

The NEW BELLE of the WHITE HOUSE

WHO?



Miss Helen Taft... PHOTO COPYRIGHT 1908 BY HILSON & COMPANY



Miss Grace Bryan PHOTO COPYRIGHT 1907 BY HILSON & COMPANY

Will She Enjoy a More Brilliant Career Than Her Predecessors?

TWO young girls are watching the progress of the present presidential campaign with more than ordinary interest. For the result of the battle of ballots will mean the elevation of one or the other to the proud position of belle of the White House.

Will the happy one be Helen Taft or Grace Bryan?

Not only will the winner enter upon a marvelous social career, but there lies ahead the possibility of another White House wedding. For who doubts that either Miss Taft or Miss Bryan will succumb to Cupid's darts before the term of the next President is ended?

And it will be a glorious thing, too, for a young girl to become belle of the White House. A wonderful career will be opened to her. She may take place in history beside the most prominent of those who have preceded her—Harriet Lane, Letitia Tyler Semple, the gay and versatile Dolly Madison, for instance, to say nothing of a number of others now almost forgotten.

PREVIOUS to that of Miss Alice Roosevelt, the only White House weddings, within the memory of most persons of today, were those of Grover Cleveland and Miss Frances C. Folsom, in 1885, and Algernon Sartoris and Nellie Grant, in 1874. Only four weddings have been witnessed in the White House during the last fifty years, and only ten in all its history.

Therefore, should Miss Taft or Miss Bryan figure in a brilliant nuptial ceremony at the home of the nation's chief, during the next four years, she will not only furnish new and interesting history for the



Nellie Grant (From Portrait at Time of Her Marriage)



Letitia Tyler Semple, from Portrait Painted While She Was Mistress of the White House



Harriet Lane, Later Mrs. Johnston, Wife of President Buchanan



Dolly Madison, the First White House Belle...

writers of the future, but will add to a series of notable national events.

AS WE SEE OURSELVES



"Madame is ravishing in it."

"Ah, but don't you think it makes me look too slender?"



Miss Folsom

What more could a young girl wish? Up to the present both daughters of the leading candidates for the presidency have been considered schoolgirls, as, in fact, they are. But it will not be long after the installation of one or the other of the distinguished sires in the White House when a new bud will bloom into the fulness of social prominence. And whether fate and the decision of the ballot box elevate Miss Taft or Miss Bryan to that dazzling supremacy, the role of White House belle will be filled fittingly and well. They are girls of excellent sense and careful training, they represent the best traditions of sweet, clean, charming young American womanhood, and either may be trusted to honor the high position to which she may be called by the nation.

A great deal of sense and mental balance is required of a young woman elevated to such a prominence. Not only this country, but the world looks upon her with critical eyes. Her deportment, her friendships, her escapades, if there be any, and especially her love affairs are blazoned to the wide world. There is no concealment; there can be no dodging of the limelight.

Miss Frances Folsom, perhaps, decided to wed President Cleveland as quietly as possible, but when it was decided that the wedding should take place in the White House she realized that her objections to publicity must be set aside.

She did this with the sweetness and graciousness of character that marked her later rule as one of the most popular mistresses of the executive mansion. Social life had not been at high tide during the administrations of Mr. Cleveland's predecessors. President Arthur was a widower, and his daughter, Miss Nellie Arthur, who afterward developed into sweet and lovable womanhood, was too young to take the social helm during her father's occupancy of the White House.

President Garfield's headship of the nation was terminated so soon that any social career he might have planned for his family came to an abrupt and tragic end. The family of President Hayes had little

aspiration for a social career. The children of the family were too young, anyway, to branch out in social activities.

Passing over the wedding of Nellie Grant, one must go back, in seeking for interesting events to illustrate the social careers of White House occupants, to the days of President Buchanan.

There was "nothing doing" during the administration of President Johnson, and Abraham Lincoln was too busy with the daily happenings of the Civil War to pay much attention to the demands of society, even if his children had been of proper age to meet them.

Harriet Lane, afterward Mrs. Johnston, was the young, beautiful and brilliant mistress of the White House during the administration of her uncle, President James Buchanan.

She occupied that position when the present King Edward of England, then the young prince of Wales, visited this country in 1860, and not only was Great Britain's present ruler charmed with the personality of his hostess but he was highly pleased by the lavish hospitality she extended.

Born in 1831, the youngest daughter of James Buchanan's sister, Harriet Lane, she was from early girlhood a favorite of her bachelor uncle, and her role as the hostess of noted persons was taken up before she was out of her teens.

When Buchanan was sent by President Pierce to represent this country at the English court, Miss Lane, a vivacious young woman of 33 years, went with him to dazzle the gallants of London with her beauty and wit. Her triumph in the English capital was instantaneous and wonderful. Even Queen Victoria was captivated. The American girl won all hearts.

ADMIRER BY TWO CONTINENTS

When her uncle became President of the United States Harriet Lane took her position as mistress of the White House with the same ease and grace. Buchanan's administration was marked by a series of brilliant social functions, and his handsome niece was queen of these.

Her reputation for beauty and graceful accomplishments extended over two continents, and in dispensing the hospitality of the executive mansion she revived the most cherished traditions of Washington social life. These traditions had been lit-hard during some of the former administrations.

In 1864 Miss Lane became the bride of Henry Elliot Johnston, of Baltimore. She died several years ago and left a collection of rare paintings to the National Galleries of Art, in Washington.

A White House belle about whom little has been preserved in writing was Miss Mary A. Fillmore, better known as Abigail, daughter of the thirteenth President of the United States.

According to accounts, she was a plain, sensible young woman, upon whose shoulders devolved much of the social management of her father's administration. In fact, because of the ill health of her mother, she was virtually the Lady of the White House.

"She was remarkable," writes a historian, "for her mental attainments and her intensely affectionate nature, and discovered during her brief life only

those traits which served to render her a source of interest and admiration.

"She was fitted by education and a long residence in Washington, to adorn the high station she was destined to fill, and acquitted herself there, as in every other position, with great dignity and self-possession.

"She died shortly after the expiration of her father's term, following her invalid mother to the grave within a year.

It is said that Mrs. Zachary Taylor and her daughter Betty "never sympathized with the display and bustle of the White House, and they always performed such official duties as were imperatively forced upon them by their exalted position as a task that had no compensation for the sacrifices attending."

Elizabeth Taylor, who was the third and youngest daughter of the old warrior President, was 22 years old when she assumed the formal duties of the First Lady of the Land, her mother being disinclined to accept this responsibility of directing social affairs.

Although she was Mrs. Bliss, wife of Major Bliss, Elizabeth was still popularly known as "Miss Betty," and was greatly admired by those who were fortunate enough to be admitted into the circle of her friends.

Some years ago a writer recorded the following: "When the traditions and histories of the White House have the romance of time thrown around them, Betty Taylor will be recalled to mind, and for her there will be sympathy that is not accorded with youth, for she was the youngest of the few women of America who have a right to the title of 'Lady of the White House.'" This claim, however, is disputed by biographers of Mrs. Letitia Tyler Semple, who, upon the death of her mother, became mistress of the White House at about 21 years of age.

Mrs. Semple, the daughter of a prominent New York family, married Miss Julia Gardiner, of New York, the ceremony being performed in the Church of the Ascension in New York city.

The first Mrs. Tyler was an invalid when her husband succeeded unexpectedly to the presidency, so that the direction of social affairs was left in the hands of her second daughter, Mrs. Letitia Tyler Semple. She continued to discharge those duties until her father's second marriage.

During her regime as lady of the White House Mrs. Semple was very aristocratic in her ways. She despised public show. According to her own account, "Nothing whatever, preceded by cards of invitation, was expected to be considered in any other light than as a private affair of the President and his family, with which the outside world and the public press had nothing to do. We lived at the White House precisely as if we had been in our own home at Williamsburg."

SYSTEMATIZED SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Mrs. Semple reduced the public functions of the White House to a system. Every week she gave two dinners, to which about twenty guests were bidden.

The first was always devoted to distinguished visitors "who were invited to dine with the President" and the second of these weekly dinners was to members of the diplomatic corps distinguished foreigners in Washington and statesmen to whom President Tyler wished to show attention. The dining rooms were always open until 11 o'clock, and the regular program for every night except Sunday. On certain occasions the state apartments were opened for formal balls, which, however, closed at 12 o'clock.

Mr. William Henry Harrison never presided over the White House. During the short month that her husband held the high office of President she remained in Ohio because of ill health, intending to come East later in the year.

Under the brief administration of President Harrison the mistress of the White House was his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Jane F. Harrison, widow of his namesake son. She is recalled as a refined woman of many accomplishments, and made herself very popular during her short stay as the social head of the administration.

President James Buchanan's wife had been dead seventeen years when, in 1857, he took possession of the White House. His accomplished daughter-in-law, Mrs. Abram van Buren, did the honors of the executive mansion for him, and did them well.

There was little of social elegance during the administration of President Jackson. John Quincy Adams, although his previous social record had been brilliant, was a semi-invalid during her residence at the White House, so that her regime cannot be described as more than commonplace.

She was the sixth in the succession of occupants of the executive mansion, and with her closed the list of the ladies of the Revolution. Her administration had sprung up in the forty-nine years of independence, and after her retirement, younger aspirants claimed the honors," says a historian.

Mrs. James Monroe was an elegant, accomplished woman who had learned much of the social ways of the world through her life at various European capitals. Her health was poor during her husband's terms as chief magistrate, and for that reason her social regime is not numbered among the brilliant ones of White House history.

"To preserve a custom established by her predecessor," a writer of the time stated, "she gives what are termed 'drawing rooms' for the purpose of gratifying the wishes and curiosity of such strangers as may please to visit her and the President. These 'drawing rooms' are conducted on principles of republican simplicity, and are widely different from the magnificence and splendor of the English levees; the rooms are crowded, the hum of voices loud and the motion of the company incessant."

When Mr. Monroe became President the White House, destroyed by the English during the War of 1812, had been partly rebuilt, but it offered few comforts and furniture was not of adequate sort, and the debris of the destroyed building lay in heaps about the new mansion. Upon the direction of Congress, General Lee, then in Paris, purchased a silver service of plate, which was forwarded at once, and which was used until replaced by a more modern service in 1829.

Mrs. Dolley Madison was, perhaps, the most notable mistress of the White House during its early history. It is said that the forms and ceremonials which had rendered the drawing rooms of Mrs. Washington and Mrs. Adams dull and tedious were promptly banished, and no kind of stiffness was permitted.

Mrs. Madison's chief aim was to be popular and to help make her husband's administration brilliant and successful.

"Her field," wrote an admirer, "was the parlor, and with the view of resigning supreme there she bestirred energies of her mind to the one idea of accomplishment. In her thirty-seventh year she entered the White House in a position which she occupied for seven years, and during that time she was, in every respect, the beauty of feature and form and eminently happy in the sincere regard of her husband. Mrs. Madison was not a learned woman, but decidedly a talented one, and her name will ever be a synonym for all that is charming and agreeable."