

**A WASHINGTON  
SYMPHONY**

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A Washington Symphony by Mrs. William Lamont Wheeler

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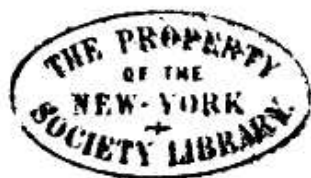
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**MRS. WILLIAM LAMONT WHEELER**

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# A WASHINGTON SYMPHONY



BY

MRS. WILLIAM LAMONT WHEELER

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TO  
WASHINGTON'S POPULAR HOSTESS  
MRS. FIELD  
WIFE OF THE EMINENT JURIST  
THIS LITTLE STORY IS INSCRIBED  
A SLIGHT TOKEN OF THE  
AUTHOR'S REGARD







## A WASHINGTON SYMPHONY

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### CHAPTER I.

THURSDAY was reception day during the season at one of the best-appointed houses in Washington, presided over by a society leader endowed with the fine tact which enables its possessor to collect the choicest materials of the social *menu*, and to so assimilate them that the tastes of all present are sure to be gratified. Elbow-room was also one of the characteristics of this *salon*, which the hostess never allowed to become so crowded as to prevent a comfortable circulation of mind and body.

It is often asserted that only mediocre persons are universally popular. Mrs. Leigh-Scott was certainly an exception to this rule, for she was very far above mediocrity, and she was one of the most popular women in Washington. A brilliant conversationalist, she was also what is perhaps more rare, a sympathetic and intelligent listener. She was, moreover, a woman

of heart as well as brains ; nothing delighted her more than to divine the trump thought in the mind of a diffident talker, and to lead up to it, thus giving an opportunity for successful play in the conversational game, and winning for herself the gratitude of flattered *amour propre*. Yet, strange to say, this popular woman had no enemies ; there was a *bonhomie*, a personal magnetism about her, which disarmed criticism and took the sharp edge from the tongue of rancor, usually so busy with the moral dissection of men and women of any prominence in a community. Mrs. Leigh-Scott was a Bohemian in her tastes and inclinations, seeking her kindred spirits without regard to their money or position. She had the courage of her opinions, but she never did startling things, and her entertainments were always in keeping with good taste and within the limits of her income ; her delicious little suppers and dinners were never beyond the culinary powers of her *cordon noir*, whose roasts, done in a tin oven before the fire, preserved the distinctive taste of the meat, and whose soups and sauces were equal in delicacy to those of any French *chef*, while the wines and cigars which were served at these artistic feasts would have met with the approbation of the gastronomic expert of New York's Four Hundred. It was therefore not surprising that invitations to such choice

entertainments were eagerly accepted by the fortunate recipients.

There were two points in the management of her household upon which Mrs. Leigh-Scott was the more particular from having been often annoyed and surprised at their non-observance by persons who ought to know better. One was the prompt response to the door-bell by man- or maid-servant in proper attire. Another was that her servants were forbidden to say "engaged" at the door, Mrs. Leigh-Scott holding that when the mistress of the house was "out" of that portion in which visitors were received, the word was strictly true. But a visitor once admitted, and the card received, under no circumstances, save those of the most urgent necessity, would this thorough-bred woman deny herself.

Mrs. Leigh-Scott had outlived the illusions of life. She had outlived happiness, but it was much to have had that greatest happiness life can afford and to be able to live in its retrospect. It kept warmth in her heart and light in the dark, expressive eyes, which contrasted so well with the clear, fine-grained skin, only washed with pure water, and with the once black hair still so abundant and so artistically powdered by time and sorrow. Her sweet smile was tinged with sadness, but the rows of nature's own teeth gleamed beneath the parted