

THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 3.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, JULY 3, 1897.

VOL. LV.

PRESIDENT BUCHANAN'S NIECE.

(Copyrighted 1897 by Frank G. Carpenter.)

WASHINGTON, D C., June 23rd, 1897.

LIVING within a few blocks of the White House, so near to it that the strains of the Marine band at the President's receptions can almost be heard within her parlors, is a woman, who, forty years ago was one of the most popular mistresses the Executive mansion has ever had. Forty years ago she was

known as the most beautiful, the most intelligent and most accomplished woman of the United States. The beaux of the army and navy then bowed down to her; diplomats from a dozen foreign courts strove together for her smiles; statesmen famous for their eloquence and wit, repeated her bon mots; and the American people, without regard to party, admired and worshiped her. To-day this woman is intellectually as bright as she was then, and physically she seems almost as young as she was when she presided over the White House. Her luxuriant mass of golden hair has, it is true, been turned to frosted silver by the brush of time, but the blue of her eyes is still clear, the roses of her complexion still bloom and the wrinkles of withered old age have yet to come.

I wish I could show you President Buchanan's niece, Mrs. Harriet Lane Johnston, as I saw her in her Washington home this week. Her form is as straight as it was when she held the position of "First Lady of the Land," and were it not for her white hair you would take her to be in the prime of middle age. She is also young in soul. The long pathway of her life has often been marked with bitter sorrow. First her uncle, then her husband and her children, one by one have passed away. But she has not allowed her troubles to sour her and she keeps abreast with the spirit of the times. She is in sympathy with the world of today, and although she is still in her sixties she is still one of the queens of Washington society.

Mrs. Johnston is a woman of means. Her Washington home is a large house, made of cream-colored brick situated on the corner of eighteenth and I streets, in the most fashionable part of the capital. In the same block is the mansion in which Secretaries Frelinghuysen and

Whitney and Postmaster General Wanamaker successively lived, and all about are the houses of distinguished men and women. Mrs. Johnston's home is beautifully furnished. It contains mementoes of travel from many parts of the world. A screen of Moorish work, which once formed a window to hide the beauties of Cairo from the gaze of the passers-by, stands in the hall, and upon the walls hang paintings and engravings, almost every one of which is the more valuable by its associations. In the parlor, for instance, there is a portrait of the Prince of Wales, painted just after the prince left the United States, and sent by him to President Buchanan. Just under the portrait in a little black frame is the letter which the prince sent with the portrait. The letter was penned by his royal highness on the shores of Palestine, where he was traveling. It reads:

"Jaffa, March 29, 1862.

"Dear Mr Buchanan:

"Permit me to request that you will accept the accompanying portrait as a slight mark of my grateful recollection of the hospitable reception and agreeable visit at the White House on the occasion of my tour in the United States.

"Believe me that the cordial welcome which was then vouchsafed to me by the American people and by you as their chief, can never be effaced from my memory.

"I venture to ask you at the same time to remember me kindly to Miss Lane, and believe me, dear Mr. Buchanan,

"Yours very truly,

"ALBERT EDWARD."

The Prince of Wales visited the United States as the guest of President Buchanan. He was at the time in his twentieth year, and Miss Lane could not have been much older. She was, you know, then mistress of the White House, and the week which the prince spent there must have been one of the fullest weeks of that eventful period of her life. She says herself that the visit of the prince was a most enjoyable one. He came here on an English man-of-war, accompanied by a large suite. The prince and his suite all stayed with the President at the White House. The time was one round of receptions, dinners and amusements. Every evening, with one exception, President Buchanan gave a dinner, at which distinguished people were invited to meet the prince, and Miss Lane also gave an invited reception, introducing his royal highness to the society of the capital. At the dinners the English minister and his attaches were present, and the minister, who was Lord Lyons, gave a dinner at the legation, at which Miss Lane and the President attended. One of the features of the occasion was an excursion to

Mount Vernon, in which the party went on the dispatch boat "Harriet Lane," one of the revenue cutters belonging to the treasury department.

It was in talking about the Prince of Wales' visit that Mrs. Johnston gave me some interesting information as to how her uncle regarded presidential expenses. He was one of the most conscientious Presidents we have ever had, and was scrupulously careful that none of his personal expenses should be paid by the government. All of the bills connected with the Prince of Wales' visit to Washington were settled by Buchanan and the cost of the trip to Mount Vernon was privately arranged for between him and Mr. Cobb, the secretary of the treasury. Congress was not asked for a cent, and even the fuel which was used for the revenue cutter for that day was paid for by the President. President Buchanan never thought of planning hunting excursions and vacation tours for himself on government vessels, as our Presidents have done of late years. During his stay in the White House he entertained to such an extent that his salary was hardly equal to his expenses. It cost him much more than his salary to live when he was a minister to England. The salary of the minister at that time was in the neighborhood of nine thousand dollars, with a slight addition for traveling expenses between London and the United States. Mrs. Johnston tells me that Mr. Buchanan paid almost his whole salary for his house rent, and that she understood that it required all his private income in addition to meet his expenses. He appreciated the dignity of the British mission, and knew that in order to do efficient work his social expenditures must be great. He was one of the few ministers whom we have sent to London who was popular both with the English and the people here at home. This rigid code of official honor, Mrs. Johnston says, was kept by Buchanan throughout his life. He devoted the most of his years to politics and statesmanship. He held many official positions, and yet he never made a cent out of politics. All of his fortune was accumulated at the law before he began his political career, and he was so clean-handed as to have always been above suspicion.

There are a number of fine portraits of President Buchanan in Mrs. Johnston's home. Among others she showed me a beautiful miniature painted by a famous artist when Mr. Buchanan was in his prime. It represents a face much handsomer and more human than the stiff and stately figures shown in the ordinary engravings. In it the complexion of the President is rosy, his eyes are as blue as the summer skies and his face is full of kindness and soul.