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The Female Lobby.

Life in Washington.

BY DONN PIATT.

At any time during the session of Congress one ante room to the Senate Chamber is filled with females gathered in groups about the learned law-makers, or attracting them singly. Some of them are wives or daughters of the Senators, some are strangers visiting the capitol; but the majority is made up of women pressing claims before Congress.

To get a better look at these feminine agents, one must visit the lobby to the rear of the Speaker's chair in the House of Representatives. It is a long low corridor under the reporter's gallery, finished and furnished in the same florid style peculiar to the entire building. On the same side are doors opening to the hall of the House, on the other the Speaker's private room, originally intended for the families of the members, but of late so invaded and occupied by the female lobby, that families of members shun the place, and the Speaker himself is driven to the Clerk's office when he wishes to see a friend or write a note.

Here we find the female lobby in all its glory. It appears clad in all the tints of the rainbow and fairly dazzles one with its display of jewelry. Some of this is cheap, but most of it is really costly. To the man of the world the dress is a shade too vulgar and the manner slightly loud and coarse. Some are young and fresh, but the majority are on the wrong side of forty, with a hard look about their faces, and lines that are tracks of tried feelings past disappointments.

The average Congressman is not a man of the world. He marries before he achieves greatness, and his knowledge of life is limited to a very primitive social condition, where he encountered and wed the plain, homely little woman who shares with his elevation without adding much to its dignity or grace. When such a man comes within reach of the more ordinary specimens of these legislative Deilahs, he is somewhat intoxicated by their attentions and votes away vast domains, subsidies or huge monopolies, under the influence of two tender eyes or the confidential tap of a saundie-wood fan. The study of the average Congressman from a social, or, indeed, any point of view, is not only of interest, but important, if we wish to understand and appreciate the working of our free institutions. Taken from the common walks of life, he finds himself translated out of a little office where poverty waits on business, and an humble home, barely possessed of the ordinary comforts of life, to the gorgeous magnificence of a marble palace—gorgeous beyond his wildest dreams. As he approaches its many entrances, obsequious servants bend before him and the magic doors swing on easy hinges, as if conscious of his rights and privileges; nimble pages obey his slightest wish and anticipate his needs. His mail matter suddenly swells to an enormous extent. The average Congressman appreciates the mail matter. It costs him nothing and indicates his greatness. In the committee room where his delegated body reposes in a velvet cushioned chair, under ceilings where gorgeous frescoes weary the eye, he has a realizing greatness. This is not diminished when the committee, after half an hour's heavy labor on public affairs, draws the bottle from a hidden recess of the heavily curved

walnut closets, a bottle with which to refresh their gigantic minds.

The average Congressman revels in stationery. The man who never read a book with a taste for reading, and regarded pen, ink and paper as punishments, suddenly wakens to a thirst for stationery. He seizes on hot-pressed satin surface, gilt edge, French, English and Yankee paper! How he does eye and grasp the snowy envelopes neatly packed and put at his disposal! He makes a requisition for his stationery in the house, and sends it to his boarding house to astonish his wife. In the committee room the clerk, if he is an amiable man, draws other and further stationery for him.

Much depends upon this. Once the Committee on Commerce was honored by my presence as a clerk to the same. Some days after I was duly installed the messenger entered the committee room laden with stationery, in response to my requisition.

"Here Colonel," said the obliging messenger, "lock this up and don't let the Congressmen have any, they waste it so."

But it is when the average Congressman, first comes in contact with the female lobby, that he realizes his translation. These are to him, refined, fascinating and beautiful creatures. His poor little homely wife fades into naught. His life seems to have been barren until then—and now he regrets the early marriage that shuts him out from a union with one of these elegant women!

There are two sorts of processes by which fraudulent legislation is perfected. One is called "ring," which means a combination of rogues for some purpose; the other is called the "lobby," and designates agents living here, and employed by rings and individuals to push their evil schemes through Congress.

I have made the acquaintance of several specimens of those two sorts of jackals, and propose photographing them some day to enlighten my readers as to the nature of this branch of our National Legislature, that costs the people more than the legitimate law-making power, the judiciary and the executive.

I was turning this over in my mind during the late session while I sat on the sofa in the Cave of the Winds, listening to the blowing to and fro about me, when I happened to cast my eyes to the ladies' gallery above, and out of the gloom saw a memory come in the shape of a fair face. These galleries were not constructed with an eye to effect, so far as female loveliness is concerned, as the dim light from above gives a ghastly paleness that not only destroys the beauty but seriously damages the expression. Under the circumstances the face failed to locate itself, and my memory was dim and uncertain as the flashes of a former life that come to us at times between sleeping and waking.

I was so disturbed and haunted by this memory, that I left my seat and sauntered into the gallery, seating myself near my fair friend, and without rudely staring I found my mind gradually gathering up the disjointed fragments of the past, until the fair face was framed in and located. It was a very sweet face, not so young as it was, but with a prevailing expression of childlike innocence. Add to this a manner of great refinement, set off and adorned in the extreme of the fashion, but subdued to the best taste and most artistic harmonizing of colors, and I had an old acquaintance before me. Although I looked my fair friend in the face, I saw that she had either forgotten me or was not disposed to renew the acquaintance. She was talking in a quiet, easy manner to a well known member of Congress, and I considerably withdrew as if I had been looking in the face of an utter stranger, instead of one well known in times gone by. An hour afterwards I happened to be on the entrance to the Senate Chamber, where the multitude of marble steps seemed to run out and flow down, when my fair friend came by, accompanied by her Congressional escort, late of the gallery, and almost brushed me with her dress—the two descended. I saw a neat private carriage, drawn by a handsome pair of bays, and driven by a coachman in livery, drive up.

My friend of the law making power helped the lady in with a bow; the door swung to with a bang, and the fair one drove away, while the Solon came up the steps, humming a tune and snapping his fingers, as if especially pleased with himself. Having a speaking acquaintance, I begged pardon for my curiosity, and asked Solon the name of his friend.

"Mrs. —, of New York," was the quiet response.

The whole of these surroundings were apparently so lifelong and respectable, and so entirely different from those that I believed formerly hedged in the lady, that I was in doubt. But no; the longer I thought upon the matter, the more I felt satisfied of the identity. And the remembrance was singular. While detained in Washington during the war, awaiting orders, I was invited by a brother officer to a wine supper. The people giving the entertainment were strangers, but taking my friends word, I went. I was particularly struck with two of the guests—one a slender youth with large, dark eyes, and a broad, thoughtful forehead, whom I took for an Italian or a Frenchman—his name has since taken its place upon the roll of immortality; pinned there by the most fearful crime ever committed—the other a beautiful woman of twenty, in fact, but much younger in appearance. I found this young lady exceedingly charming, as she was not only lovely in person, but lively in mind.

We broke up at a late hour of the night, or rather at an early hour of the morning, and being ordered away a few days after the wine supper and merry people there assembled, soon passed from mind in the hurried eventful life of the camp. They were destined to return. Could the future have been anticipated, death would have sat at our board that night, and phantom visions of dreadful events dimmed the glittering lights, and settled in horrible gloom on the countenances of the assembled guests.

To one death would have said: "I will claim you at Chancellorsville," to another: "We will meet at night and I will save you from the gallows."

Of that little assembly in the supper room, two only survive—I and another.

While we were here in command at Baltimore, and after Col. Fish got into his difficulty with Baker, so that I had for a time immediate control of the Provost Marshall's office, I received a card at the Eutaw House, from a lady waiting to see me in the parlor. Repairing to the reception room I found my fair friend of the wine supper at Washington. So far as her beauty went she remained the same, but her wardrobe evinced straightened circumstances, of poverty. She gave me a long account of her troubles, and wound up by offering to go to Richmond in the employ of the government, and return with all the information she could gather up for the war department, in Washington. I at once engaged her, but did not send so suspicious looking an agent into the enemy's country until after I had given her a fair trial in Baltimore. She proved the most adroit, cunning, self possessed detective that I ever saw or read of. She afterwards made two successful trips to Richmond, returning with valuable information, although Mr. Stanton had no question but that she took to the Confederates as much as she brought away.

I left the army, and saw and heard no more of my pretty little detective until the day I met her in the ladies' gallery so elegantly gotten up and surrounded. That is, if she really were the same. All doubt on this subject was removed by a note I received the next day, inviting me to an interview at the fair woman's lodgings. I found her surrounded with elegant upholstery, and yet more fascinating in the delicate morning robe that so adorns a beautiful woman by the concealed effort to adorn. A tall, square built, iron gray man of an intensely respectable appearance was introduced as her husband, and as long as he remained no allusion was made however to the past, other than the few words of introduction as an old and valued friend. Soon as he left, however, she turned and said:

"How kind of you not to recognize me yesterday. My poor heart was in my mouth when I saw you approach. But you have such tact—you have such a kind heart; I was relieved in a moment when I saw that you started as if only attracted by my charms."

"Why, wouldn't your husband put up with the part you are, I suppose, concealing from him?"

"My husband!"—and she gave a silvery little laugh—"My husband, that fellow! Why he isn't my husband. But if the Hon.—you saw me with yesterday, were to suspect for a moment, I would be ruined."

"Come now, this is interesting; tell me all about it. What little game are you up to? Believe me, I won't betray you."

"That's clever; you never have, and I don't add to risk by telling you. Well, I am no longer a detective, a spy; I am a lobby agent. It is my business to persuade

honorable members to vote for my bill."

"What is your bill?"

"The one I am employed to worry through."

"Well, does it require a sham husband, a handsome carriage, and all this sort of thing to set up a lobby agent?"

"Certainly. Without a husband I would not be respectable; without a carriage and all this evidence of wealth I could not be attractive. It pays, however. I could retire now on a hundred thousand. But I am horribly ambitious; I want a million only think of it, I must have a million. I have sold myself for money and I want a big price."

"And do none of the honorable representatives know who you are?"

"Why, you goose! I thought you knew better than that. Why, the ring always reaches into the House and Senate, and some of our directors are the most respectable men in Congress. There is one, the most benevolent, pious, philanthropic individual in the world. He is so intensely pious that he never speaks to me; nevertheless he pays me heavily. There is another most respectable gentleman, who bows to me profoundly in the gallery and on the avenue, and presents me to his family with a lofty air, who would look at me with intense astonishment if I were to thank them for my clothes, carriages and servants. Yet he contributes."

"Why, this is so damnable I can scarcely credit—"

"Yes, it is very wicked, and I'd rather you wouldn't believe it. But after the schooling you gave me in deceiving, you ought not to wonder."

"You mean that for a hit. You forget that that service was in behalf of your beloved country, and this—"

"But do you mean to say that men in high position connive at this wickedness?"

"Look around you; see the enormous fortunes realized by officials, and you will see that mine is not the only carriage rolling about Washington that is a fraud, and I am but among the host of the wicked. You are too much a man of the world Col. to be astonished at finding a good deal of sanctimonious respectability covering rascality. It is the cheapest cloak to get and the easiest to wear."

"And how do you influence these Solons?"

"Sometimes one way, sometimes another; but always in being very quiet and exclusive. The men bought cheaply are not worth buying. My business is among the higher sort, that will not stoop to common carriages, and carry with them great moral character that not only covers themselves but all the little rogues that vote with them."

"And do you often fail?"

"Sometimes; not often, for my mission is to capture the leaders. The lesser lights are left to coarser means. Some surrender to delicious little suppers, others to persuasion, others again to love. There is General —, proud, sensitive and suspicious, he comes to me with all his griefs and I listen to them. You'd be astonished to know how little the tongue and the ear have to do with this business. Then there is Mr. —, who began life with a homely, unrefined wife, and is now ashamed of her. Poor man! he is really in love with me."

"And will all the money you get pay for the degradation you suffer in return? You are a woman of fine intellect, an intellect that approaches genius. You could command admiration, respect, wealth, by devoting your gifts to an honorable pursuit."

Her face flushed for a moment, and then starting to her feet and pacing the floor in some excitement, she exclaimed:

"I learned my power when it was too late. But you are the last man to upbraid me. Do you know when I discovered my powers as an actress? I will tell you. Under your tuition while in Baltimore, I came to you starving and you sent me into private families to worm out their secrets and betray their intentions."

"There you go again. That was the service of your country, and the people possessed of these secrets were our enemies."

"What was the difference, so far as my character went? But I do not regret—I have nothing to regret. I have no friends, no relatives, no country. I never knew a man who did not either insult me or cheat me; I never knew a man who had not a stony heart and claws like a cat. I hate them all. They would hunt me down, and so I hunt them down when I can."

"But you have made money enough, why not leave this horrible business, and from this out try and possess your soul in

peace. You are young yet, and can have many years of happiness before you."

"You want me to desist," she said, interrupting me. "I have two good reasons for going on. It is not avarice, although having sold myself to the devil, I am right in getting the best price for my poor soul. But let me show you my two reasons for going on."

She walked to an arched recess, and, pulling aside a heavy curtain, showed me, playing on the floor, two beautiful children.

"There," she continued dropping the curtains, "there are my two reasons. I cannot give my children a good name but I will give them that which is more precious than a good name in this mean wicked world of ours. I will give them wealth and I will try to teach them to be anything on earth but what their unfortunate mother has been, so that if you betray me you betray them. I left detective business when I left Baltimore. I try moral suasion now. And so I took my leave, and I give this imperfect sketch of the way laws are made through the lobby, in our beloved Capital."

The Seven Wonders.

The "seven wonders," of the world are among the traditions of childhood, and yet it is a remarkable fact that ninety-nine persons out of one hundred who might be asked the question could not name them. They are the Pyramids—the mystery of the past—the enigma of the present—and the enduring for the future ages of this world. The temple, the walls and hanging gardens of Babylon, the most celebrated city of Assyria, and the residence of the kings of that country after the destruction of Nineveh. The Chryselephantine statue of Jupiter Olympus, the most renowned work of Phidias, the illustrious artists of Greece. The statue was formed of gold, and was sitting on a throne almost touching the summit of the temple, which was seventy feet high. The Temple of Diana at Ephesus, which was two hundred and twenty years in building, and which was four hundred and twenty-five feet in length and two hundred and twenty in breadth, and supported by one hundred and twenty seven marble columns of the Ionic order, sixty feet high. The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, erected in the memory of Mausolus, the King of Caria by his wife Artemesia B. C. three hundred and fifty-three. The Pharos at Alexandria, a lighthouse erected by Ptolemy Soter at the entrance of the harbor. It was four hundred and sixty feet high, and could be seen at a distance of one hundred miles. Upon it were inscribed, "King Ptolemy, to the gods, the saviours, for the benefit of sailors." Lastly the Colossus at Rhodes, a brazen image of Apollo, one hundred and five Grecian feet in height, which was to be located at the entrance of one of the harbors of the city of Rhodes.

The Salt Works of Southwestern Virginia.

The somewhat famous salt-works of Southwestern Virginia have a singular history. Where they are located was once a vast swamp, noisome, slimy, and dangerous. Deers, hogs, and cattle would often be found dead there. Vapors continually arose from the sodden ground. So lonely was it that it got the reputation of being haunted, and when William Crabtree, a hunter; settled upon it and claimed it, he found no one to dispute his right. From his heirs a certain William King, suspecting its value as a salt-field, from various indications, bought it for a rifle and a pony. He opened it, and cleared it, and dug his wells. It was a profitable business, and rapidly increased. During the war these works were the principal dependence of the Confederacy for salt. Over a thousand covered wagons waited at one time to load. They conveyed the salt for hundreds of miles into the interior. After several attempts the federal troops demolished the works, but never held them for any length of time. The company now have six furnaces, and make 3,400 bushels of salt a day.

A very singular property of ice is shown by placing a wire across a mass of that substance and weighting it so that it will cut its way through rapidly. The ice will reunite behind the wire and can be as easily cut at any other point as where the wire went through. A Scotch experimenter has also found that a mass of ice placed on wire gauze and subjected to slight pressure, will pass through the gauze and reappear on the other side in a solid mass of the same shape and nearly the same weight as before.

A young lady who thought she could make her voice clear by straining it made a great mistake.