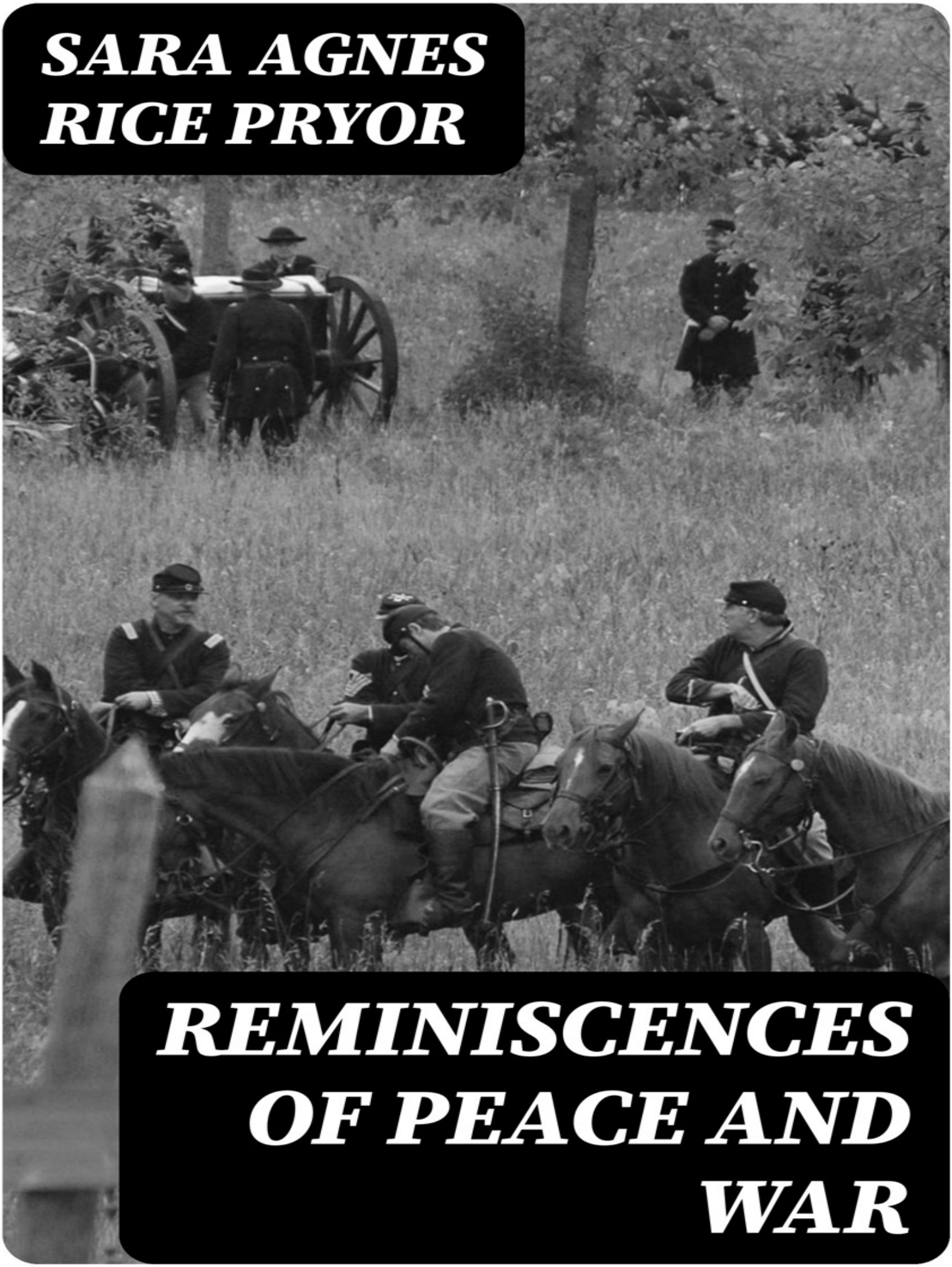

SARA AGNES RICE PRYOR

REMINISCENCES OF PEACE AND WAR

Sara Agnes Rice Pryor

Reminiscences of Peace and War

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GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE ON "TRAVELLER."
From a photograph by Miley, Lexington, Va.

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO THE MEMORY OF

My Son

WILLIAM RICE PRYOR, M.D.

WHO GAVE TO SUFFERING HUMANITY ALL THAT
GOD HAD GIVEN HIM

Preface

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It will be obvious to the reader that this book affects neither the "dignity of history" nor the authority of political instruction. The causes which precipitated the conflict between the sections and the momentous events which attended the struggle have been recounted by writers competent to the task. But descriptions of battles and civil convulsions do not exhibit the full condition of the South in the crisis. To complete the picture, social characteristics and incidents of private life are indispensable lineaments. It occurs to the author that a plain and unambitious narrative of her recollections of Washington society during the calm which preceded the storm, and of Virginia under the afflictions and sorrows of the fratricidal strife, will not be without interest in the retrospect of that memorable era. The present volume recalls that era in the aspect in which it appeared to a woman rather than as it appeared to a statesman or a philosopher.

ROGER A. PRYOR.

Chapter I
Washington in the Fifties

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The Washington that I knew in the fifties was not the Washington of Dickens, Mrs. Trollope, and Laurence Oliphant. When I knew the capital of our country, it was not "a howling wilderness of deserted streets running out into the country and ending nowhere, its population consisting chiefly of politicians and negroes";[1] nor were the streets overrun with pigs and infested with goats. I never saw these animals in the streets of Washington; but a story, told to illustrate the best way of disposing of the horns of a dilemma proves one goat at least to have had the freedom of the city. It seems that Henry Clay, overdue at the Senate Chamber, was once hurrying along Pennsylvania Avenue when he was attacked by a large goat. Mr. Clay seized his adversary by the horns. So far so good, but how about the next step? A crowd of sympathetic bootblacks and newsboys gathered around offering advice. "Let go, Mr. Clay, and run like blazes," shouted one; and Mr. Clay did let go and did run, his senatorial coat-tails flying like pennons behind him.

But this was before my day. I remember Washington only as a garden of delights, over which the spring trailed an early robe of green, thickly embroidered with gems of amethyst and ruby, pearl and sapphire. The crocuses, hyacinths, tulips, and snowdrops made haste to bloom before the snows had fairly melted. The trees donned their diaphanous veils of green earlier in the White House grounds, the lawn of the Smithsonian Institution, and the

gentle slopes around the Capitol, than anywhere in less distinguished localities. To walk through these incense-laden grounds, to traverse the avenue of blossoming crab-apples, was pure pleasure. The shaded avenues were delightful long lanes, where one was sure to meet friends, and where no law of etiquette forbade a pause in the public street for a few words of kindly inquiry, or a bit of gossip, or the development of some plan for future meetings. If one's steps tended to the neighborhood of 7th and D streets, nothing was more probable than a meeting with one of Washington's most noted citizens, — the superb mastiff of Mr. Gales, the veteran editor of the *National Intelligencer*, as the dog gravely bore in a large basket the mail for the office. No attendant was needed by this fine animal. He was fully competent to protect his master's private and official correspondence.

He had been taught to express stern disapprobation of Democrats; so if a pleasant walk with him was desired, it was expedient for members of that party to perjure themselves and at once announce: "I am an 'Old-Line Whig,' old man," and the dog's tail would wag a cordial welcome.

Omnibuses ran along Pennsylvania Avenue, for the convenience of Senators, Congressmen, and others on their way to the Capitol, — but the saunter along the avenue was so charming that I always preferred it to the People's Line. There were few shops. But such shops! There was Galt's, where the silver, gems, and marbles were less attractive than the cultivated gentleman who sold them; Gautier's, the palace of sweets, with Mrs. Gautier in an arm-chair before her counter to tell you the precise social status of every one of her customers, and what is more, to put you in your own; Harper's, where the dainty, leisurely salesman treated his laces with respect, drawing up his cuffs lest they touch the

ethereal beauties; and the little corner shop of stern Madame Delarue, who imported as many (and no more) hats and gloves as she was willing to sell as a favor to the ladies of the diplomatic and official circles, and whose dark-eyed daughter Léonide (named for her godmother, a Greek lady of rank) was susceptible of unreasoning friendships and could be coaxed to preserve certain treasures for humbler folk.

Léonide once awoke me in the middle of the night with a note bidding me "come *tout de suite*," for "Maman" was asleep, the boxes had arrived; and she and I could peep at the bonnets and choose the best one for myself. Thus it was that I once bore away a "divine creation" of point lace, crêpe, and shaded asters before Madame had seen it. Otherwise it would have been reserved for Miss Harriet Lane or Mrs. Douglas. Madame had to know later; and Léonide was not much in evidence the rest of that season. At Madame Delarue's, if one was very *gentil*, very *convenable*, one might have the services of François, the one and only hair-dresser of note, who had adjusted coronets on noble heads, and who could (if he so minded) talk of them agreeably in Parisian French.

All these were little things; but do not pleasant trifles make the sum of pleasant hours? Washington was like a great village in those days of President Pierce and President Buchanan. To obtain the best of the few articles to be purchased was an achievement.

My own pride in the Federal City was such that my heart would swell within me at every glimpse of the Capitol: from the moment it rose like a white cloud above the smoke and mists, as I stood on the deck of the steamboat (having run up from my dinner to salute Mount Vernon), to the time when I was wont to watch from my window for the sunset,

that I might catch the moment when a point on the unfinished dome glowed like a great blazing star after the sun had really gone down. No matter whether suns rose or set, there was the star of our country, — the star of our hearts and hopes.

I acknowledge that Wisdom is much to be desired of her children, but nowhere is it promised that they will be the happier for gaining her. When my lot was cast in Washington, Wisdom had not taught me that the White House was less beautiful than a classic temple. To be sure, Dickens had called it "like an English club-house," — that was bad enough, — but Mark Twain had not yet dubbed it "a fine, large, white barn with wide handsome grounds around it." "The President lives there," says Washington Hawkins. "It is ugly enough outside, but that is nothing to what it is inside." To my uneducated eye the East Room with its ornate chandeliers, fluted pillars, and floriated carpet was an audience chamber fit for a king. A triumph of artistic perfection was the equestrian statue of the hero of New Orleans, now known to be out of all proportion, and condemned as "bad" and "very bad" by Wisdom's instructed children. Raising his hat, indeed! Why, any man in that position would be holding on to the mane with both hands to keep from sliding off. And as for the Capitol — the sacred Capitol! From foundation to turret it was to my eye all that genius and patriotism could achieve. The splendid marbles at the entrance, the paintings, the bas-reliefs within the rotunda, — these were things to boast of, to dream of. Not yet had arisen our irreverent humorist to warn us never to enter the dome of the Capitol, "because to get there you must pass through the great rotunda, and to do that you would have to see the marvellous historical paintings that

hang there and the bas-reliefs, — and what have you done that you should suffer this?"

When our friends came up from Virginia to make us visits, it was delightful to take a carriage and give up days to sight-seeing; to visit the White House and Capitol, the Patent Office with its miscellaneous treasures; to point with pride to the rich gifts from crowned heads which our adored first President was too conscientious to accept; to walk among the stones lying around the base of the unfinished monument and read the inscriptions from the states presenting them; to spend a day at the Smithsonian Institution, and to introduce our friends to its president, Mr. Henry; and to Mr. Spencer Baird and Mr. Gerard, eminent naturalists, who were giving their lives to the study of birds, beasts, and fishes, — finding them, Mr. Gerard said, "so much more interesting than men," adding hastily, "we do not say ladies," and blushing after the manner of cloistered scholars; to tell them interesting things about Mr. Gerard who was a melancholy young man, and who had confided to me that he had sustained a great sorrow. Had he lost his fortune, or been crossed in love, was he homesick for his native Switzerland? Worse than any one or all of these! He had been sent once to Nantucket in the interests of his profession. There he had found a strange fish, hitherto unknown to science. He had classified its bones and laid them out on his table to count them. In a moment's absence the housemaid had entered and dusted his table.

Then the visits to the galleries of the House and Senate Chamber, and the honor of pointing out the great men to our friends from rural districts; the long listening to interminable speeches, not clearly understood, but heard with a reverent conviction that all was coming out right in the end, that everybody was really working for the good of

his country, and that we belonged to it all and were parts of it all.

This was the thought behind all other thoughts which glorified everything around us, enhanced every fortunate circumstance, and caused us to ignore the real discomforts of life in Washington: the cold, the ice-laden streets in winter; the whirlwinds of dust and driving rains of spring; the swift-coming fierceness of summer heat; the rapid atmospheric changes which would give us all these extremes in one week, or even one day, until it became the part of prudence never to sally forth on any expedition without "a fan, an overcoat, and an umbrella."

The social life in Washington was almost as variable as the climate. At the end of every four years the kaleidoscope turned, and lo! — a new central jewel and new colors and combinations in the setting.

But behind this "floating population," as the political circles were termed, there was a fine society in the fifties of "old residents" who never bent the knee to Baal. This society was sufficient to itself, never seeking the new, while accepting it occasionally with discretion, reservations, and much discriminating care. The sisters, Mrs. Gales and Mrs. Seaton, wives of the editors of the *National Intelligencer*, led this society. Mrs. Gales's home was outside the city, and thence every day Mr. Gales was driven in his barouche to his office. His paper was the exponent of the Old-Line Whigs (the Republican party was formed later) and in stern opposition to the Democrats. It was, therefore, a special and unexpected honor for a Democrat to be permitted to drive out to "the cottage" for a glass of wine and a bit of fruit-cake with Mrs. Gales and Mrs. Seaton. Never have I seen these gentlewomen excelled in genial hospitality. Mrs. Gales was a superb old lady and a fine conversationalist. She had the

courteous repose born of dignity and intelligence. She was literally her husband's right hand, — he had lost his own, — and was the only person who could decipher his left-hand writing. So that when anything appeared from his pen it had been copied by his wife before it reached the type-setter. A fine education this for an intelligent woman; the very best schooling for a social life including diplomats from foreign countries, politicians of diverse opinions, artists, authors, musicians, women of fashion, to entertain whom required infinite tact, cleverness, and an intimate acquaintance with the absorbing questions of the day.

Of course the levees and state receptions, which were accessible to all, required none of these things. The role of hostess on state occasions could be filled creditably by any woman of ordinary physical strength, patience, and self-control, who knew when to be silent.

Washington society, at the time of which I write, was comparatively free from non-official men of wealth from other cities who, weary with the monotonous round of travel, — to the Riviera, to Egypt, to Monte Carlo, — are attracted by the unique atmosphere of a city holding many foreigners, and devoted not to commercial but to social and political interests. The doors of the White House and Cabinet offices being open on occasions to all, they have opportunities denied them in their own homes. Society in Washington in the fifties was peculiarly interesting in that it was composed exclusively of men whose presence argued them to have been of importance at home. They had been elected by the people, or chosen by the President, or selected among the very best in foreign countries; or they belonged to the United States Army or Navy service, or to the descendants of the select society which had gathered in the city early in its history.

During the Fillmore administration there were peculiar elements in Washington society. The President was born of poor English parents. At the age of fifteen he was apprentice to a wool-carder in Livingston County, New York, representing in his father's mind no higher hope than gradual advancement until he should attain the proud place of woollen-draper. But at nineteen he had entered a lawyer's office, working all day, teaching and studying at night. When he became President his tastes had been sufficiently ripened to enable him to gather around him men of literary taste and attainment. John P. Kennedy, an author and a man of elegant accomplishments, was Secretary of the Navy. Washington Irving was Kennedy's friend, and often his guest. Lesser lights in the world of letters found Washington an agreeable residence. We knew many of these men, and among them none was brighter, wittier, or more genial than G. P. R. James, the English novelist whose star rose and set before 1860. He was the most prolific of writers, "Like an endless chain of buckets in a well," said one; "as fast as one is emptied up comes another."

We were very fond of Mr. James. One day he dashed in, much excited: —

"Have you seen the *Intelligencer*? By George, it's all true! Six times has my hero, a 'solitary horseman,' emerged from a wood! My word! I was totally unconscious of it! Fancy it! Six times! Well, it's all up with that fellow. He has got to dismount and enter on foot: a beggar, or burglar, or pedler, or at best a mendicant friar."

"But," suggested one, "he might drive, mightn't he?"

"Impossible!" said Mr. James. "Imagine a hero in a gig or a curricle!"

"Perhaps," said one, "the word 'solitary' has given offence. Americans dislike exclusiveness. They are sensitive,

you see, and look out for snobs."

He made himself very merry over it; but the solitary horseman appeared no more in the few novels he was yet to write.

One day, after a pleasant visit from Mr. James and his wife, I accompanied them at parting to the front door, and found some difficulty in turning the bolt. He offered to assist, but I said no — he was not supposed to understand the mystery of an American front door.

Having occasion a few minutes afterward to open the door for another departing guest, there on his knees outside was Mr. James, who laughingly explained that he had left his wife at the corner, and had come back to investigate that mystery. "Perhaps you will tell me," he added, and was much amused to learn that the American door opened of itself to an incoming guest, but positively refused without coaxing to let him out. "By George, that's fine!" he said, "that'll please the critics in my next." I never knew whether it was admitted, for I must confess that, even with the stimulus of his presence, his books were dreary reading to my uninstructed taste.

A very lovely and charming actress was prominent in Washington society at this time, — the daughter of an old New York family, Anna Cora (Ogden) Mowatt. She was especially interesting to Virginians, for she had captivated Foushee Ritchie, soon afterward my husband's partner on the editorship of the *Richmond Enquirer*. Mr. Ritchie, a confirmed old bachelor, had been fascinated by Mrs. Mowatt's Parthenia (in "Ingomar") and was now engaged to her. He proudly brought to me a pair of velvet slippers she had embroidered for him, working around them as a border a quotation from "Ingomar": —

"Two souls with but a single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one."

And oh, *how* angry he was when an irreverent voice whispered one word, "Soles!"

"Cora must never hear of this," he declared indignantly; "she is, beyond all women, incapable of *double entendre*, of coarse allusion."

Alas! I cannot conclude my little story, "And they were married and lived happily ever after." They were married — and lived miserably — and were separated ever after. The single thought was how they could best escape each other — and the two hearts beat as one in the desire for freedom.

"The shadow of the coming war was even then beginning to darken the land and confuse legislation with bitter partisanship and continuous attempts at an impossible compromise," but, alas! our eyes were holden so we could not see.

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1. "Life of Oliphant," Vol. I. p. 109.

Chapter II
President Pierce's Inauguration

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On the 4th of March, 1853, Franklin Pierce was inaugurated President of the United States. This was an exciting day for me. My husband had written articles for a Virginia paper which had won for him a place on the editorial staff of the *Washington Union*, and was now in a position to break a lance with my friends, Messrs. Gales and Seaton. Mr. Pierce had liked his articles in the *Union*, and sought his acquaintance. A friendship rapidly followed which was a happiness to us both. So when some member of the staff of the Democratic organ must be consulted about the inaugural address, the President had sent for my young husband and had taken counsel with him.

I was delighted when I received an invitation from my good friends of the Smithsonian Institution to join them in a pleasant room opening on a balcony and overlooking Pennsylvania Avenue, where we were to have a collation and witness the parade. My husband's sixteen-year-old sister, Fanny, was with me, and she was literally wild with delight. The rest of the party were Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Baird, little Lucy Baird, Mr. Gerard, and Mr. Turner. Little eight-year-old Lucy was the belle of the occasion; so wise in scientific matters, knowing so much about "specimens" and "extinct species" that we felt ourselves heavy and ignorant beside her. "Come now, Lucy," said Mr. Turner, "I expect you to take care of me on this occasion. These are painful scenes for an Englishman. When you see the Continental

troops coming, give me the wink, and I'll slip away and stir the punch. Those are the fellows who whipped the British!"

The elements frowned upon the change of administration. The sun was blanketed with dark clouds, from which the snow fell thickly — not a soft, enfolding snow, but snow driven by an angry wind. The crowd in the avenue was immense; swelled by the presence of the largest number of strangers ever before gathered at an Inauguration, the majority of whom were members of the mighty army of office-seekers from the party recently come into power. From the White House to the Capitol, windows, balconies, and roofs were thronged; and the sidewalks of the avenue were filled with a motley crowd of men, women, and children, foreigners, government clerks, and negroes.

About twelve o'clock the boom of a great gun announced the moving of the procession. The throng in the streets surged toward the gates of the Capitol, and "lined up" on either side awaiting the arrival of the cortège. Carriages filled with women and children, some of them with the emblazoned panels of foreign ministers, passed rapidly in advance of the cavalcade — the police actively engaged the while in keeping the waiting crowd within bounds. Presently distant music was heard, and a mighty cheer announced the near approach of the escort. Six marshals in gay scarfs led the procession. Then came the "flying artillery," drawn by fifty or more horses. An interval, and then platoons of soldiers of diverse battalions filled square after square, and band after band of martial music mingled with the cheers of the crowd.

We were all out now on the balcony, little Lucy keenly alert. Presently she touched Mr. Turner on his arm and he fled! The Continentals were passing.

Following these, in an open carriage drawn by four fine horses, came our President: the youngest, handsomest President we had ever elected. As he neared our balcony we stood up, waved and cheered, and threw him flowers, and so winning in their enthusiasm were little Lucy (her mind being now quite at rest about Mr. Turner) and my own young sister, that the President rose and bared his head to us.

A platform had been erected over the steps of the east wing, and on it was a table holding a Bible. The distinguished officials of the time were seated around this table, and beneath it the crowd pushed and scrambled and struggled for place within hearing. Instantly there was silence. The slender, almost boyish figure of our President approached the table, and with bared head under the falling snow stood for a moment surveying the crowd.

His face was pale, and his countenance wore an expression of weary sadness. When he took the oath he did not, as is the custom, use the word "swear." Placing his left hand on the Bible without raising the book, he raised his right and, looking upward, "affirmed" that, God helping him, he would be faithful to his trust.

There were tears in his voice, but it was musical, and his enunciation was clear and distinct.

Only two months before, his only child, a beautiful boy of thirteen, had been killed in a railroad collision — killed before his parents' eyes! His address began, "My countrymen! It is a relief to feel that no heart but my own can know the personal regret and bitter sorrow over which I have been borne to a position so suitable for others rather than desirable for myself."

The public does not tolerate the intrusion of a man's personal joys and griefs into his official life. However willing the world may be to sympathize, it considers this indicative

of a mind lacking fineness and delicacy. To keep one's inner self in the background should be the instinct, and is surely the policy, of every man and woman who aspires to popularity.

There were many who quickly criticised this unfortunate sentence of the President. The Whig journals sneered at it as "a trick of the orator to awaken personal interest before proceeding to unfold his public policy." But he had the sympathetic tears of many of his audience.

His address went on to discuss the annexation of Cuba — a dream which lasted through many subsequent years. The Pearl of the Antilles was ardently coveted as a pendant to our chain of states, but she will never belong to us, unless as the result of more misfortune. The President then pledged himself to the never dying Monroe Doctrine, prayed appealingly for the preservation of our Union, and touched upon the troubled questions which, despite all our wars and sufferings, are not yet fully settled. And then, amid cheers and shouts and salvos of artillery, he was driven to his new home, and it was all over.

Three days after the inauguration the Cabinet nominations were sent to the Senate. Mr. Marcy was to be Secretary of State; Mr. Guthrie, Secretary of the Treasury; Jefferson Davis, of War; James Dobbin, of the Navy; Robert McClelland, of the Interior; James Campbell, Postmaster-General; Caleb Cushing, Attorney-General — four men from the North, three from the South. These, then, with their families, were to lead the social life of Washington for four years. The Executive Mansion, shrouded in gloom, could never become a social centre.

We had the honor of knowing well the three most distinguished of these men, Mr. Marcy, Mr. Davis, and Mr. Cushing.

Mr. Marcy, the best-known member of the Cabinet, strong, honest, and an adroit politician, was a man of rugged and abrupt manners, yet a great favorite with the ladies. We at once became keenly interested in his initial proceedings. He was sternly democratic in his ideas. Absorbing as were the cares of his department, exciting and menacing as were the questions of the hour, he inaugurated his official life by settling matters of dress and etiquette — so far as they related to the presence of American envoys at foreign courts. President Jackson had been supposed to be democratic, but he was a bloated aristocrat beside Mr. Marcy. Jackson had rejected the prescribed court dress, — embroidered cuffs and cape, white breeches, gold knee-buckles, white silk stockings, gold shoe-buckles, chapeau-bras, cockade, eagle, white feather, and sword. Alackaday, that we should have lost all this bravery! Jackson decreed no cape at all (such a friendly fashion to laden shoulders), no embroidery except a gold star on the coat-collar, — but breeches and modest buckles, a sword, a chapeau-bras with eagle and cockade.

Now why should Mr. Marcy make trouble by meddling with the cut of the garments of our representatives abroad — at a time, too, when such a number of serious questions were about to come before him; when filibusters were at work, a war with Spain imminent, treaties to be made with Mexico, and fishery questions to be settled with England? Simply, I suppose, because great men all over the world have condescended to prescribe in trifling matters — matters belonging to the chef, the milliner, the arbiter of fleeting fashions. It would seem that the greater the man the greater his appreciation of trifles. Everything to him is important — from the signing of a treaty to the tying of a shoestring.

The consequences of Mr. Marcy's meddling were far-reaching. On June 1, 1853, he issued a circular recommending that our representatives abroad should, in order to show their devotion to republican institutions, appear whenever practicable in the simple dress of an American citizen.

Our Minister at Berne found the court of Switzerland quite willing to receive him in his citizen's dress. The Ministers at Turin and Brussels reported they would have no difficulty in carrying out the instructions of the State Department. The representative at Berlin was at once informed that such action would be considered disrespectful. The king of Sweden insisted on court dress at social functions. Mr. August Belmont, at The Hague, received a cold permission from the king to dress as he pleased — and it is recorded (as matter for gratitude on the part of the American Minister) that after all, and notwithstanding, the queen actually danced with him in his citizen's dress, and the king condescended to shake him by the hand and to talk with him!

Mr. Mason, at the French court, could not face the music! He consulted his wife, and together they agreed upon a compromise. He appeared in an embroidered coat, sword, and cocked hat, and had the misfortune to receive from Mr. Marcy a severe rebuke.

Mr. Buchanan, at the court of St. James, having no wife to consult, thought long and anxiously on the subject. The question was still unsettled at the opening of Parliament in February, 1854. Our Minister did not attend, — he had "nothing to wear," — whereupon "there was quite a sensation in the House of Lords." "Indeed," he wrote to Mr. Marcy, "I have found difficulty in preventing this incident from becoming a subject of inquiry and remark in the House

of Commons." Think of that! At a time when England was on the eve of a war with Russia, all the newspapers, court officials, House of Commons, exercised about the dress of the American Minister! The *London Times* stated that on a diplomatic occasion "the American Minister sate unpleasantly conscious of his singularity." The *London Chronicle* blamed General Pierce's republican ill manners, and the "American puppyism," and continued: "There is not the least reason why her Majesty should be troubled to receive the 'gentleman in the black coat' from Yankee-land! He can say his say at the Foreign Office, dine at a chop-house in King Street, sleep at the old Hummums, and be off as he came, per liner, when his business is done."

Poor Mr. Buchanan, sorely pressed, conceived the idea of costuming himself like General Washington, and to that end examined Stuart's portrait. He may even have gone so far as to indulge in a private rehearsal — *queue*, powdered wig, and all; but he seems to have perceived he would only make himself ridiculous; so he took his life in his hands and — brave gentleman as he was — appeared at the queen's levee in the dress of an American citizen; and she, true lady as she was, settled the matter, for her court at least, by receiving him as she did all others. Mr. Buchanan wrote to his niece, Miss Harriet Lane, "I wore a sword to gratify those who yielded so much, and to distinguish me from the upper court servants."

Mr. Soulé, at the court of Madrid, adopted the costume of Benjamin Franklin at the court of Louis XVI — sword, chapeau, black velvet, and much embroidery, looking, "with his black eyes, black looks, and pale complexion, less like the philosopher whose costume he imitated than the master of Ravenswood." There had been a lively discussion among the Austrian and Mexican Ministers and the Countess of

Montijo, the mother of the Empress Eugénie and of the Duchess of Alba, whether or no he should be rejected; but Mr. Soulé did not know this. The queen received him, he wrote to Mr. Marcy, "with marked attention and courtesy."

There is no telling whether this simple deviation from the prescribed court dress was not the real cause of Mr. Soulé's serious troubles at court. It was the Duke of Alba who provided the spark which fired the train of Spanish indignation against him and occasioned a quarrel which resulted in two duels and strained relations which were never reconciled.

It is always dangerous to infringe upon accepted rules of etiquette, even in association with those who are themselves defiant of these rules. I discovered that Mr. Marcy was very jealous of respect due to himself, as well as to his government.

He was a prime favorite, as I have said, with the ladies — and with none more than the charming family of "Father Ritchie," as we called one of Washington's most esteemed citizens. Mr. Ritchie had been editor for forty years of the *Richmond Enquirer*, which he had founded under the auspices of Thomas Jefferson, and made one of the most influential Democratic papers of the country. His home in Washington was noted for elegant hospitality. He lived next door to Mr. Corcoran on Lafayette Square, near St. John's Church. He had lovely daughters, and whenever Mr. Marcy appeared in the salons of the town, one or more of these ladies was sure to be with him.

It so happened that some of us were much interested in a poor, worthy young man, who desired a position in the State Department. His application had long ago been filed in the office and we were afraid he had been forgotten. We

longed to ask Mr. Marcy about it, but did not know how we could manage to bring the subject to his notice.

"Let's make Ann Eliza ask him," suggested one. Now, Ann Eliza Ritchie was a beauty, as fascinating a young creature as the Lord ever made, irresistible alike to man and woman. She hesitated, — everybody was afraid of Mr. Marcy — but goaded on by us, she ventured: —

"Oh, Mr. Marcy" (Virginia girls always begin with "Oh"), "Oh, Mr. Marcy! They all want to know if you are going to appoint Mr. Randolph in your department."

The lion turned. He did not growl, he simply roared: "*What* do you mean, madame? How *dare* you take the bull by the horns in this unseemly manner?"

And so no more of Ann Eliza Ritchie. And so no more of the rest of us. We learned a lesson we never forgot; namely, not to meddle in Cabinet affairs, but to content ourselves with the honor of amusing great men, — in short, to know our place and keep it.

Mr. Jefferson Davis had been an eminent public man long before the presidency of Mr. Pierce. He was a graduate of West Point. He had been an officer in the Indian wars. He was in the House of Representatives at the age of thirty-seven. John Quincy Adams heard his maiden speech and said: "That young man is no ordinary man. He will make his mark yet, mind me." His devotion to reading and study amounted to a passion. He had served as a colonel in the Mexican War. It was said of him that "his brilliant movement at Buena Vista carried the day, and that his tactical conception was worthy of a Cæsar or a Napoleon."[1]

He was afterward a member for four years of the United States Senate, and although defeated in a gubernatorial contest in Mississippi, he rose rapidly in the esteem of the people of his own section; and now, at the age of forty-five,

he was the "leader of the Southern people, and successor of John C. Calhoun." He was leader a few years later in the Battle of the Giants, fought so bitterly in Mr. Buchanan's time.

Of Mr. Caleb Cushing I knew less than I did of Mr. Davis and Mr. Marcy. He had great learning, great ability, wide experience in public life. He has been described as a "scholar, author, lawyer, statesman, diplomatist, general, and judge." He was one of the rare class of men who are precocious in childhood and youth, and who go intellectually from strength to strength as long as they live. He was graduated from Harvard when only seventeen years of age. He was a most attractive man in manner and address, and a fascinating public speaker. He could quote the "Iliad" from beginning to end, and could speak to each one of the foreign ambassadors in his own tongue.

Mr. Cushing sent an editorial nearly every day to the *Washington Union*, of which my husband was associate editor. No compliment upon his own articles which my husband ever received was more gratefully appreciated than one from Mr. Cushing. A serious difference of opinion had arisen with the senior editor, because of a paper upon the Anglo-Russian war, in which my husband warmly advocated the side of Russia. He declined retracting his words (which were copied and translated abroad), and finally gave up his position on the paper rather than express sentiments other than his own. Mr. Cushing applauded him, and bade him stand fearlessly by an argument, "unanswered and unanswerable."

Shortly after this Mr. Pierce appointed my husband special Minister to Greece. I longed to go with him to Athens, but my mother's health was frail, and I felt I could not leave her. So I returned to my home in Virginia with my

children, and their father went on his mission alone. When it was accomplished, the Pierce administration was drawing to a close.

My temporary home was near Charlottesville, and thither, on his way South, came the President to spend a day and to visit Monticello, the home of the Father of Democracy. He wrote to me, inviting me to spend the evening with him and a few friends at his hotel. We had a delightful evening. He told me all I wished to know of the exile far away in Greece, expressed warm friendship for him and his, and presented me with two gorgeous volumes, bound sumptuously in green morocco, and inscribed, from my "friend Franklin Pierce," in his own fine handwriting. I played at his request, he sitting the while beside the piano. I selected Henselt's "L'Elisire d'Amour" and "La Gondola," to the great delight of the President. The other day I read, from the pen of some irreverent critic, of the "lilting puerilities of the innocuous Henselt." All the same, these puerilities pleased the President, and will charm the world until the end of time.

I feel that I have said too little of Mr. Pierce in this sketch of the men we knew. I cannot hope to convey an adequate conception of his captivating voice and manner. Surely its source was in genuine kindness of heart. I knew nothing of him as a politician. It was urged against him that he was extremely partial to the South. I know the South honored and loved him always. It was said that "Franklin Pierce could not say 'No'" — a weakness which doubtless caused him a world of trouble in his political relations, but to which he may have owed something of the indescribable charm for which he was conspicuous. Mr. Seward, his political opponent, wrote to his wife: "The President has a *very* winning way in his manners." I can fully understand the

beautiful friendship between him and Nathaniel Hawthorne. How exquisite the answer of the author when chidden because he had dedicated a book to the President, after the latter had become unpopular: "Unpopular, is he? If he is so exceedingly unpopular that his name is enough to sink the volume, there is so much the more need that an old friend should stand by him."

Hawthorne had then arrived at the height of his own popularity, while his friend, on account of his fancied Southern sympathies, had lost the friendship of his own people. A bitter lot for a sensitive patriot, who had done his best! "An angel can no more!"

My residence in Washington during the Pierce administration was too short to afford me more than a brief glimpse of the social life of the city, but I keenly enjoyed that glimpse. I had the good fortune to find favor, as I have said, with the old residents, and also with the Hon. W. W. Corcoran, at whose house the best of the old and new could always be found.

There I met many distinguished people. I remember especially General Winfield Scott, Sam Houston, and Washington Irving. General Scott, grand, imposing, and ceremonious, never failed to tell everybody that he had been groomsman for my husband's father — he had been born in Petersburg, Virginia. He addressed all young women as "fair lady." He was a great hero and a splendid old fellow in every particular, and he never for a moment forgot his heroism and his splendor. People called him "vain." So great a man could not be accused of vanity — "the food of fools." He had a reasonable pride in what he had achieved, but his was certainly not the kind of pride that apes humility.

As for old Sam Houston, he had had romance enough in his past life for a dozen heroes. He had lived many years

among the Indians, had fought in many wars, had achieved the independence of Texas — what had he not done? Now he was Senator from Texas, very popular, and rather impatient, one might judge, of the confinement and restraints of his position. It was amusing to see the little pages of the Senate Chamber providing him with small bundles of soft pine sticks, which he would smuggle into his desk with a rather shamefaced expression. Doubled up over this desk, his face almost covered with his hanging eyebrows and iron-gray whiskers, he occupied himself in whittling sticks as a safety-valve for unrest while listening to the long speeches, lasting sometimes until midnight. He would prove afterward in his brilliant conversation that he had not lost a word. Sometimes the pine under his knife would take shape in little crosses, amulets, etc. He was known, now and then, to draw from the pocket of his tiger-skin vest an exquisitely carved heart and present it to some young lady whose beauty attracted him.

Then there was Washington Irving, — an old man with but a few years to live. He died before the end of the next administration. One would never think him old, — so keen and alert was he, — but for his trick of suddenly falling asleep for a minute or two in the middle of a conversation. A whisper, "Sh-h-h," would pass from one to another, "Mr. Irving is asleep;" and in a moment he would wake up, rub his hands, and exclaim, "Well, as we were saying," taking up the conversation just where he had left it.

My little sister worshipped Mr. Irving. "Only let me see him," she pleaded; "only let me touch the hand that wrote the 'Sketch Book.'"

I repeated this when I introduced her, and he said: "Ah, yes, yes! I know! I have heard all that before — many times before. And just as I am getting happy over it, here comes a