

LITTLE KNOWN ROMANCES OF WASHINGTON HOMES

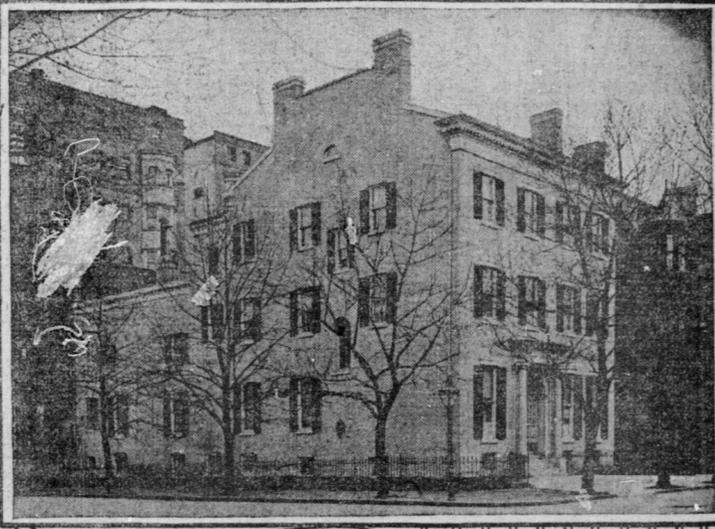
NUMBER EIGHT

The Story of a Lonely President and His Lovely Niece



HARRIET LANE.

The Woman Who Gave Her Uncle's Administration Unequaled Social Distinction.



THE JOHNSTON HOUSE. Where Harriet Lane Died—Nineteenth and I Streets.



PRESIDENT JAMES BUCHANAN.

A Bachelor Whose Life Was Closed to Romance While Still a Youth.

How Stately James Buchanan Found Himself Elected Guardian by a Naive and Impetuous Young Orphan, the Daughter of His Sister.

Tell me of Harriet Lane. Does she still go about? I knew her well as a girl and her charm and beauty were irresistible.

The speaker was a silver-haired woman who had come down to Washington from New England to revisit the scenes of her social glory of about the time of the civil war. Her interest in Harriet Lane was evidently that of one who knew her and loved her, and she sighed a little when she was told that the Harriet Lane of her younger enthusiasm had become a tired and willful old lady who denied herself to callers and who lived in seclusion—except for occasional sallies into the noisy society of today—in a great house in I Street.

"I should find it hard to convince you of Harriet Lane's girlish beauty," went on the visitor, sadly. "I was affected by it—all of us plainer girls were—as though it were a part of her personality and not just mere beauty. It seemed to shine, although that isn't just what I mean either. Mary Clemmer wrote of her so sweetly that I learned her description by heart.

"Every motion was instinct with life, health, and intelligence," she said. "Her head and features were cast in noble mold, and her form, which at rest had something of the massive majesty of a marble pillar, in motion was instinctive with power and grace.

"Wasn't that beautiful? But it doesn't half describe Harriet Lane."

And one who heard the gentle-voiced old lady recalled steadily a sight he had had the day before—a sight of an old woman walking heavily down a fine staircase, leaning hard on the banister and breathing when she reached the foot of the stair, like one who had run a race.

Harriet Lane came into the public view as the niece of James Buchanan. As long as her distinguished and courtly uncle walked in the paths of government Harriet Lane walked beside him, and both were conspicuous. Yet uncle and niece were alike isolated, and all the social glory of conspicuous service in Congress, life in St. Petersburg as the representative of the United States, dignified position as Secretary of State, official attendance on the girl Queen of England, and four years of brilliant entertainment at the White House left them still isolated and alone.

Mr. Buchanan came to Washington in 1830 as the choice of a Federalist constituency in Pennsylvania. He was then only twenty-nine years of age. In 1832 he voted to elect Andrew Jackson to the Presidency, and later became the old stalwart's staunch defender, and in three years he was rewarded by appointment as "ambassador"—the words of reference all give it so—to Russia. He was still remarkably young when elected to the Senate in 1835, and when he left it in 1845 he was still young to serve as Polk's Secretary of State. With the inauguration of "Rough and Ready" Taylor in 1849 Buchanan, who had by this time ceased to be prominent, lived four years of masterly inactivity. His friends came into power again in 1853, and Franklin Pierce appointed him minister to the Court of St. James. It was while serving his country in the ornamental and picturesque role of an envoy that his party associates chose him for their national candidate and elected him into the White House. There his sun set, and his career contracted to a decidedly weak end.

Buchanan's Personal Charm. His social tact and his personal charm seem to have been unerring. Mrs. Fremont, who saw everything with clear eyes, describes him as "tall and of fine presence, and quite a type of Saxon coloring and freshness." He was always a student and an idealist. His

courtesy must have been inborn. Many who knew him commented on his imperturbable dignity. He had the face of an aristocrat. Finally, it was not the least of his attributes in feminine eyes that even when he first came to Congress and first made his way up leafy Capitol Hill—"the chapter of sentiment had already closed for him."

"There was nothing in Buchanan's appearance," says one historian, "nor in his attitude toward life in general that suggested the tragic episode of his youth. It is only in retrospect that we realize the glamour it cast over his subsequent years. Nature reacts through various channels, and in him she sought her outlet in an unabating mental activity. He was a student all his life."

The rising young bachelor widened his life to include his beautiful niece soon after he entered the Senate in 1845. He had taken a house in F Street, on the site of what is now the Adams Building, a house which John Quincy Adams had occupied for many years. There he studied and wrote and buried himself deep in the famous impeachment of Judge Peck, in the fight against Calhoun, in the acquisition of Texas, in the establishment of a national, independent treasury, and last—man of intellect as he was—in a serious attempt to dispose of the slavery question by suppressing discussion of it in Congress.

A Breath of Mountain Air. His sister Jane, and her husband, Elliot Lane, died while Buchanan was thus occupied, and Harriet, the youngest of six children, became an orphan in her tenth year. Apparently it was her choice exclusively that she should attach herself to her uncle. Buchanan was somewhat abashed, but deeply touched by the regard of his little kin-woman. He did not flinch. On the contrary he opened to her at once his roomy, formal brick house in Lancaster, and set up his niece in it as its prospective mistress and its greatest treasure.

"She came into Buchanan's life," writes one who loved Harriet Lane, "like a breath of wind from the mountain side, fresh, sweet, and wild. Buchanan was distressed, his bachelor habit was in confusion. He was a man of theories and ideals. This bit of youthful life that had elected to invade the quiet of his ways was a being of impulse, however, generous, health and spirits, a sense of his superiority, road-making in Washington then, and her carriage was, no doubt, often buried in dust and stuck in mud; and if the weather was clear her journey was frequently enlivened by scattering fowls, bellicose goats, barking dogs, and squealing pigs.

Associated With Great Minds. It was in the year which followed her graduation from the convent that she and her uncle grew really to know each other. Mr. Buchanan, still Secretary of State, kept her by his side constantly, introduced her always to his distinguished guests, led her to talk with everybody, and permitted her to grow, day by day, to possess him entirely. We have a glimpse of her in those days in the testimony of admiring

critics. "She had a warmth of coloring," says one, "that further bore out the idea of abundant health. Her hair was of a golden-brown hue, and worn always with that absolute simplicity which best became her well-shaped head. Her eyes were of a deep violet, and her mouth, was faultlessly beautiful, with its full red lips and upward curve." Another speaks of her as being "as discreet as she was beautiful." Even as a little child she had inspired in Buchanan a reverence for her absolute truthfulness. "She never told a lie," he said of her once. "She had a soul above deceit or fraud. She was too proud for it."



THE SITE OF SECRETARY BUCHANAN'S HOUSE.

The First Washington Home of the Beautiful Harriet Lane—F St. Near 14th.

With Zachary Taylor's election came four years of retirement spent at the Lancaster home, Wheatland. But this rest of reading the newspapers, studying statecraft, and learning to serve her uncle was more than atoned for by a subsequent journey to England.

The little girl who had been plunged from a convent into the deepest political discussions among the greatest minds of a great age, now had her vista widened still further. She grew to know Macaulay, Lord Brougham, Lord Holland, Lord John Russell, Disraeli, Guizot, and representative men from all over the world. Without the formality of being presented to the Queen, she was hidden to one of her majesty's balls. Unmarried and unhelped by any official station, she was ranked by the Queen with the wives of the other ministers.

A Fleeting Matrimonial Prize. But all this was nothing when compared with her personal triumphs. In England, as in America, her fame was prodigious. When Minister Buchanan was decorated a doctor of civil laws at Oxford with Lord Tenynson, the American niece was cheered ten times more tumultuously than either of the two dignitaries. "She was a most distinguished young person," said an observer, "whom more than one Englishman would have given his head to marry."

Her reputation spread to Paris. Once when visiting friends in the French capital the people followed her about the streets, expressing their admiration in the most open way. Finally came her uncle's nomination to the Presidency, and the campaign which elected him did as much to fix her reputation as that of the nominee.

Brilliance and Sorrow. Overtaken the four years these two spent in the White House were years of joy and success. Actually they were years of sorrow and failure. The President saw his influence slip through his fingers. Like Seward, four years later, he saw himself decrease

from leader of his party to a post among its humblest followers. His heart was bound up in the South and the principle it was then expounding, that slavery was altogether a local issue, and that the North could not disturb it; yet when he made way for Lincoln slavery had become a national fire, and the nation was sweeping hotly about to destroy it. Finally, and most trying of all for a man of his spirit, his public career came to an end darkened by just suspicions that he had permitted enemies of the nation to assemble the nation's resources for an attack upon its integrity. The 4th of March which saw him leave the White House was a bitter day for James Buchanan.

Harriet Lane's sorrow was the loss of her only sister, Mrs. George W. Baker. Except for her uncle she was alone in the world. She, too, felt the significance of the events which bore so heavily on the President. But her woman's courage enabled her to ride through it all. At the inaugural ball she was the chief ornament—a noble, smiling, gracious figure clad in the simplicity of a white dress, flower trimmed and ornamented by a necklace of pearls.

An Ideal Republican Court. The Executive Mansion of the Buchanan Administration was socially repellent. "The White House," wrote Jefferson Davis—it is not singular this testimony came from this source—"under the Administration of Buchanan approached more nearly to my idea of a republican court than the President's house had ever done before, or since the days of Washington." The Washington public never tired of the picture of the grave and chivalrous bachelor-President attended by his beautiful and lovely niece. Her beauty was not her only charm. Sorrow, observation of a wide field, and contact with the world in many phases, had given her a mature kindness which softened everything she did. So when the Prince of Wales came to America, he who is now Edward VII, he went away from Washington much impressed—not by the Government or the governors alone—but by the personality of a young woman who, ranked with the grande dames of his own ancient country.

Buchanan and his niece found shelter from the storm of the war in Wheatland. Four years after that struggle ended the former died there in his old home, but not before he had seen the niece he loved so well married to a man of whom he approved heartily—Henry Elliott Johnston, a banker of Baltimore.

The two passed their honeymoon in Cuba, the island Buchanan had fought so hard to annex. Then they divided their time between Baltimore and Lancaster. Mrs. Johnston having inherited Wheatland with the greater part of Mr. Buchanan's other possessions. Two

children were born to them, James Buchanan Johnston and Henry Elliott Johnston. But all this did not make lasting happiness; for in a few years husband and children died, all three, and Harriet Lane was left alone.

The Scene of Her Greatest Glory. A strange inclination of mind brought the sorrowful, dejected old woman back to the scene of her greatest glory. Her means were large and

she was able to obtain a home here which should conform with her old station and her present taste. Accordingly, she bought an impressive, quiet-looking house in I Street, fitted it with the dignified heavy walnut furniture she had known all her life at Wheatland, and decorated it with the trophies of a more notable career as a belle than any other woman of her day could boast. It was a fine home—aristocratic and characteristic to the last; and to

the last its mistress reflected the rare personal distinction which gave social character to her uncle's long service in public office. But at the end, when death relieved her alike from the loneliness of her old age and the haunting memory of those to whom she had given her life, the Harriet Lane who had come into the Buchanan life like a breath of wind from the mountain side had become, even in her own brave heart, a broken and unhappy old woman.

WISE GOVERNMENT EXPERTS ARE STUDYING COOKING

Showing How Wasteful Are the Ordinary Methods of Housewives.

THE fathers of the Republic, who built its simple foundations, would be rather amazed, it is likely, if they could behold the elaborate superstructure that has been reared by their successors in office and power.

Not the least of their consternations would result from the inspection by officers of the Government, engaged in constructing an eager and attractive public in the proper methods of boiling steaks and baking bread. Yet these are just the problems to which much of the energy of the Department of Agriculture is being directed at this time.

Placed of Study. Dietary studies are being conducted at stations throughout the country, including Middletown, Conn., Champaign, Ill., and other places and the relative values of different feeding stuffs and methods of feeding farming animals for market purposes have been studied.

A smaller, but no less important, number have studied problems relative to the important subject of meals, their cooking and place in the everyday diet of the great American people. Some of the most broadly illustrative experiments are being conducted at Champaign, in co-operation with the Department of Agriculture, by the chemists of the University of Illinois. It is here that the test is being applied of "ordinary household methods of cooking meats with that which obtains in a large institution, housing say two to four thousand persons.

Ordinary Methods Wasteful. Here it has been shown how wantonly wasteful and extravagant the ordinary methods are and the Government is undertaking to supply correct information on the subject of cookery. Its officials disclaim any purpose, however, to set themselves up as rivals of the publications devoted to culinary subjects. They are content to let these occupy their chosen field unchallenged and unopposed. However, those who seek to know the cooking truth may now know where to apply.

In an official report to the Secretary of Agriculture, Hon. James Wilson, Prof. A. C. True, director of the office of experiment stations, says: "I have the honor to transmit herewith the report of investigations conducted by Prof. H. S. Grindley, associate professor of chemistry in the college of science, of the University of Illinois, and Timothy Moloney, who was at the time an assistant in chemistry at the same institution, the work being conducted under the general supervision of Prof. Atwater, chief of nutrition investigations, in accordance with instructions given by the director of this office.

Always Accurate Data. In this, as in Prof. Grindley's earlier work," says Director True, "the object has been to secure accurate data regarding the changes which take place in meat when cooked by the ordinary household methods, and also the effects of cooking upon nutritive value."

Dr. True says that the investigations have received material aid from the department of animal industry of the Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station, and from the department of household science and the department of chemistry of the University of Illinois. Over at the Department of Agricul-

ture there is nothing more interesting to be found than the tabulation and restatement of facts elicited by the investigations of the bureau of cookery.

One can picture these gray-haired scientists, beading over a griddle or an oven, white-aproned and paper-capped, in the earnest and zealous pursuit of the secrets of this new branch of knowledge. New, that is, to them, for tradition has it that the cooks of the olden times thought they possessed some information on the subject, and there is even a legend as to "the pies that mother used to make."

Science Shatters Idols. Science, however, is proverbially an iconoclast, and many of the beliefs that youth was wont to cherish, including William Tell and his band of braves, and his boy and his apple, have died under its scalping knife.

Sitting in his office on the second floor of the building of the Department of Agriculture, Dr. True produced some of the latest bulletins from the nutrition investigators, including W. O. Atwater, Ph.D., chief of nutrition investigation, at Middletown, Conn.; C. F. Langworthy, Ph.D., editor and expert on foods and animal products, and C. D. Woods, B. S., special agent at Orono, Me.

One of the things to which the department has paid special attention is the changes due to different methods of analysis such as is only possible by the use of the severe methods adopted by these department's experts, that when bread is toasted at 150 degrees Centigrade, it loses only a little more weight than when heated at 100 degrees, although when kept at the lower temperature for an hour a slice of bread one-half of an inch thick is converted into a light-yellow toast.

Good for Dyspeptics. According to the latest official reports of Secretary Wilson's department, such toast is commonly thought to be very suitable for persons whose digestive apparatus is not as strong as it might be. It is also found by the investigator for the department that bread toasted at 150 degrees Centigrade, does not contain much more soluble albuminoids than raw bread.

In thoroughly toasted bread the change in starch into soluble compounds and the sterilization are factors which may be sufficient to account for the increased digestibility noted in the experiments and also for the commonly observed fact that such toast is more readily digested by invalids than bread. According to Prof. Hilgard the case is otherwise with toast made by the ordinary household methods.

In the experiments conducted at the University of Illinois in the cooking of meats, the beef rib roast was chosen as the most satisfactory cut. The graybeards studied the effects of varying temperatures of roasting, length of cooking period, form and size of the roasting pan and kindred topics. A specially designed oven was used, although for purposes of comparison a market oven, in which the cooking is continued at a moderate heat for a long period was also employed. The experts concluded that meat should be subjected to a degree of heat, which will sear the outside of the roast, so that the juices may be retained, but they differ greatly as to the temperature and time in which this result may be accomplished. It is also noted that the Department of Agriculture is still considering the possibility of using drippings, the loss of weight in boiling, and kindred problems of like importance. Meanwhile, housewives hunt the portions of the department, waiting for the bulletins to come out.

Making of Toast a Fine Art, to Say Nothing of Cooking Meat.

tal loss in weight, largely due to the evaporation of water, was about one-eighth of the total weight of the roast. Housewives will be glad to learn that when meat is baked for a short time at a very high temperature the outside layer is likely to be overdone and the inside too rare to be used.

Dr. True says that as near as he can learn from the reports of the experts, "if browned at the end of the process the outside became tough and seemed to have the characteristics of overcooked albuminoid."

Every woman who has read her cook book knows there is a given rule, to the effect that meat should be roasted fifteen minutes for each pound and fifteen minutes for the oven. The experts have learned, though, that thirteen minutes a pound and thirteen minutes for the oven is amply sufficient for a rare roast; fifteen minutes to the pound and fifteen minutes for the oven brings out a medium-done roast, and if a well-done joint is desired twenty minutes to the pound and twenty minutes for the oven must be allotted.

Basted Meat Rare. At one of the conferences the effect of basting was solemnly considered, and as a result of it the glad tidings were spread abroad that when cooked under otherwise identical conditions basted meat was always rarer than meat that had failed of this opportunity.

Even the hardware merchant will be interested in some of the facts brought out in the tests. The shape, size, and character of the cooking utensils have been taken into account, and valuable contributions to the bibliography of this special subject have been made in the form of official reports.

"In a comparison of an oval, convex pan, with opened and closed flat, rectangular pans," says one of the reports, "it was found that so far as total losses in weight were concerned the shape and size of the pan did not seem to be of grave importance. So far as color and, consequently, the flavor of the drippings were concerned, the area of the pan and its shape were important, the pan with the smaller area giving the lighter-colored drippings."

The great point at which all of these investigations have been directed is to arrive at the total loss of weight in cooking, and its relation to the cost of raw meat and the finished kitchen product, ready for the table.

An Increase in Cost. The results of twenty-one tests have been tabulated; the total weight of meat before roasting was 62 pounds, and after being cooked the weight was 52.55 pounds, showing a loss of about one-sixth. It is announced that the average cost of the cooked meat was 12 cents a pound, an increase of 4 cents a pound over the original cost. This ought to settle it. It is understood, though, that the Department of Agriculture is still considering the possibility of using drippings, the loss of weight in boiling, and kindred problems of like importance. Meanwhile, housewives hunt the portions of the department, waiting for the bulletins to come out.