

New Year's Day at the White House

Leaves From a Reporter's Note Book

Washington, D. C., January 2, 1892.—To the stranger at the national capital New Year's day at the White House has its inspirations and its oddities. It is inspiring to know that you stand in the midst of the men upon whom the eyes of the world are fixed, and it is an oddity to be forced to realize that, after all, these are but human beings displaying to the naked eye all the ear marks of human frailty. But there are in reality many special inspirations as well as a host of fully developed oddities. The year 1892 gave to President Harrison the first clear New Year's day of his administration. Politicians are superstitious, and they declare this to be a good political forecast for the Harrison boom. But the pretty day was acceptable to those who were not politicians, and the reception at the White House on Friday is said to have been the largest for many years.

When the hour for the reception arrives, hundreds of thoughtful civilians stand upon the walk without the grounds, and clinging to the iron fence, peer through at the active scenes within, scenes of activity and bustle on the part of the policemen in charge and the favored few who rush in to be present at the official reception. The great iron gateways to the grounds are each guarded by a pair of stalwart policemen who, until the hour for the general reception, reject all comers except newspaper correspondents or members of the "official families."

The former include a comparative few, while the latter seem to cover a multitude. At the White House door another identification must take place before the applicant may mingle with the throng within. The interior of the White House is, by members of the "official families," regarded as entirely too small in circumference and modest in arrangement for its purpose, but to the man who doesn't call his supper "dinner" and who is satisfied with two suits of American made clothes, the interior of the president's house is fit for any kind.

Step inside the portals of the White House and your eyes first rest upon the marine band, whose every note is a poem and whose apparel comprises everything which gold and the colors of the rainbow can provide. To the right is the huge stairway, and as the beautiful music bursts upon the air the flowers which greet the eye and the plants which serve as stumbling blocks for awkward feet, seem to grow sweeter.

Two army officers lead the presidential party down this stairway, the president and his wife first in line and followed by members of the cabinet and their families. The stranger in search of "more light" involuntarily rushes for the great corridor to the rear of the band and standing there he realizes probably the chief inspiration of New Year's day at the White House. To the strains of the best American music—and that is the best music under heaven—the presidential party passes this corridor to the blue room. In truth and fact it is a panorama. All the White House seems a stage and the men and women, the flowers and foliage, the national colors and the national airs, seem to be the actors. Some are mute, but their realism is none the less intense.

With each note of music the panorama moves. The east end of the blue room presents a scene of marvelous beauty, taken as a whole, mind you. Here are gathered a hundred women, all conceded for the occasion to be handsome. Each is arrayed in the latest style of the dress-maker's art and armed with fan and bouquet, their faces are wreathed in smiles, but their breasts are as bare as the day they were born. All is not barren, but as Speaker Mull would say, "what is uncovered is uncovered enough to make up for all the rest." It could not impress one as a modest scene. Its beauty is too attractive to prevent for the moment thoughts of proprieties. In fact, the objections of a prude would be suppressed by the charm and grace of the scene.

To the head of this congregation of handsome women the presidential party moves and there halts. The cabinet officers take the presi-

A Description of New Year's Day Scenes at the President's Home When Harrison was Chief Magistrate and Blaine Secretary of State

dential hand and wish him a Happy New Year, then they pass along the line of smiling, handsome women. Their march is lined with smiles and happy greetings of the season. On and on past the aggregation the cabinet officers go to the east room where they are free to do as they please. As a matter of fact, the cabinet officers hurry from the east room to their own homes, but once in the east room, the visitor may crowd and be crowded as long as he can stand up under the strain.

There is some mistake here. All of the cabinet officers have not gone. There at the president's right stands a stalwart man, whose face would attract the eye in a crowd of thousands. The eyes of the visitors gaze a moment at the president, because he is president, and then turn hurriedly to rest for a host of moments on the stalwart man by his side because he is James G. Blaine. The sight of this man, whose name has stirred millions of people, standing beside his chief in name only, is one of the inspirations of the occasion. To the stranger, however, it seems an oddity to be told that the little man with a tired look is the president, while the other is his secretary of state, but the panorama pauses for a moment only to provide a good glance at this feature, and then the circus of the day begins.

Mr. Blaine has remained to present the representatives of foreign governments to the president. While the band is playing tunes of all colors, sexes and previous conditions, it seems that an improved edition of P. T. Barnum's "Greatest Effort" has broken loose in the crowd. At the head of the long line of diplomats is a little dark skinned man arrayed in a swallowtail coat and an immense display of white shirt front. He is the dean of the diplomatic corps and the representative of the Mexican government.

The long line of foreign representatives pass the president, exchanging compliments of the season, then run the gauntlet of the pretty women, bowing and scraping as they move, and each wearing himself in the effort to bow the lowest.

The members of congress crowd upon the diplomats, while the music changes to popular airs, and the diplomats are pushed out into the east room, and having discharged his duty Mr. Blaine hurries away and pressing through the crowd hastens to his own home to prepare for the breakfast to the foreign representatives.

Congressmen greet the president and follow the old line past the handsome women, and the justices of the supreme court, dressed like men, follow and pass on down the line, bowing low to the ladies and losing their identity in the democracy of the east room.

But the line does not stop. On and on it comes. The dull, prose dress of the congressman and justice is speedily relieved by the officers of the army and navy in their blue and golden equipments. When the army and navy pass the ladies the smiles of the latter seem sweeter than ever. The pets of social life in Washington are moving by, and when this long line reaches the east room the officers scatter here and there, each supported by a pretty woman, and all admired for the splendor they give the scene.

But the procession never stops. Department employes come next, and when they have passed members of the Grand Army of the Republic, many hundred strong, have marched by the gates and are already at the entrance. This is one of the inspiring sights of the day. While the "vets" pass, some with empty sleeves, many on crutches, the band strikes up "March-

ing Through Georgia," and the old comrades keep lively step to the lively air. How the old fellows march! They walk with stately tread and their faces clearly portray the proprietary interest they feel in the White House and all its belongings.

Then the gates are thrown wide open and at 12:40 the great American public crowds in. At 2 o'clock the reception is at an end. Imagine, if you can, that you stand in the center of a long line of human beings dressed in all manner of costumes, and see their long line pass by you and around you over velvet carpets and between broad leaves of palm, and dissolving when they have encircled you into a struggling mass of talking, laughing human beings, and you have, with the fragrance of the roses, some idea why a novice feels inspired at the situation.

It is not a full dress affair. There is the diplomat in his strangely foreign costume, the attache of the legation in his full dress suit, the army and navy officers in their gold, the handsome women in their best and costliest gowns, but with all these there is the plain American citizen dressed in a common sack coat of all colors and all vintages. The man who, with characteristic American freedom, strolls around with his hands buried in his trousers pockets rubs up against the man who keeps his hands aloof from any vulgarity. It is the one day of the year on which Washington society in the least approaches a democracy. It is inspiring to see the plain, everyday citizen rug up against the man whose name is on every tongue or whose name is linked with one or another of the important historical events of the nation. It is inspiring to elbow your way through the crowds of great men and ordinary men, breathing the air purified by the scent of roses and gazing on the scene glorified by the presence of hundreds of charming women. It is inspiring to stand beneath the silken folds of the American flag and listen to the strains of national airs, knowing that you are standing in the very midst of Uncle Sam's business establishment. It is inspiring to feel and know these things, but the oddities are none the less interesting.

Mrs. Morton, the gracious wife of the vice president, sweeps down the corridor, and an attache of the French legation nearly knocks down one newspaper correspondent while the Frenchman rushes by to grasp Mrs. Morton's hand and imprint a kiss thereon while he sinks to his knees.

Mrs. Morton bows low her acknowledgments and the vice president, who follows, bends his thin frame double in accepting the honor shown his wife.

When they pay their respects to the president, the foreign representatives hover around through the corridors, bowing and scraping here and there or peering over the heads of the crowd to catch a glimpse of a pretty woman.

The Chinese representatives are the most attractive, because, probably, the most ridiculous to the American eye. These sail by with an air that indicates the pleasure they find in the occasion. One woman, who keeps persistent track of five low-breasted daughters, herself wears a decidedly low-necked dress and reveals to a delighted populace five adult moles which seem to thrive well above the shoulder blades. Of the many oddities of the occasion there was one of international importance. When the officers of the army and navy have passed into the east room, and while they stand there for a moment, presenting a solid and admirable front, Senor Montt, the Chilean minister, happens by chance in struggling through the crowd to halt directly in front of the officers. Montt is short in stature. He is the only civilian in the throng. He gazes at his warlike surroundings and hastily withdraws. A smile goes around which in some quarters develops into suppressed laughter. The situation lasts but a moment, but it is sufficiently long to compare the dwarf of the Chilean adult with the splendid vigor of American manhood. This is an oddity, but under the circumstances it is also an inspiration.

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