extent to which the wife of the President of the United States is burdened with duties of an official or semi-official character. Most people were disposed, after Mrs. Cleveland's marriage, to regard her as a very fortunate young lady, elevated suddenly to a position comparable only to that of a reigning sovereign, and one where she would have no severer duties to perform than to dress well, look her best, and entertain pleasant company. The reality was far

different ; and if it was a matter of some surprise that a young girl, whose social experiences since leaving school had been comparatively limited, should have undertaken and fulfilled so acceptably the purely social requirements of her position, it certainly was no less surprising that she should have acquitted herself equally well of the semi-official duties referred to, which are far more onerous than is generally supposed.

During the greater part of the year, the President's



THE WHITE HOUSE.

(From a photograph by C. M. Bell, Washington.)

wife cannot be said to have any time at her own disposal after twelve o'clock in the day; and it may be safely assumed that domestic and family matters, however much she may be relieved of the former, must keep the morning hours fairly well employed. After that hour she may be truly said to be as much a servant of the public as her distinguished husband.

In European countries, no doubt the same may be said of the ruler's wife, but the public to which she belongs is very different and less exacting than that to which an American President's wife is amenable. The public with which the wife of a European ruler comes in contact, consists principally of the high social circle standing next to royalty, and, besides that, includes only a few distinguished personages or high officials; and even then her relations with that comparatively narrow circle are hedged about with a certain formality, and kept strictly within certain prescribed, well-defined, and universally recognised limits.

An army of officials—from sentries and police, to equerries and gold-sticks—on public occasions preserve the person of royalty from anything like rude contact with the crowds whom its presence attracts. The case is very different in America.

In the first place, the limits of official life in this democratic country are far more comprehensive than in Europe, and everyone invited to White House entertainments has to be received by the President or his wife, or by both, as the case may be; and even in formal public receptions the absurd handshake cannot be omitted without offence.

Receptions to senators and representatives, to the

army and navy, to members of the Cabinet, to the diplomats and other high officials, and to the judiciary, are frequent, and include in the aggregate an enormous number of people. But besides these more ceremonious receptions, that are usually held in the evenings, and the state and semi-public dinners which are of frequent occurrence, and at which the President's wife, unlike the Queen, for instance, must be present from the reception of the first to the speeding of the last guest, there are innumerable receptions of a less formal, but far more public and more wearing character. Washington is a great place for those frequent conventions annually held by the thousand-and-one societies and organisations—political and religious, philanthropic and commercial, social and literary—for which the United States are famous.

All of these expect to be received in a body by the President of the United States; and in those cases, by no means infrequent, where women are included among the delegates, by the President's wife also. A committee is appointed, and, accompanied by some senators or other Congressmen, waits on the President and begs to be informed when it would suit him or himself and lady, as the case may be, to receive the delegates to the National Horticultural Convention, or to the American Society of Pharmaceutists, or to the Women's Christian Temperance Union, or whatever the society may be; and the President having named the hour and the day, the delegates duly appear, are introduced, and severally *shake hands*.

Then there are the weekly or tri-weekly public receptions, when "all the world and his wife" may

present themselves at the White House, and be received with the same formalities. Every second day—that is, every day except Sundays and Cabinet days—the President descends to the east room, and from 1 to 2 p.m. shakes hands with everyone that presents himself or herself. "The butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker," the visiting stranger from the rural districts, the resident "cullud" folks—all are ushered past in single file, and with each individual the President shakes hands. So with the President's wife, who for two hours every Saturday afternoon holds court—or, rather, a *levée*—in the same fashion; and as an evidence of the dexterity with which constant practice enables the chief participant in this semi-barbarous custom to dispose of the hand-shaking multitude, it may be stated that on one Saturday towards the close of Mr. Cleveland's Presidential term, Mrs. Cleveland "received" in this way seven thousand persons between 3 and 6, she having, with her usual good-nature, extended the time of the reception one hour beyond the prescribed limit, rather than disappoint the great crowd of expectant visitors still awaiting the cherished honour. Public receptions are also occasionally held in the evening, from which the crowds who have the temerity to attend them emerge almost as though from a rough-and-tumble fight, limp and bedraggled, torn and tumbled.

At these evening receptions the President and his wife receive together. Mr. Cleveland was wont, after the hand-shaking had proceeded an hour or two, on these occasions to insist upon his wife standing back

or sitting down while he continued the laborious process as long as the surging crowds continued to present themselves.

After this account of the physical qualifications requisite for suitably filling the high office of President's wife, our readers will not be surprised to learn that by dint of the excessive hand-shaking imposed upon her, Mrs. Cleveland's right hand became so enlarged that her gloves have now to be made to order, the right-hand glove being larger than the left.

To a less extent the wives of the Cabinet Ministers have similar duties to perform. They almost all hold weekly afternoon receptions, at which the great public is privileged to present itself, shake hands, and adjourn to a refreshment-room, to indulge in hasty participation of sandwiches, cake, punch, tea, and often more costly viands, amid the attractions of brilliantly lighted rooms, extravagantly decorated with flowers,* and filled with the harmonies of an orchestra concealed in some bower of palms or other exotic plants.

"Card" receptions, both at the White House and at the residences of Cabinet Ministers, are supposed to be confined to those who are invited; but this is a rule as often honoured in the breach as in the observance, and a "card" reception for which 500 cards have been issued has been attended by 700 guests. This sort of imposition seems to be both expected and uncomplainingly borne by the victims.

Mrs. Cleveland had the honours and the onerous duties of mistress of the White House thrust upon her at an age when all excitement is more or less pleasurable. To youth, even an incessant round of duties may thus be, not only endurable, but even enjoyable. With Mrs. Harrison, who succeeded her last March, the case is quite different. A lady of mature years, already a grandmother, and one who has lived for many years a comparatively placid life in the quiet city of Indianapolis, she, it is said, at the very outset of her reign contemplated with undisguised dread the painfully wearing nature of her public duties. She even ventured several suggestions tending towards their reasonable modification. Indeed, it was hinted, soon after President Harrison assumed his high office, that the public receptions were to be less frequent, and that the hand-shaking was to be dispensed with entirely; but among a certain class of people, and by a number of the public journals, this course was bitterly criticised; and so for some years more the American people will, no doubt, continue to countenance proceedings which weigh heavily upon the time and strength of their Chief Executive and his consort, and they will have the satisfaction of knowing that the President's right arm and hand are periodically so disabled that he cannot even sign a State paper, and that on certain occasions the President's wife has well-nigh fainted from sheer exhaustion. Abuses, however, are apt to work their own cure, and in course of time we shall outgrow this sort of rudimentary stage, and realise that we do not elect our President to his high office for the purpose of sacrificing its dignity and his



MRS. HARRISON.

(From a photograph by M. W. H. Potters, Indianapolis.)

* The flowers at one of Mrs. Whitney's receptions (wife of the Secretary of the Navy) last winter cost \$3,500, or £700.

own time and strength to the silly curiosity of a tuff-hunting crowd.

The White House—or, more properly speaking, the Executive Mansion, for that is its proper title—the home over which the President's wife, for the time being, is called upon to preside, is a beautiful, large, roomy mansion. It is very pleasantly situated in the midst of charming grounds extending from Pennsylvania Avenue on the north to the Potomac on the south. Though large and roomy, as we have said, it is not very commodious, considering how many of the rooms, including the celebrated east room, are devoted to public uses, and, indeed, are open to the public for hours daily, being, consequently, unavailable to the President's family. Some rooms on the second floor in the east wing—five, if I remember rightly—are utilised as Executive offices, Cabinet room, &c.; so, as a matter of fact, that portion of the mansion which may be regarded as the President's private residence includes little more than the west half of the second floor.

People who are familiar with the White House realise its inadequate accommodation, while, on the other hand, Americans generally pooh-poo the idea that an American citizen is not amply provided for with a mansion containing two dozen rooms, quite forgetting that, for all practical purposes, one-half of the number are devoted to the use of the public, or occupied as Executive offices. During the *régime* of President Arthur, who was a man of fine taste, the decorations and furniture of the mansion were for the most part renewed, and very greatly improved; and to-day the entire house, inside and out, presents what our American cousins designate as a truly "elegant" appearance.

In one respect the mistress of the White House is, doubtless, an object of envy to her sisters the country over. Attached to the west end of the house, and opening off the private stairway, are spacious and well-tended conservatories, whence floral treasures



MRS. CLEVELAND.

(From a photograph by C. M. Bell, Washington.)

and exotic shrubs find their way constantly to the parlours and dining-room of the mansion. The marine band also are always at her disposal on the occasion of public entertainments, and, besides providing excellent music, present a very fine appearance in their handsome uniform, of which the, to me, most noticeable feature was that the coat was red, though in both branches of the United States service the uniform colour is blue.

SOME EARLY SPRING FLOWERS.

(THE GARDEN IN JANUARY.)



AFTER all, there are perhaps few flowers that delight us so much as those whose bloom we associate with the early spring and sometimes even with the depth of winter, in which we now are. Flowers at all times are a thing of beauty and a joy for ever; yet in July we look for them everywhere: in our gardens and windows, and on our table, and indeed their absence would then astonish us more than their presence.

But it is not so in January, for upon entering a supper-room—it may be at one of our Christmas gatherings—a few flowers that are made the most of in the centre of the table at once call forth general admiration, not, perhaps, so much because they are flowers with which probably everyone in the room is familiar, but because it is *January*, and for the time it looks as if we had succeeded in driving away winter altogether.

Now among our early spring flowers must certainly be named the cineraria; and when we have what is popularly known as "a forward garden"—which very often means little more than one well cared for—our cineraria will be showing for bloom by the middle of this month, if not actually in flower. A few words, then, as to their general culture and treatment will be