



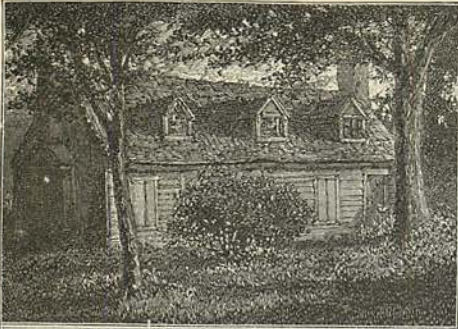
SIGHT-SEEING.

### A NATION IN A NUTSHELL.

WASHINGTON to-day is so cosmopolitan that the proud citizen who goes thither for the first time has to stop and reflect a little before he can fully comprehend that it all belongs to him. Twenty years ago—the time of Buchanan's Presidency and Douglas's supremacy as a Presidency-seeker—it was a skeleton structure, a scattered, unhealthful village, doubly dwarfed by its huge public buildings. Now it is a city clean and fair, and the public buildings are connected by a living tissue of populous streets.

It has not grown as other American cities grow: its progress has been tardy. This yearning of towns, so carefully fostered on the banks of the Potomac, has not availed itself to any great extent of that popular method of improvement so successfully adopted by Chicago and Boston—the method of burning; and its increase has been more a reflection of the extending magnitude of other centres than a spontaneous movement. More and more the custom has grown among the rich or energetic and inquiring in-





pillared dome, like a shining cloud in the air, to remind you of the human mass so near—Washington nevertheless wears distinctly the appearance of a capital which has risen to the emergency.

It has this special charm to commend it above other places, that while Boston and San Francisco and Cincinnati and New York, despite their numerous points of other than commercial interest, are work-a-day towns, the "maiden capital" shows a gayer disposition, and devotes



habitants of other places, of going to the capital to see what it is like; many of them have been so fascinated that they have staid; and now Washington may fairly be called the winter end of New York, as Newport is the summer extension of the metropolis. Add to the exotic population the enlarged ranks of public officials and clerks, the growing circle of scientific and literary people, who from choice or government connection have been led to make their homes there, together with the needful contingent of small traders who supply the daily wants of these elements, and you have a general classification of the hundred and sixty thousand heads counted by the new census. A city without a commerce and without suburbs—drive a mile or two in any direction and you find yourself in the midst of woods set but sparsely with houses or cabins, and with only the great

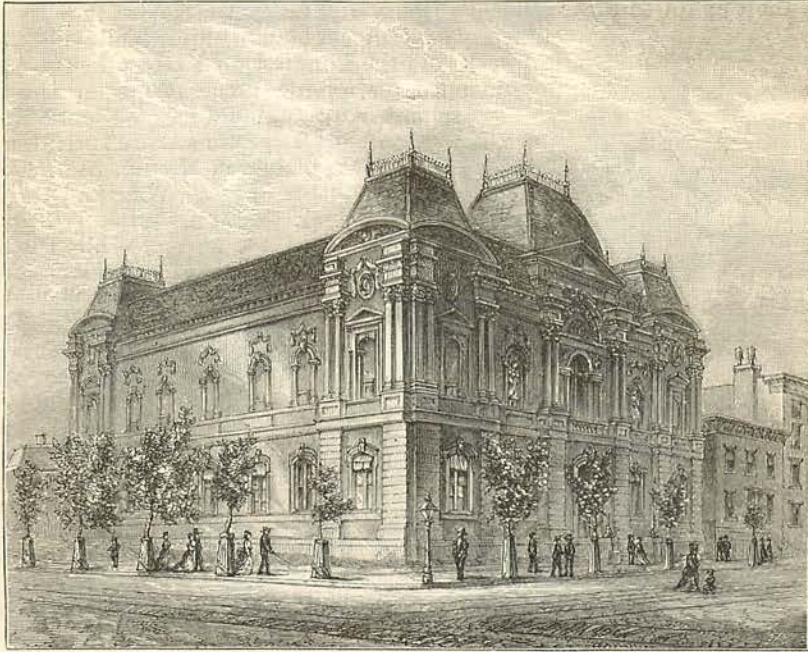
itself largely to social pleasures. To the outsider the difference is that between friendship and flirtation. You like, you may love, the particular big local capital where you live and do business, but you approach Washington with a sense of its being a something piquant and novel, with which you may trifle and entangle yourself in a make-believe attachment having all the stimulus and none of the drawbacks of steady devotion. Besides, it is a city provided with "sights." There are Congress and the Capitol; there are Mount Vernon and Kalorama, where dwelt

THE VAN NESS MANSION, OLD AND NEW.



the author of the "Columbiad," in profound conviction of his errand as the American epic poet; and Cabin-John Bridge, the longest single arch in the world; Arlington, with its earlier historic and later war memories; Georgetown,

ing these thoroughfares, you know that the trail of the Boss is over them all, but it is a picturesque trail, excellent in its results, whatever it may have been morally. Many of the houses in the new northwest end are well set off by trees



THE CORCORAN ART GALLERY.

with its observatory, its college, and its convent; besides all these, the Corcoran Art Gallery, the Smithsonian Institution, the curiosities of the Patent Office, the Treasury with its hundreds of rooms and thousands of employés, where you peer into the busy brain-cells of the government while they are in full activity.

You arrive by an early morning train, and are greeted by a gong beating for breakfast at the station, which makes you feel like an impossible Chinese embassy. But, armed with a pocket copy of the Constitution, you re-assert your birth-right, and after going to the hotel, where you wait some hours for a room, you step forth into the broad airy streets. They have a continental width and extent, making it impossible to crowd them except on rare occasions, and in the more retired ones children glide peacefully along the asphalt on roller-skates. Walk-

and lawns; some stand on terraces decked with vines and shrubbery; and the avenues are lined with more than a hundred thousand trees judiciously planted—elm and tulip, buttonwood and cottonwood, the ash, the negundo, the maple. The quality of the houses is still unequal. Here and there you see a relic of the village era—some little whitewashed hut sticking pertinaciously to the side of a fine modern brick structure of comfortable and tasteful style, like a wasps' nest attached to a real human habitation; and it is amusing to come upon a building—in what is known, according to the barbarous nomenclature of the place, as E Street—which bears on one side the legend, "Law College of the University of Georgetown," and on the other, "Capitol Laundry." Such a conjunction is only to be explained by the tendency of people nowadays to wash their dirty linen in



court. Black men and women are numerous, and laugh very loud on the streets with refreshing freedom. There is everywhere about the city a slight but racy touch of Southern characteristics, interfused with the vigor of other portions of the Union; and for the sake of this you are willing to forgive the copious tobacco stains—those blots on the national escutcheon—which disfigure the sidewalks, and around which you see an English tourist and his wife making their way with a pardonably imperial disdain.

One local improvement in particular deserves our praise. From the park east of the Capitol to the President's House and Lafayette Square there is a long

stretch of government land, within which stand the Capitol itself and the Congressional Greenhouse (which is *not* intended for forcing green members), the Smithsonian Institution and new National Museum, the Department of Agriculture, the Washington Monument, the Departments of State, War, and the Navy,

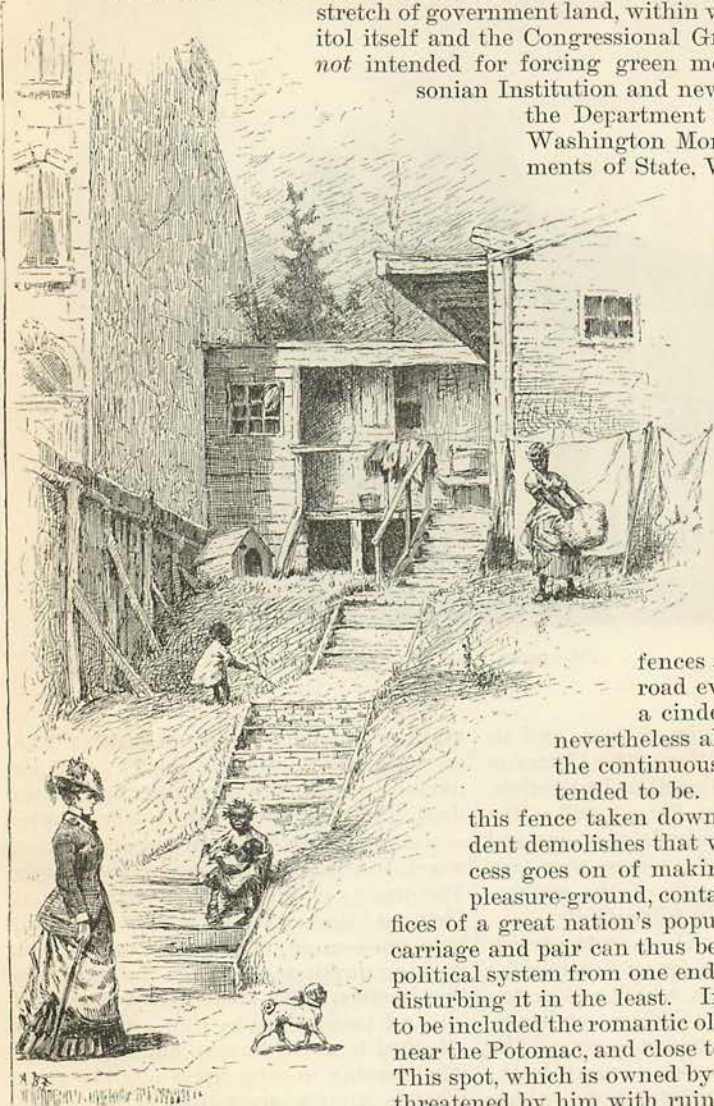
the Treasury and White House, and the superb building dedicated to official printing and engraving, together with a large but still unfinished parade-ground by the Potomac. This territory, several miles long, and from a half-mile to a mile wide, has been hitherto short-sightedly broken up by

fences and walls, and a railroad even yet scars it with a cindery track; but it has

nevertheless almost taken shape as the continuous public park it is intended to be. One President gets

this fence taken down, and another President demolishes that wall; and so the process goes on of making the tract a noble pleasure-ground, containing the central offices of a great nation's popular government. A

carriage and pair can thus be driven through our political system from one end to the other without disturbing it in the least. In this domain ought to be included the romantic old Van Ness mansion, near the Potomac, and close to the parade-ground. This spot, which is owned by a millionaire, and is threatened by him with ruin to make room for a railroad station, is closely united with the history of the capital and its illustrious founder. It was



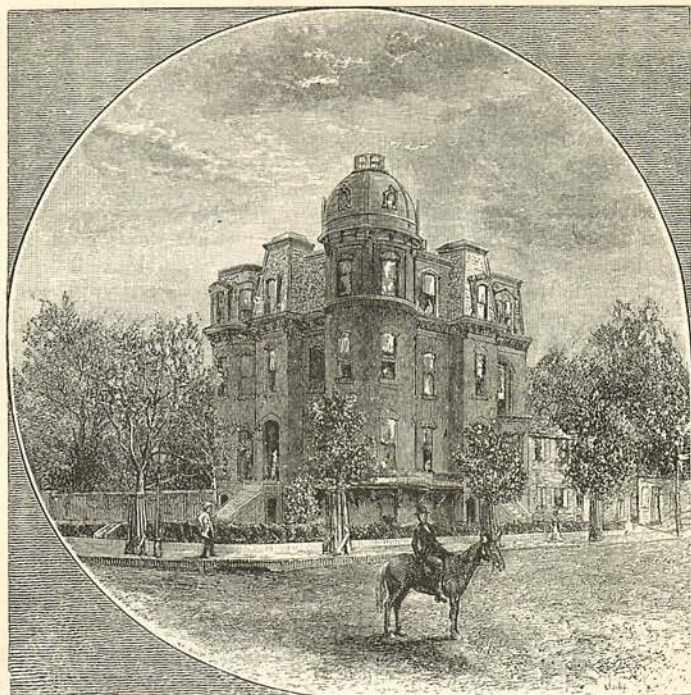
NEGRO SHANTIES.

owned by David Burns, who sold to the government most of the ground on which the city stands, and here are the trees under which Washington sat negotiating with him; here, too, the poor old tottering house in which the famous beauty, Marcia Burns, received the most distinguished company. She married Governor Van Ness, of New York, who built a prouder abode, in style a diminutive White House, within



a few rods of the old home. During the civil war it was owned by Southern sympathizers, and it was in the cellar that the

like bronze videttes, in sunlight and starlight, you are ready to pronounce Washington not only delightful but impress-



A PRIVATE RESIDENCE.

plotting kidnapers at one time intended to imprison President Lincoln. So curious a link of history ought to be preserved by government. But it is dismantled and disregarded, and looks melancholy enough among its rich old hedges of box, its thick-blossomed magnolias and double-flowering peaches. The grounds are used for a negro beer garden, and only the glorious violets in the grass recall the long-dead beauty's eyes. The colored inhabitants of the neighborhood do what they can for it by investing it with the fame of being haunted, and aver that at midnight the grand Van Ness chariot re-appears in the street drawn by ghostly steeds, which are so obliging and economical as to dispense with their heads.

After you have glanced at some of these localities, and have begun to make acquaintance with the leafy parks or open circles and triangles where the statues of national heroes stand mutely eloquent, or sit their sculptured horses colossally,

ive. Delightful is hardly the word for life at the huge and expensive but well-conducted hotels, unless one's taste inclines that way; but it is curious, and has its stimulus. One dines at the Riggs (where political people chiefly resort) in a big room like a legislative hall, with a gallery full of music, and tables adorned by Congressmen and diamonds. A member of the cabinet, I observed, had his regular seat near one of the windows; and the soup betrayed a positively diplomatic flavor. Nothing could be more democratic than the manner in which the officers of the executive and the members of the legislative branch dispose of themselves at the Federal city, and arrange their mode of life to suit their circumstances or their convenience. One will own a house, simply or richly decorated, as the case may be, with pictures, books, and bric-à-brac, and the sundry belongings of a home; another hires his house for the season; others, again, board in small, economical quarters, or establish



themselves luxuriously at Wormley's. A third hotel receives its characteristic tone from the army and navy, and its halls are full of severely quiet gentlemen, who dress in as dark clothes as possible, and have the air of slightly overdone civilians. Elegance and plainness, the showy and the subdued, are very sharply contrasted, because many degrees in the manner of life are seen among those who occupy the same grade of position in public affairs; and the importance which the hotel and lodging-house necessarily assume where so many are residents only for the time being, makes one feel at moments that the government is to a large extent kept in a trunk. Yet society has many points of stability too. A false notion has gained ground as to the prominence in it of corrupt schemers, of the vulgar and commonplace. Novels of Washington life, for some reason, insist upon this side as the distinctive one. It is the inexcusable defect of such books as De Forest's *Playing the Mischief*, Riddle's *Alice Brand*, and Bret Harte's *Story of a Mine*, as well as of a more recent anonymous fiction, *Democracy*—the cleverest of all—that they present repulsive or unpleasant phases, to the exclusion of those which are much more deeply characteristic of Washington. The Bardwell Slotes and the Mrs. General Gilflorys exist, and paraded perhaps more boldly during and just after the war than they do now; but they are not, and never were, the most permanent types. They certainly are the least profitable to contemplate. It is also quite true that many members of Congress are no better, no more attractive or richly endowed with good taste, than some of the people whom they represent. The wretchedness and coarseness of the life into which some among our national lawmakers fall, who bring no very high aspirations with them, find no entrance into society, and are not provided with intellectual or moral force, could, perhaps, hardly be exaggerated. But the same thing can be said of legislators in other countries, and it is not the chief significant thing about congressional life at the capital. Neither is the social phase of political intrigue a prominent characteristic; though, if properly considered, and taken in connection with the traits of intellectual power, charming personalities, secret ambitions or anxieties, and the often really honest motives which such

intriguers have, it becomes an absorbing and dramatic chapter of human character. Apart from this, it must be said that in Washington are to be met many of the most agreeable people in the world, both in politics and out of it—some of the most cultivated and delightful that our own country affords, and quite a number from other countries. Speaking of this, one of our most distinguished generals said to the writer of these paragraphs, with a touch of military impatience for legal debate: "You go up to the Capitol and see members of Congress wrangling over their desks like a parcel of school-boys; but in the evening you find no more accomplished and entertaining men in the world than they are. I can bring together at my dinner table here, any day, thirty of them as brilliant in all departments of thought as could be chosen in any capital of Europe." And he had been in those capitals, and knew the best they had to offer.

Party hostility is, as a general thing, thrown aside in the urbane intercourse of dinners and levées, although some bitter enmities are kept up even there. As a counterpoise, it is discovered that men the most widely opposed in public affairs, who hurl defiance at each other so savagely when the country is gazing at them, are drawn together privately, by common traits, into perfectly harmonious hobnobbing; while others who are eminent as fellow-leaders in the same party cherish feuds so bitter as to forbid speech with one another. For the majority of persons it is important to have place, either legislative, official, military, naval, or scientific; but the mere possession of such a post does not in itself entitle the holder to the best *entrée*. Society at our good-natured seat of government is, for all the good-nature, made up on much the same principles of selection as elsewhere. The best of all kinds assemble in one group, and the rest cohere on the several stages between the highest excellence and mediocrity; but the range of choice and the warmth of welcome accorded to those who are acceptable exceed here the capabilities of any other city hitherside of Europe. There are circles within circles, of course, and the different ones intersect at various points. That which has most permanence and is the most satisfactory as to pure quality, without other regard, is composed of old Wash-





AN INDIAN RECEPTION AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

ington families, on whose heads eternal sunshine settles, above the rolling storms of successive administrations; of cabinet secretaries (if they happen to be of the right kind); a few Senators, with here and there additions from the Lower House; and of the diplomatic corps, who affiliate more easily with this than with any other mixture. Even in this association they are to some degree strangers: they appear in it like quicksilver in water. For the interior order or fellowship just described has, notwithstanding a sufficient elaboration of ceremony, a remarkable freshness and informality, a republicanism, to which it is doubtful if representatives of foreign courts can ever wholly accommodate themselves. Within this guarded fold the public gossip retailer, the writer of letters on society, who is sufficiently dreading to have the run elsewhere, penetrates with more difficulty. The inner circle is not necessarily much connected with the White House, and those belonging to it rather take pride in the fact. The existence of such a nucleus, always retaining one aim and one code, is a valuable social condition.

The indispensable *vade mecum* in Washington, next after the Constitution and a bank account, is the card-case. I am not sure that the card-case should not be put first. "Why, sir," exclaimed one inexperienced individual from the East—a constituent who had managed to dip a little into the social current—"I hadn't been in Washington a week, before I got rid of a dozen finely engraved visiting-cards!" At the height of the season these little certificates of attention are scattered by the ten thousand every day: one could almost track the course of a successful belle by her pasteboard trail. Those who are much blessed with receiving and being received, keep the engraver's press running well-nigh continuously, and don't expect to see their card plate again till the early summer. The season begins with a New-Year's Day reception by the President and his wife, and ostensibly closes with Lent; though in fact the form of gayety is simply changed, and continues with gradual diminution until May. Theoretically the week is distributed in the order given here: Monday, the ladies of the Supreme Court



judges are at home; Tuesday, those of citizens and Representatives; Wednesday, of the cabinet; Thursday, Senators' wives; Friday, Representatives and citizens again—this government being for and of the people; and Saturday, Mrs. President receives. But this is no more than a frame-work on which innumerable other diversions are hung, such as balls, lunches, kettledrums, a manifold succession of brilliant dinners, interspersed, or rather confused, with the *levées*, the afternoon receptions, and state dinners and social evenings at the White House. An arrangement so definite suggests, what is true, that Washington is the only place in the United States where a fixed and complicated etiquette prevails, resembling that of foreign capitals. Minute regulations of precedence exist, but not being themselves regulated by a final authority, they give rise to vexatious questions, and are not as a whole satisfactory to everybody concerned. The general rule, however, is that those who derive power directly from the people take precedence according to the dignity of their office. Some authorities make an exception in favor of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Bench. If you give a dinner party to private citizens, and invite certain dignitaries, these must sit higher than the special guests for whom the occasion was made. Foreign ministers and their wives sometimes find their claims but slightly regarded by this republican code. The usual law, moreover, that residents should call first on visitors, has to be exactly reversed at Washington.

If, in the more miscellaneous companies, a great many individuals are encountered who do not awaken a lively yearning for further intercourse, there are always desirable ones present as well. The families of men holding seats in the Senate or House are burdened above all other beings with duties toward all sorts of people from their "districts," who make free use of their time; sometimes incredibly queer people; frequently excellent, homely folks who in their hour of trial on getting to this unfamiliar spot turn naturally for support to those who once leaned upon their votes—and may want to again. The wives and daughters of Senators and members, accordingly, may be seen superintending the sight-seeing of such parties in the winter, or taking them to the White House and oth-

er places where the Declaration of Independence entitles them to enter. Something incongruous there doubtless is about it, though the custom is in accord with our ideas of practical equality and mutual good-will. It can hardly be questioned, at any rate, that a wholesome consideration is thus maintained in those who theoretically stand high toward humbler personages; and that by these means germs of cultivation are scattered widely and carried to remote neighborhoods, where they yield fruit. In the very heterogeneity of the company that one may meet under such circumstances, there is to any healthy and unprejudiced observer a peculiar interest. The greater breadth of toleration for incomplete or even antipathetic persons one has, the greater gain in his range of observation and influence. A young Englishman from one of the higher planes of the British aristocrats' paradise, who passed several weeks at the capital in the mid-season of *gayety*, found this variety of circles hugely entertaining. In one day, for example, he went to three affairs, which marked the extremes and the middle of the social scale. One was a reception given by some Congressional lady, herself a person of the highest breeding, to whose house the most illiterate constituent, the most remote stranger, or the shadiest kind of adventurer might come on that particular day. Next in order was a fashionable wedding, where, of course, the attendance was more select; and the final and finest sifting was represented by a card reception in the evening at the house of the Secretary of State. The young man pronounced all this "tremendously jolly"—a phrase which in the vocabulary of British youth never fails to express the utmost of praise.

"You could write *seven volumes* about Washington," a young lady said, who knew it thoroughly, and felt that every man born with a gold (or even a steel) pen in his hand should add his quota of comment. The precision of her statement as to the quantity leaves no room for doubting its accuracy. But as the volumes are at present not forth-coming, we must content ourselves with a few extracts from the unpublished diary of a young belle.

"*January 13.*—Since the New-Year receptions I've been to a dozen dinners and dances, two or three receptions every day, and made



about fifty calls, to say nothing of those which Aunt G—— and I have received. My head's in a whirl, and I'm dreadfully happy..."

"February 1.—My dress at Mrs. Admiral——'s party, night before last, has been described in the papers. Who could have done it? I'm sure I didn't, even if some people *do*. Now that I know how much there is here besides dressing, and how well people stand who dress very plainly, it seems very foolish this being paraded just for one's costume. Washington, after all, is the most democratic and sensible of cities."

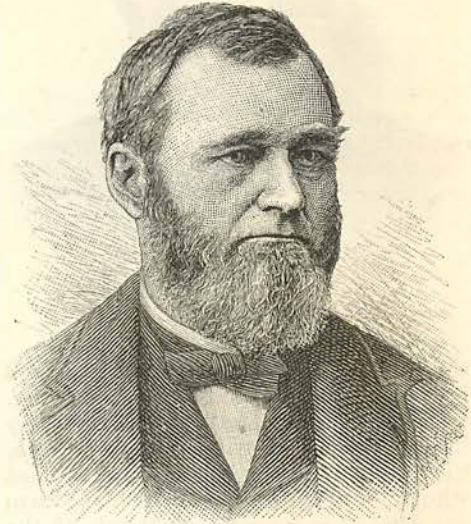
"February 6.—I'm getting awfully tired; but no one can stop after the round has once been begun. We keep it up every day from noon to midnight, meeting the same people at a great many of the places, till it's like one big family."

"February 19.—A funny reception given to some Chippewa and Apache Indians last night at Senator Savage's. The Indians squatted on the floor in their skins (I don't mean their own, but artificial ones), and in beads and feathers, with a smell of camp-fire smoke and earth and horses about them that wasn't pleasant; and we all shook hands with them, and stared. One of them took hold of the lace on my sleeve, and smiled at it with childish delight. Then they sang, beating their tomahawks on the floor to keep time, a strange chant like the wind in a canyon, ending with a sharp, fierce barking like dogs. We made a show of them, and they made one of us. Which were the most civilized?"

"February 21.—Going up to a night session at the House, the stalks of gas jets in the tholus on top of the dome and the electric light at the dome's base made a wonderful effect. All the middle of the Capitol was in a blue, weird mist of brilliance. While I was there they sent the sergeant-at-arms to bring in absent members, who came in evening dress from the dinners and parties where they were found, and had to make excuses. One of them looked half tipsy; another, a new member, was dreadfully disturbed because the House, by way of a joke, pretended at first that it wouldn't accept his excuse. Then they moved to reconsider, and he was greatly relieved. There was a great deal of fun over the whole proceeding."

"February 24.—It is astonishing the variety of *tone* that one finds at the meetings of different sets here. One Senator will have a party at which you are thrown in with the most outlandish individuals—men with gaunt faces, stiff beards, and no mustaches, who look as if they would like to take their coats off—side by side with the nicest people. Another collects none but the most interesting, and his party is entirely fine and superior. I can't imagine anything more polished than the atmosphere at Secretary——'s. It is just like a court. The manners are as clear and quiet as crystal. The diplomatists go there, and I experience at

every moment what Emerson calls the romance of meeting the best. There is an indescribable excitement in chatting informally with two or three possible Presidents, who wear dress-coats just like anybody else. One thing is very queer, though; that is, you find men against whom the most dreadful charges are made, associating on the best of terms with others who are quite above suspicion; that



SPENCER F. BAIRD.

is, if the accused person is important and 'able.' The powers that be have to show a good deal of tolerance toward 'influence' and wealth."

"March. *End of the Season.*—Am completely worn out, and haven't an idea left in my head. I shall now begin a course of Shakspeare readings, and have joined the Literary Society. There is still a good deal going on socially, though, and I have an invitation to-morrow for a 'four to seven,' which, in spite of its name, has no connection with politics, but is a delightful afternoon and evening *conversazione*. The Bachelors' German was given last night, and the Army and Navy assemblies will go on after Lent. These are both conducted by young men, who return in this way the civilities they have received during the season."

The Literary Society above mentioned is an agreeable organization (presided over latterly by General Garfield), which devotes itself to essays and poetry, followed rationally by supper, conversation, and music. Recently, also, Washington has developed a small art club. The city has too many other resources to be much given to clubs, but a solid house called





PROFESSOR NEWCOMB.

the Metropolitan exists, and is frequented by gentlemen the best worth knowing. Installed in a few pretty rooms, and very informally conducted, is another club, the Cosmos, which is composed almost wholly of scientific men. Among them are Professor Spencer F. Baird, of the Smithsonian Institution; Professor Simon Newcomb, long of the National Observatory, and now connected with the Nautical Almanac; General Francis Walker, Superintendent of the Census; and many others of enviable renown, who live in a quiet way, and maintain, besides the Cosmos (which is purely social and desultory), a fortnightly Philosophical Club. These men do honor to the nation at its central city by representing its best intellect there, and by an unselfish devotion to intransigent aims.

Having said so much in favor of Washington life, it is no more than fair to cite an opinion on the other side, from a gentleman of great attainments, in official place at the time of this writing, who may be called a connoisseur in social phases. "I don't like Washington society," said he, flatly. "I must confess I prefer people who speak one's own language. Here it is a mixture of dialects. Besides, everything changes. Some of the best people I knew a few years ago are gone now: they were not re-elected. In New York, elections make no difference. On the whole, life here is like that of some petty European capital without

the court; and you feel the strain and jar of the political machine all the while. . . . You don't have a *good time*. At a dinner here you meet ten men any one of whom would be made the sole centre of a dinner in any other principal city; but somehow I don't like it. And one reason may be that, while the men are unusual, their wives are not up to their level," he heartlessly concluded. "You see, they married before they were distinguished." He quite overlooked the great number of ladies, brilliant in beauty, in intellect and manners, who have given distinction to the tone of social intercourse here.

The newspaper correspondents, judging from their gloomy dispatches, ought to take an equally discouraged view of Washington; but, on the contrary, they like it, and this notwithstanding the arduous life they lead. The correspondent posted here by one of the great journals is usually a picked man. He works fourteen hours out of the twenty-four. He must be reporter, interviewer, and editor in one. Sometimes he supplies two or three dailies in different sections of the country with news specially suited to each. Up to midnight you see the glow of the windows behind which these critics are recording political and social history by pen and telegraph; and not one of them goes to bed after it all without fearing that he has suffered a "beat." They must be incessantly watchful: one of the New York papers has a coupé with lighted lamps standing at its door throughout every evening, prepared for sudden sallies upon some important man for news. These correspondents form, by-the-way, the most powerful group of men in the capital, public opinion being largely in their hands; and to their credit it can be said that, though here and there a man is false to his trust, and sells his power to politicians and subsidy-seekers, on the whole they use their position well. Their chief fault lies in the suspiciousness caused by a habit of ferreting out wrong or exposing imbecility, together with a belittling and patronizing manner of treating public men, that tends to lower the general tone of discussing national affairs.

At Washington, however, everybody becomes more or less an opinion-maker. On every citizen who goes there rests the great burden of determining with his own eyes and ears *How We Are Governed*. Yet to do this is not so easy a matter as it



seems from a distance. From the galleries of the House of Representatives

popular government appears to consist of a confused mass of desks and desultory men—the desks littered with books and papers, and the men continually walking about in every direction; of a vast amount of private correspondence, a relay of page-boys obeying a Turkish magnificence of clapped hands from this and that member to do his errands; and a monotonous droning by the clerks, together with a minimum of oratory. All this against a dignified background of cigar smoke in the lobbies, and of coat-rooms and barber-shops, where Congressmen lounge and joke, or confer on coming measures. It is also apparent, from the amount of work done with the penknife, that the House is determined to have order as to its finger-nails, whatever may be the fate of public business in this respect. You hear some half-audible speaking, but the general walking, talking, and rustling suggest how Demosthenes, if he had enjoyed the privilege of a seat in this body, might have dispensed with the aid of the sea.

Then a division takes place, and members pour in from the lobbies, the restaurant, the committee-rooms, to pass like a drove of sheep between two tellers. The



A NEW YORK NEWSPAPER OFFICE AT WASHINGTON.



efforts of inexperienced or unimportant members to get attention are pathetic. One is perpetually swaggering about, but never speaks; another gets up and murmurs, but being ignored by all parties, sits down, with a ghastly disappointment, and tries to look as if he did not feel he was being looked at; another, with Chadband hair, rises for information, asking in a bland voice a question so needless that some one on the other side answers it, to save the Speaker's time, and Chadband, after swaying uncertainly on his toes for an instant, subsides so abruptly that he can't at once recover the use of his limbs sufficiently to steal away toward a cloak-room. Yet at almost any moment, except in the "morning hour" and on "private bill day," an exciting and masterly discussion may begin, which promptly fills the chairs, and enchains every listener. The general demeanor of the House, too, is more business-like, excepting for the amount of preoccupation, than that of the House of Commons. Those who come to look on, with imaginations trained by history and the press, are grieved to go away without seeing a single member spring at another's throat, or even call him a liar. The homogeneity of the faces and persons on the floor is another point for remark. It is clear that Americans are Americans, however wide asunder their abodes may be, and it occurs to one that if the representatives of different sections were to get hopelessly mixed up and changed about some day, it would produce no incongruity so far as their outward appearance is concerned. To imagine these comfortable gentlemen arrayed, in their frock-coats of identical make, on opposite sides in a civil war, or as the lawgivers of separate confederacies, would be grotesque, if the reality a few years ago had not been so tragic. A few distinctions of East and South and West may perhaps be traced in the physiognomies, but individual peculiarities assert themselves far more strongly. The man of the people, with his indifferent neck-tie and "well-met" manner; the smug, well-to-do lawyer; the "elegant speaker"; the richest members, with heads partially bald and faces seamed with fine wrinkles, wearing a look of long resignation to the collection of dividends; or the plethoric, rosy-faced man who gains his point by private Champagne rather than public speech; the quiet gentleman of re-

finéd manners; and the gory antagonist—all these, and other types besides, may be sharply discriminated without regard to State or geographical lines. It has grown to be the fashion to say that Congress accomplishes nothing except to disturb trade, but if that is so, it is not due to idleness. Accomplishing nothing was never before so laborious a task. House members are the busiest people in the country, with their caucuses, their incessant committee meetings, their speeches and preparation, their dense correspondence with constituents, and interviews with visitors. The House, too, turns out a vast amount of work, its committees being efficient agencies for transacting business. Every day you find in the Document Room a fresh armful of newly printed bills, many of which are trash, to be sure, but harmless. The real and great defect of the popular branch is its fatal capacity for distorting, maiming, or destroying good measures matured in committee, by unforeseen amendments carried in general debate. A few laudable enactments, however, always survive this general massacre of infant bills, and we must remember that the amendments often represent a wholesome watchfulness against special class or private legislation. Whatever the evils of Congress, finally, they are faithful reflections of the avarice, ambition, or low sense of honor in the communities there represented; and the people do not do wisely to sneer at their own exposed deformity, without trying to remedy it by cultivating morals more assiduously in business and in political opinion.

The facilities offered new members for finding their true level are unsurpassed. Some of them, prominent enough when at home, you do not notice at all until they loom up magnificent among obsequious waiters in the hotels. The long perspective of Pennsylvania Avenue, as they approach the Capitol, dwarfs them amazingly, and the big dome, when they get under it, acts as an extinguisher, snuffing them out completely. Only when they return to their constituencies do they again become fully visible. The spectators are often as interesting in their way as the Representatives. Sometimes one-half in the men's galleries are negroes. Every grade of uncouthness or of fashion is represented among the on-lookers of both branches. "Wheer do they daunce?" asked a tall, simple, high-





Bayard.

Gordon.

Hampton.

Lamar.

SOUTHERN SENATORS IN THE CLOAK-ROOM.

cheeked North Carolinian, who had come in the favorite slouch hat of his region, and was looking at prospective feminine voters in the opposite gallery—"Where do they daunce? I ain't seen the fiddler." The number of regular attendants, too, is surprising; for watching the sessions of Congress exercises an awful fascination, akin to that of gambling. The House in particular is haunted by a lank ex-clerical gentleman, whom the press correspondents have nicknamed "the prayer fiend." It was he who, toward the end of the Forty-fifth Congress, when a continuous session of some days was about to trench upon Sunday, rose in his place and solemnly forbade the proceedings. Failing in his pious purpose, he has faithfully continued to appear every morning in the same seat, whither he comes all the way from Georgetown, striding like a

fate-impelled messenger in time for the opening prayer, during which he stands erect, with head thrown back dramatically. Here and in the corridors also are found the lobbyists—usually shrewd, dashing business men, or women whom it is not desirable to know—and every species of claimant, including a few crazy ones, who never had a valid case, but imagine that Congress has been wickedly bought up to vote against their demands. I heard of one man who had left a profitable business, and utterly ruined his life, to prosecute his claim for a fabulous sum which will never be paid, but is followed by him with insane energy. A withered, elderly woman was pointed out, descending the Capitol steps, dressed in a thin faded gown and flighty bonnet, with an old shawl askew on her shoulders, who carried an envelope box tied with a





A CLAIMANT.

string, containing the papers with which she daily besieges her committee. She was a nurse in the war, and is believed to be really entitled to the small amount she seeks; but she is not beautiful, and she has an acid tongue, with which she does not hesitate to characterize members: therefore she has had to wait long, and meanwhile has wasted energy enough to have maintained her comfortably if de-

voted to regular employment.

To an observer the Senate sessions are the more agreeable. They are clearer, more dignified, and deliberate. In the House one feels the power of quantity and of the average; in the Senate, that of selection. Honorable gentlemen here do not clap their hands for the pages, but autocratically snap their fingers instead, and manage to surround themselves with an august atmosphere generally. How strongly the dignity claimed by the Senate affects the imagination is seen in the theory which is steadily kept up, that there is less violence in this body than in the one under the other wing of the building, although, as a matter of fact, the fiercest personal encounters on record have taken place in the Upper House. Fairness requires the statement here that exhibitions of arrogance are not confined to members from any one section. The comparative quiet of the chamber, and the attention to forms of courtesy preserved by Senators, even in their most discourteous and savage utterances, assist this fiction. When there occurs what the newspapers call "a breeze in the Senate," you may per-

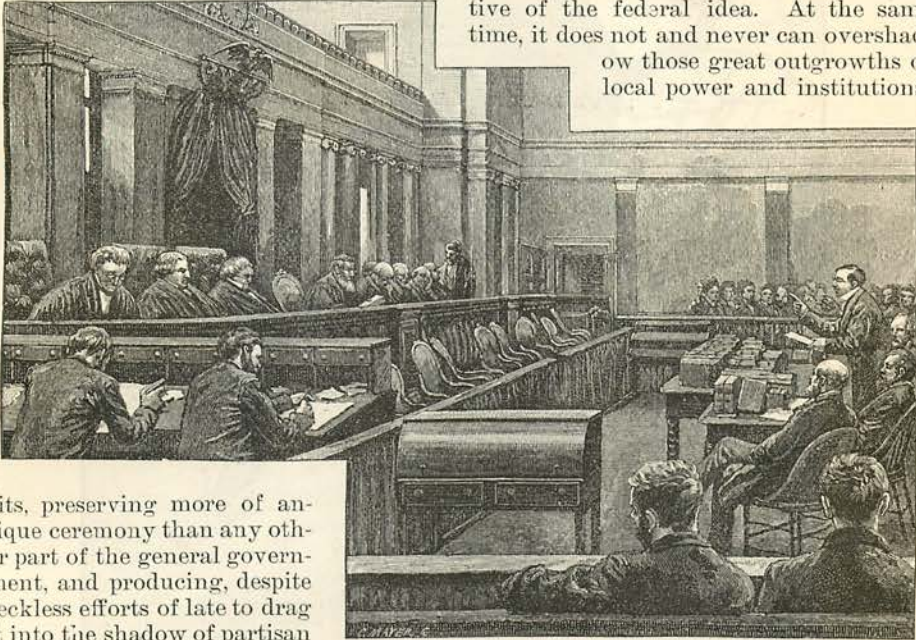
chance see a former Speaker of the House spring up, advance, and gradually walk in among the desks of the enemy, shaking his raised forefinger at them with an energy which gives it the keen force of a dagger, while his vehement words gride on the air wrathfully; yet the action has not quite the same air here that it would have among the Representatives. Something of the modified effect is probably due to



the Senate's smallness. Scatter its members in a larger space, and they must at once adapt themselves to a rougher and louder scale. The fact that in the days of Webster and Clay their assembly met in a room less than half the size of the present chamber, suggests a partial explanation of the greater ascendancy then of elaborate oratory, and the traditions of unsurpassable eloquence left by that body. In that old hall the Supreme Court now

and the Senate, although a more cultured growth, appears blighted by the disease of ambition or factional misgrowth.

Enough has been said to show that Washington, if still incomplete, has revealed a healthy capacity for developing in accord with the national needs. From a mere central agency, with a something hesitating and uncertain in its character, before the civil war, it has become, with the greater security given to our confederation by that struggle, a fit representative of the federal idea. At the same time, it does not and never can overshadow those great outgrowths of local power and institutions.



THE SUPREME COURT CHAMBER.

sits, preserving more of antique ceremony than any other part of the general government, and producing, despite reckless efforts of late to drag it into the shadow of partisan suspicion, a stronger impression of integrity. It is an interesting and impressive sight to watch the stately entrance of the judges in their black gowns, every one in the court-room rising, and returning their bow after they have taken their places, while the marshal's deputy calls out, in sing-song: "Oyez! oyez! oyez! All persons having business before the Supreme Court of the United States are admonished to draw near and claim its attention," etc. The Justices and their Chief, with massive heads and strong features, face from the bench a wall, where they are confronted by the heads of former Chief Justices, made a little more weighty and permanent by being shaped of marble, and seem therefore to form a living and majestic link between the republic's past and its future. By contrast with this presence the House becomes a motley crowd,

the chief cities of the United States: Its relation to them is admirably republican, and in accord with our system; it will never permit a concentration of wealth and intelligence such as imperial centralization has caused by slow absorption in Paris and London. Yet all the currents of life from all the States flow through it, giving and receiving something in the passage. It is a whispering gallery for the Union. Every interest and quality, good or bad, that belongs to the parts finds here a voice and a hearing. Much that is dark, no doubt, exists; but it is not very deep. The society of the place is remarkably pure, the city is well ordered. On the whole, examining the nation in a nutshell, as we may do here, we find the substance reasonably sound.