

# Increasing Intensity of Social Rivalries at Capital



MRS. THOMAS F. WALSH, WIFE OF THE COLORADO MILLIONAIRE.



MRS. HANNA, WIFE OF THE SENATOR FROM OHIO.



MRS. REGINALD DEKOVEN, WIFE OF THE COMPOSER.

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**T**HE merry social war at the national capital is rapidly resolving itself into a civil conflict. It no longer merely presents the spectacle, familiar in other cities, of rival social queens competing for the position of supremacy, although this phase of the matter is not lacking, to be sure. But, underlying and influencing all the individual campaigns for popularity and transcending them in importance is the general contest between the people in official life and as a body and the coterie of wealthy residents of the city on the Potomac, sometimes denominated as the "smart set."

This warfare, of which the country at large already has some inkling, is the result of latter day conditions at the American seat of government. In the early days of the republic when Washington was so unattractive that the nation's rulers and their families, who were compelled to reside there, cordially detested it and fled immediately after the adjournment of congress in the spring, the social circle was not divided into two great rival factions. The present genteel struggle has come about slowly through the gradual transformation of Washington into the most beautiful city in America. This and the absence of vast industrial activities make it an ideal city of leisure and the most attractive place of residence on the continent. It is not surprising that there has grown up a colony of wealthy folk, whose social ambitions have increased with each new recruit added to the fold.

## About the Two Sets.

There are not less than 2,000 persons in the official set, which means that there are that number of individuals directly or indirectly connected with the political life of the capital who are sufficiently prominent to entitle them to invitations to a certain number of social functions. In the list is embraced everybody from the president, senators, diplomats and members of the supreme court, together with the women of their households, to the families of assistant secretaries and bureau chiefs of the various government departments, and the army and navy officers. The list does not stop with the immediate members of the families even; there are not a few people in public life at Washington to pry open the social gates for nieces, cousins and friends.

The members of the fashionable residential circle are not so numerous, possibly, as their opponents. Exclusiveness is the pride of this elite contingent. However, this residential set is a house divided against itself as to whether wealth or lineage shall constitute the password for admission. There are a number of millionaires—some of whom have made their money too rapidly to satisfy the social arbiters at home—who have come to Washington to idle. While these affect a certain exclusiveness, they



COUNTESS MARGUERITE CUSINI.

are yet inclined to admit to the social fortress any possessor of a large bank account who is willing to deplete it by lavish entertaining, unless mayhap the applicant be one of those who has refused to let down the bars for the "newly rich" at a former place of residence. Such a one generally encounters the opposition of some one on the inside who is thirsting for revenge. On the other hand, there are living in Washington a number of old Virginia and Maryland families who are unwilling to accept this new standard of social eligibility, and in self-defense have grown clannish and ultra-exclusive.

## The Antagonism is Growing.

The antagonism between the two general divisions of Washington society, which, despite the covering of good breeding and social tact, is growing in bitterness, is due primarily to the differences in tastes and sources of power, and to the exalted opinion each set holds with regard to its own claims of superiority. The official contingent has the advantage in some respects, but must needs be chary of those manifestations of disregard for public opinion in which many of the well-to-do residents delight. It will not do for the office holders to displease the people on whose votes they are dependent to keep them in Washington.

There are bound to be certain occasions on which the official crowd has a monopoly of the social sweetmeats. This was forcibly illustrated during the recent visit of Prince Henry of Prussia, and incidentally it might be mentioned that no other one event has been provocative of so much envy and jealousy. The ambitious rich folk who had the houses and the funds wherewith to entertain the royal visitor in regal style did not get the opportunity, and indeed very few of them even enjoyed the boon

of meeting him. So, too, the people who are in Uncle Sam's official retinue have the best of it with reference to social function at the White House, to which, of course, a certain popular interest always attaches.

The reverse of this picture of the advantages of social officialdom is presented by the people who have the government positions, but lack the money to maintain them, socially speaking. The family that comes to Washington hugging the popular delusion that in official life one's social position is cut out and only awaits assumption is bound to be rudely disillusioned. The congressman who comes to the capital with nothing but his salary is likely to find that he is no larger a figure on the social horizon than is a policeman in his own home town. With wealth he may be enabled to climb to one of the pedestals in the society gallery, but without it his only chance is to wait until he has made a name in congress, a process which, under the existing rules in the house of representatives, is a sadly tedious one, necessitating a strong and unflinching political "pull" at home.

## Great Cost of Entertaining.

A host and hostess may spend \$50,000 a year in entertaining in Washington without their entertainments being exceptional in any respect or attracting even passing attention. Therefore, many a congressman who appears wealthy in the eyes of his rural constituents finds it out of the question to attempt to dispense hospitality in Washington. The members of the house of representatives who entertain other than on the most modest scale may be counted on the fingers of one hand. There are Senators Hanna, Depew, Lodge, Kean and Elkins—each of these expends several times the amount of his salary every season in entertaining, but they are few in proportion to the total membership of the upper house of congress; there are veteran wearers of the toga today who are almost solely dependent upon their salaries and who year in and year out reside in boarding houses.

For most of the assistant secretaries, or bureau chief of the executive departments, entertaining in a formal way is out of the question, since none of them receive salaries in excess of \$4,500 a year, and it is by no means an unheard of thing for a member of the cabinet to reside at a fashionable apartment house and ignore all but the most urgent social responsibilities.

Were it not for the straightened circumstances of a number of the people in political life in Washington the struggle between the official set and the residential set would be a very unequal battle. As it is a number of the people who have been given social standing by reason of their occupancy of government positions are forced either to withdraw from social life altogether or else accept the invitations of those who are willing to extend hospitality with no expectation of reciprocity, and thus the



MRS. H. C. HANSBROUGH, WIFE OF THE SENATOR FROM NORTH DAKOTA.

wealthy hostess of the residential set is always able to fill out her guest list with people of official prominence. It will thus be seen that each of the two main sections of Washington society is indirectly and heavily dependent on the other, and yet each would be only too glad to cut loose with a declaration of independence if it but dared.

## Professional Diners-Out.

This odd state of affairs has bred the diner-out, usually of the masculine gender. Despite the number of statesmen and politicians who throng Washington in season, there are many social gatherings where men are at a premium, and if he be courtly and an entertaining conversationalist, the unmarried official or the congressman who has left his wife at home need seldom be under the necessity of paying for his dinner. Even in the case of a married man, the ability to "pay back" does not figure at all. For instance, there might be cited the case of General Miles, who, this season, and particularly since he was reprimanded by the president, has been one of the most extensively entertained men in Washington. Yet the head of the army is in moderate circumstances and not in a position to return the compliment to more than a small portion of his hosts.

Even in the assurance of the more desirable of these professional diners-out the spirit of rivalry between the wealthy members of the residential set and the possessors of private fortunes in the official set constantly crops out. Thus the young official who is open for invitations is often compelled to choose between two opposing claimants, and must make the decision with due regard to future invitations on the one

hand, and possible promotions or the forfeiture of official favor on the other.

This "lionizing" of officials has resulted in the almost utter neglect by Washington society leaders of the stage favorites who are the particular prey of the "tuft hunters" in other cities. The celebrities of the musical world are somewhat more fortunate, for they are usually entertained at the home of Reginald De Koven, the operatic composer, who, with Mrs. De Koven, an authoress of some prominence, maintains a salon that is the hub of the literary and artistic set in Washington.

## Diplomatists at the Top.

The really enviable positions in Washington society are held by the members of the diplomatic corps. As in the case of senators, only a small proportion of the envoys of foreign powers are possessed of great private fortunes, but practically all the representatives of leading nations receive from their governments ample allowances for entertaining in a manner commensurate with the dignity of their positions. These masters of statecraft are necessarily among the guests bidden to every official function of any interest or importance, and they are also eagerly sought by the entertainers of the residential set, who prize above all else the cosmopolitan atmosphere which the presence of foreigners leads to a social gathering. In the shadow of the diplomatic contingent with all its glitter and gold lace, however, lurks that omnipresent bugbear, the question of precedence, in the branch of which is found the rock on which many a social ambition has been stranded.

After all, the competitive game in which the official and residential forces of the capital are pitted against each other most keenly is the highly important one of picking the "coming man." The benefits to be derived by foresight of this kind are well illustrated by the Roosevelt regime in the White House. The members of the official and residential sets who bestowed attention upon the Roosevelt family when the president was merely a civil service commissioner or assistant secretary of the navy are now reaping their reward. So, too, the young man who springs into prominence suddenly, as, for instance, did Senator Beveridge, is watched most closely by the social forecasters. Coming events cast their shadows early in the social domain at the capital. For instance, if Senator Hanna is to be the next president of the United States, society in Washington will be indicating the probabilities, while yet the politicians are moving in the dark.

In a comparison, based on the hard cash expended, the advantage is not all on the side of the newly established residential set who have selected Washington as the best place in which to scatter gold. Secretary of State Hay, who occupies the most desirable residential site at the can-

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