

Laura C. Holloway



*The Ladies
of the White House;
Or, in the Home
of the Presidents*

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PREFACE.

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The Ladies of the White House have had no biographers. The custom of the Republic, which relegates back to private life those who have served it, has made it difficult to gather much of stirring interest concerning the women who have made the social history of the different administrations. From privacy they came, to privacy they were returned, and the world took little cognizance of them beyond noting the entertainments they gave, and the success that attended their dinners and receptions.

In the historical works of the age—even in the biographies of the Presidents themselves—not much has been said of women, who, for the most part, were powerful adjuncts to their popularity, and exerted great influence over their lives. The most that has been written of them heretofore were descriptions in the daily papers of the appearance of the lady of the White House on some public occasion, and with this the world has been content until now. We have had a hundred years of domestic honor in the White House—a hundred years which has added much to the glory of the country abroad, and it is but fitting that women, who have held the highest social and semi-official position in the nation, should be made historic subjects. No better time than the present could be found for filling this serious gap in general American history. The moral influence that has been exerted by the untarnished reputations and high social qualities of the women who have successively filled the position of Hostess of the Presidents' House,

cannot be estimated. Without the effective and intelligent aid they rendered, no administration would have been satisfactory; and though the political historian may ignore such service, the right-thinking, honorable men or women of this country have a higher appreciation of the services rendered by these ladies, who were the power behind the throne, equal in social influence to the throne itself, and a historical work bearing upon their lives is a valuable contribution to the nation's official history.

Such a one is now offered to the people of this country. It is a complete work, comprising a biographical sketch of every President's wife and hostess of the Executive Mansion from Mrs. Washington down to Mrs. Garfield.

The information contained in the volume has never been compiled in any other form, and there are many historical facts of a most interesting nature for the first time presented to the public. The book contains the portraits of the wives of the Presidents, and of the ladies who presided over the Mansion during the administrations of unmarried Presidents. At a time when the women of this country are commanding the attention of the civilized world by reason of their higher education, superior mental attributes, and exalted social status, such a book is of exceptional value.

The mechanical execution of the work will commend itself to all lovers of excellence in book-making. Nothing has been left undone that would make it worthy of the ladies whose records it contains. The unusual attractions of the theme, the style in which it is published, and the place in the country's history which such a book fills, conspire to render it a work which the public and private libraries of this

country cannot afford to be without; they cannot be called complete without a copy of the “Ladies of the White House.”

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