

JAMES BUCHANAN, THE SQUIRE FROM LANCASTER

By PHILIP G. AUCHAMPAUGH, Ph.D.,
Professor of History, State Teachers College,
Duluth, Minnesota

(Continued from Vol. LV., p. 300)

THE SQUIRE AT HOME

Sketching the home life of Buchanan the task is a most pleasant one. At home he is in a favorite rôle, that of a country gentleman; a squire, if you please, with the head of a shrewd politician, and the heart of a Sir Roger de Coverley. There are numerous illustrations which prove that he thus impressed himself upon his friends and acquaintances. Mrs. Mary Black Clayton, the daughter of Judge Black, said:

Mr. Buchanan himself was polished, precise, dignified, correct from his silvery pomp down to the points of his patent leather pumps. His cabinet called him "The Squire" behind his back and they stood in much the same awe of him as boys do of a school master.¹

He was not only a "Squire" but he had about him an early Britonian atmosphere recognizable even to the English writer Mrs. Maury. Sketching Buchanan, in 1846, she wrote:

He looks like an English nobleman of thirty or forty years ago when the grave and dignified bearing of men in power was regarded as an essential attribute of their office. This aristocratic address and manner, however, are natural, not acquired, in Mr. Buchanan the result of an elevated character and urbanity of disposition, united with the long practice of office and the habit of command. . . . I have never for one instant seen the least departure from that perfect self possession which bestows such a grace upon him who can practice it, and which has ever so singular an influence on him who witnesses it. The fair and delicate, though fresh complexion of Mr. Buchanan, his eye of light blue,

¹ Clayton, Mary Black. *Reminiscences of Jeremiah Sullivan Black*, p. 106.

16 *James Buchanan, the Squire from Lancaster*

and full blooded system, attest unequivocally his Anglo-Saxon descent. In social life the Secretary of State is easy and hospitable. In conversation he is rather a listener than a speaker, but he is always in advance of the subject as it proceeds.²

Hawthorne, although no friend of Buchanan's politically, wrote a most interesting sketch of him as he looked in 1855. While Hawthorne does not use the title, the term squire could not be more accurately depicted.

The tall, large figure of Mr. ——— has a certain air of state and dignity; he carries his head in a very awkward way, but still looks like a man of long and high authority, and, with his white hair, is now quite venerable. There is certainly a lack of polish, a kind of rusticity, notwithstanding which you feel him to be a man of the world. I should think he might succeed very tolerably in English society, being heavy and sensible, cool, kindly, and good humored, with a great deal of experience of life. . . . The ambassador dined with us at Rock Park a year or two ago, and I then felt, and always feel, as if he were a man of hearty feeling and simplicity, and certainly it would be unjust to conclude otherwise merely from the fact (very suspicious, it is true) of his having been a life-long politician. . . ."³

Mr. Buchanan's polish must have been an adjustable article. To many people he was most highly polished; to others, like Hawthorne, he assumed an easy but pleasant manner which put people at their ease.

Buchanan's attachment to Southerners was, I believe, in a large measure, due to this complex. Geography had nothing to do with the matter directly. It was not that they lived in a region south of Mason-Dixon line, but what they were and the life they lived which made them attractive. Buchanan rarely visited the South. He seemed to care little about going there. Old Lancaster and its German-English neighbors were

² Maury, Mrs. Sarah Mytton. *The Statesmen of America in 1846*, pp. 12, 13. Mrs. Maury dedicated her book to Buchanan whom she says suggested the book and also another volume.

³ Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Our Old Home, and English Note-books*, II. 113, 114. Hawthorne was the warm friend of Pierce.

more pleasing to him. But he ever mingled in Southern society at the Capitol. They were the people who lived Washington's type of life, the life that was worth while. They were unusually outspoken. Buchanan was to his few intimates outspoken but was otherwise prudent. Then, too, Southerners had good manners. Buchanan disliked rude people. Southern gentlemen were refined but not effeminate. So was Buchanan. Their women were like those of the dream world in which Buchanan liked to dwell when he thought of the fair sex. At the same time the belle laughed, chatted and generally had much vitality. Buchanan liked all this. They gave fine parties. So did Buchanan. Many were Scotch-Irish. So was Buchanan and he understood, if he did not fully enjoy, the effects of Calvinism. The Southerners were often bold and audacious. Buchanan liked this fire which he hoped to mollify and use in support of his own schemes. When he could not control it he let it go, and smiling, made the best of the situation, always planning to profit by it again when opportunities offered. At the same time Buchanan was not blind to what he considered the shortcomings of his Southern friends. In a letter to a northern man in which he discussed the writing of a life of Jefferson, Buchanan said that he did not know of any Southerner who was likely to carry through such a work. He thought that they were lacking in perseverance necessary to such a laborious performance. It was in just that type of an enterprise that Buchanan showed marked ability. A Southerner did, however, complete a large three-volume life of Jefferson a few years later. It was Randall's able and appreciative work.

Most of the qualities which Buchanan thought Southerners generally lacked were the ones which he was said to have in abundance. What then could be more useful to both than friendship and an alliance?

To more than one person of his time Buchanan bore resemblance to an English gentleman. Some of Buchanan's critics, who happened to be anti-British, made the most of this. While Buchanan professed to dislike the English nobility politically, he found them socially very agreeable. Lord Lyons, British Minister in the fifties, was welcome at the White House and the ladies would have it that his lordship sought the hand of Harriet Lane. When in England Buchanan was fond of Lord Aberdeen. The two men were in many respects alike. He also had a high opinion of Lord Elgin, but he was careful to assure his friends back home that England was going through an age of mediocrity and that English law lords were inferior to the jurists of Pennsylvania.

Everything has its origin but the origin is often so remote and the record so scant that the source is often but a conjecture. Difficulties are encountered in finding the origin of this creditable desire on the part of Buchanan to live up to the ideal of being an American gentleman. The ideal was not due to any especial ancestor worship, for while he had a sensible regard for his forbears he was indifferent towards tracing his family in Scotland. Buchanan in replying to a query concerning his ancestry wrote that the subject was little esteemed in America. Hence being an American gentleman was not an inheritance; it was to be an acquirement. This was true to Jefferson's ideal, of course. It was also true to John Adams who classed himself with "the rich, well born and the able."

Probably the ideal was born of mother Buchanan's admonitions. The great Washington, so often held before his eyes in youth, was a planter and the greatest and richest gentleman in America. But then Buchanan's father, although a tradesman, was also a land owner and a man of parts in his own community where

he was known as a "Squire".⁴ Buchanan's admiration for men of the planter class and his association with the great and benign Lowndes and others is a step in the history of the development of the aim. One wonders whether Elliot T. Lane, a Southerner who was Buchanan's brother-in-law and his father's business partner was a possible factor in the building of this ideal. The evidence is, up to the present, not forthcoming. Buchanan mentions him but little. Still he was the husband of his favorite sister and father of the girl to whom he played the rôle of parent—Harriet Lane. Did he read romances such as Southern gentlemen did? He was often spoken of as a cour-tier. He sometimes referred to the wife of some friend as "Mr. ——— and his lady". That may have been merely the vogue. But his mother knew the British poets and Scott was one of them. Still he makes no great mention of Scott in his letters.

Buchanan's residence in Lancaster was by no means uncongenial to his gentlemanly ideal. Lancaster was already ancient, wealthy, proud of its local traditions, of its caste and gentility. Buchanan fulfilled the criterion of legal units to the letter and won the resultant prestige. At any rate this rôle was one of his greatest joys. It was the best suited to his calm, balanced, tolerant nature. But there was that ever burning, pushing desire for fame, the desire to make a record before the public eye and to be remembered in history that made the life of a country gentleman solely, insufficient for him. This in part explains his oft repeated yearnings for retirement and his continual return to public life. Duty properly aided by honest rationalizations also played its part in these reëntrances to the public arena. His natural love for a "Squire's" tranquil, delightful

⁴ Buchanan's father migrated from Northern Ireland but the more remote origin of the family is in Scotland. The name is said to mean a place abounding in deer.

life plus his dislike of disquieting conditions, importunities attendant upon public office-holding caused him to dislike some of his official positions while he held them. At the same time his desire to make a name for himself kept him either in office or keeping himself available for future opportunities.

By the 1840's, Buchanan could take pleasure in the fact that he had "arrived" as far as his ideal of being an American gentleman was concerned. He was a well-to-do lawyer who had retired, and who lived on an income wisely but not niggardly administered. His very closeness bespoke a sedate respectability. He could give banquets which ranked with the best in Lancaster, whose people took care of their wealth and then their palates. And he was already the leader of a faction of the Pennsylvania Democracy which must be reckoned with. Further, he was high in the seats of the mighty both in Pennsylvania and at Washington. He could claim the friendship of the great Andrew Jackson; he could debate with the peerless Clay; Webster praised both his ability and his entertainment. He had done a very gentlemanly task in far off Russia where the Czar took walks with him, and later saw to it that his prime minister made a treaty with him, the first commercial treaty of the Muscovite Empire with the young Republic of the West. But all was not quite perfect. Buchanan lived in a fine home on King Street in Lancaster but it was a home in town. A squire must have a country estate.

Consequently, in the summer of 1848, when rumor said that the Honorable William M. Meredith, another member of the Squiredom of Lancaster, might sell his farm of twenty-two acres, not far from Lancaster, Buchanan was ready to purchase. Mr. Meredith was not only a famous lawyer but occupied a high place in Whig circles. He was at the time Secretary of Treasury in the cabinet of General Taylor. The two

gentlemen went about the purchase with all the courtesy and delicacy supposed to be requisite of the nobility of the ancien régime.

Hearing that Mr. Meredith somewhat regretted his decision to sell, Mr. Buchanan most graciously begged him to rescind the whole matter. It might be added that he sold Wheatland for what he had paid for it so that the idea of profit was quite foreign to his mind in the transaction. But Mr. Meredith could not withdraw from the arrangement saying:

I have in the first place to express to you my deep sense of the courtesy and consideration which induced you to make me the offer (of rescinding the arrangement) which your letter contains. I cannot accept it because to do so would be to take advantage of your friendly impulses, which I ought and cannot do.⁵

And so it came to pass that the Squire acquired a most delightful country house which he named Wheatland. A very fine description of Wheatland was published in *The World* at the time of Buchanan's death:

A mile and a half almost due West from the quaint, steep gabled town of Lancaster is a plain villa of red brick of two stories and an attic as to the body and three sheer stories as to the wings. It stands, perhaps a hundred feet back from the macadamized turnpike, from which it is screened by a plantation of locusts and evergreens. A white-washed fence divides it from the public path, and two plain wooden gates give admission to it. The windows of the lower story are secured by the ugly white shutters so common in Pennsylvania, and over either tip of the wing is woven a garment of the Virginia creeper. The place has been carelessly kept of late, and a stranger stumbles over the hoops set for last year's croquet, but now hidden under the braided blooms, unmown and stimulated by the recent rains. The stable and offices are all plain whitewashed sheds, and in the former house are two dingy carriages, three fine horses of the Pennsylvania breed, and a brindled cow. But from the portico which tops the sloping lawn is such a bucolic prospect as can hardly be looked upon elsewhere. Under the dappled clouds of a June morning, the champaign stretches away to the southwest in varying undulations of rich meadow and dense

⁵ Curtis, George Ticknor. *Life of James Buchanan*, II. 4.

22 *James Buchanan, the Squire from Lancaster*

woodland, till it is lost in the dim, dull, distant blue of the ridges of the York Hills. The intervals are filled by a country spotted here and there with native growths of forest, but for the most part rich with such vernal vegetation as only a tillage hardly paralleled elsewhere in the world can produce. Nearer, and on every hand, spreads the stoneless soil from which the domain derives its proper name of Wheatland. From the east comes murmurs of the busy hum of men in Lancaster, but all besides is absolute silence. The whole place is one for which evidently a man of domestic tastes might form a passionate attachment, and for which, much more, a wifeless and a childless man might have an almost feminine fondness. Such a man was James Buchanan, the fifteenth President of the United States and the laird of Wheatland, who has lived here for twenty years past, and who died last Sunday night in yonder room at the southwest corner of the main mansion. The room, which has always been his own favorite choice, is a plain chamber, with a four post bedstead, on which, during his last sickness, he lay, with no other book in it than a great calf-bound family Bible, and no other ornaments than two pieces of old-fashioned embroidery, done by his mother when he was a child, and marked in the corners, "J. Buchanan." Indeed, the whole house is as simple as it is solid—only one or two sumptuous pieces of carved wood or painted canvass tell to the eye that the late tenant was more than the plainest country gentleman. But the house is such a one as a gentleman might wish to live in, plain but honest, and with no suspicion in structure or decoration of the cheap and nasty about it.

While the Squire still lived it was a place of elegance, hospitality, and cheer. For many years Wheatland was kept, by the courteous and genial Mr. George Willson, in the same condition of elegant simplicity in which Buchanan and his niece, Harriet Lane, left it. Wheatland itself had its successful rôle in politics. Not only was it the rendezvous in many political battles but its picture was used in 1856. A recent Lancaster paper states that fine lithographs of the residence circulated in the South during that campaign. Thus Southern Democrats were politely informed that an atmosphere similar to their own prevailed at the domicile of their candidate.

There was a democratic side to this business of being Squire as well as its aristocratic phases. And these

Buchanan enjoyed equally. To the Scotch-Irish of his home county and the good Germans of Lancaster and vicinity he was just "Jimmy Buchanan" who kept open house where good cigars and fine wine were in abundance. Buchanan understood the art of being host to everybody. Even little children went home pleased after a trip to Wheatland. James Buchanan, Henry, and Miss Annie Buchanan have left pleasant and detailed pictures of life at Wheatland which Curtis has published in his biography. There is another equally accurate but shorter sketch which is less known. The writer, now unknown, was obviously a welcome visitor at Wheatland. It reads as follows:

Mr. Buchanan now gave himself up to the calm pleasures of a country life (1849-1850) at his beautiful home near Lancaster, where he dispensed a Southern like hospitality to all who came within its limits, and where he, himself, always genial and agreeable, was the very life of the home circle. This was composed of the charming niece whose beauty and grace of manner, and peculiar conversational attractions were as remarkable in the then school girl as now they are in the hostess of the Executive Mansion, and of two nephews, with the almost constant addition of visitors of all ages.

Notwithstanding any fatigue he might have undergone during the day, Mr. Buchanan always devoted his evenings to the family, who eagerly anticipated the rich treat afforded by his inexhaustible variety of anecdotes of people and events in this country, as also in Russia which were told with spirit and interest indescribably fascinating. These were always cheerfully contributed to the entertainment of the little circle, and a participation in any social game merrily and cordially acceded to. It is in his home life that Mr. Buchanan should be seen and known by those who doubt his possession of those genial qualities which so adorn it.⁶

The library is in the eastern wing. It contains a few book-cases, filled for the most part with legal lore. A large table is in the center, covered with books, mostly of that sort which burden the mails under frank, and are marked "Pub.doc." Several large chairs, stuffed and covered with leather are in the room. The

⁶ *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans*, published in 1852 (and with later editions), IV. 78.

24 *James Buchanan, the Squire from Lancaster*

front door and the back windows are wide open, and the balmy air of Wheatland sweeps through the apartment, rendering it quite comfortable on this hot day. Mr. Buchanan—called “Jeems Buck-an-an” by Southern gentlemen, and “Jimmy Bewchanan” by his old townsmen—is there. Four or five sturdy, honest looking Pennsylvania Dutchmen are with him, and also an old acquaintance from Philadelphia, who has a son in the Keystone Club. Mr. Buchanan’s private secretary is hard at work at a desk in the room, replying to all letters not marked “Private and Confidential.”

The old man sits in his high back chair,
Beside the open door.

He wears a loose gown made of checkered calico, not at all Romanesque or picturesque in its effect. He has light slippers on his feet and a cigar in his mouth, and is evidently going in for comfort, in spite of hot weather. He glanced at my card with one eye, according to his usual habit, and comes forward with an easy and courteous manner, and bids me welcome to Wheatland. His Dutch friends soon take leave, and in answer to an inquiry by his Philadelphia acquaintance, he says that one of them is a very rich man who has made his money in railroad and building contracts by doing his work honestly and well.

We now talked with Mr. Buchanan about politics and the affairs of the nation. He is a strict constructionist and State Rights man, and intimates that he carries the doctrine into the incipient States or the Territories that are acquiring population and forming the germs of new States. To his mind this is the only tenable doctrine in a democratic government like ours. He believes that Kansas will be very quiet within six weeks. He is of the opinion that Mr. Fillmore will run, but is confident of beating Fremont, whether Fillmore runs or not. He thinks it would be a good thing to shake this Union to pieces on account of slavery, which is a democratic question to be settled by each State and Territory for itself. He sees now, for the first time, a distinct sectional party in one part of the Union arrayed against the other part, which cannot get up an electoral ticket in a single Southern state, and which makes Mason & Dixon’s line the frontier of its operations. He has no hope of carrying Massachusetts, and regrets that that noble old State, which was so full of patriotism and everything honorable in the days of the Revolution, should have become that bed of every ultruism that springs up in these latter days. He feels sure of Pennsylvania and of success in the final result. His Philadelphia friend has bet that he will carry twenty-four states. He evidently thinks, although he does not say so directly, that his friend has made a devilish wild bet.¹

¹ *New York Herald*, June 28, 1856.

While speaking of Buchanan's library it might be well to do justice to his literary inclinations. Mr. Rhodes and some others have done Buchanan an injustice at this point. Still others have inferred that Buchanan's knowledge was of the picked up variety. Mr. Buchanan cared little for studies in belles-lettres or researches for research's sake. On the other hand he read inveterately. His niece mentions this. No wonder his library showed many books with the government frank. He made himself an expert on the affairs and details of government. He had made himself work at the law, so now he more eagerly found government and politics his workshop. He read many newspapers including Greeley's *Tribune*. Professor Sioussat finds that he studied foreign affairs diligently, and Judge John Bassett Moore says he brought order and system to the State Department. His public speeches were thorough and long. He often redrafted parts of them five or six times. His drafts show many crossings out. He made careful choice of words and phrases. His letters have a pleasant, natural style born of much practice. The *Bible* and Jay's *Exercises* were daily companions. He read much more than he professed, because unless he had spent much care on a matter he would not speak his opinions. He complained to the students of the University of North Carolina of superficial people who preferred indexes to reading a book through. On the same occasion he told them that intellect was everything. He rather liked poetry, used poetical quotations, and has been accused of having written verses in his early days. But he cared much less for it as an aid to public speaking than did many other public men of his time. His own history of his administration contains many references to public documents. Among the books cited in his works and letters appear Brown's *Forum*, Appleton's *Encyclopedia*, 1861, Abbot's *The Lives of the Presidents*, Helper's *Impending Crisis*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,

Wheaton's work on *International Law*, and speeches of various public men of his time.

Of course his keenest interest lay in politics, both foreign and domestic, which he followed with zest through newspapers, government reports and an immense private correspondence, both at home and abroad. This correspondence, it will be noted, was a chief avenue to inside political information. Buchanan was ever cultivating journalists and men with journalistic talent. He was actually a contributor to papers in which he had an interest and others, although he wrote in a hidden manner. No person was more alive to the influence of the printed page with the public. Among his correspondents were such journalists and editors as Forney, James Gordon Bennett, George Plitt of the *Pennsylvanian*, George W. Hilliard of Alabama, William Flinn of Washington, and others now less known. Black, his Attorney General, was an excellent political writer. Trescot's diplomatic work was probably a factor in causing his appointment as Assistant Secretary of State. John Appleton, his predecessor, was interested in the *Washington Union*. Horatio King, his second Postmaster General, later wrote both prose and verse. Cass had written a book on the *French Court and People*. Buchanan was connected by marriage with the poet Read. Robert Tyler was an editorial writer of marked ability. It would be entirely unjust to picture Buchanan as uninterested in literary men.

Two scholars with whom Buchanan had considerable to do were Edward Everett and William B. Reed. Everett's biographer says Buchanan wrote him often although he gives few of his letters. William B. Reed was a prolific writer and journalist. He was at one time Professor of American History in the University of Pennsylvania, and wrote a life of his ancestor Joseph Reed, a statesman of the Revolution. He had tilts with Bancroft over this gentleman's career and

wrote pamphlets on disputed questions. He wrote an able criticism of Seward's diplomacy and at least two other pamphlets during the Civil War. Besides this he lectured a great deal before that time and had some of his speeches published. At one time he was a correspondent for the *London Times*. Buchanan had planned to have Reed write his biography and left some money to Mrs. Reed in his will as a compensation. Reed considered that Buchanan had not been fair enough to the South during Secession and so let the matter drift. He was one of Buchanan's most intimate friends from about 1855 to the time of his death. Buchanan's brother, the Reverend Edward Y. Buchanan, obtained Curtis' services after Buchanan and Reed were dead.

In the matter of social attachments Buchanan was by no means lacking. We are in a go-getting age when the virtues of friendship often receive but scant appreciation. In Buchanan's time social attachments and the capacity of making long standing friendships were highly esteemed. In regard to this quality in Buchanan the most varied opinions are encountered. On few points was Buchanan more criticised or slandered. These ideas are due in part to the tirades which Republican writers or converts to Republicanism vented when seeking to show their loyalty to their new friends by be-smirching their former friends and leaders. Since all Democrats were supposed to be more or less base, an old ex-President could not expect to escape like criticism.

It would be difficult to classify the causes of Buchanan's friendships. Most of them were made probably because he liked the company of the individual. Such friendships last. Others were made for political reasons or because he thought they would bring him some other advantage. Buchanan was not snobbish or exclusive in his friendships. Although he liked to move midst elegant surroundings many of his friends were among humble folk. The men who bore his coffin

to the grave were Lancaster friends from among the humbler walks of life. One of this group was his dentist. Some of the Lancaster natives who did not receive all they thought themselves deserving of in the way of patronage, considered Buchanan cold. Forney made the most of his rupture with Buchanan as alleged proof of the latter's faithlessness. In Forney's case the cause was more due to his futile ambitions and his chagrin at not realizing them. In the matter of the test vote over the Lecompton constitution, Forney deliberately refused to sustain Buchanan's policy. Governor Wise, of Virginia, also parted from Buchanan at this point. Buchanan, instead of fighting them to the death, mourned. His sorrow, however, was not the only manifestation of the change. Forney lost printing contracts and Wise some Federal support in Virginia. Had Buchanan done as Forney wished he would have had to part with his most intimate friend, Slidell, and the Gulf State Democracy. Mrs. Maury well remarked that like Canning, Buchanan made his word his bond. Most of Buchanan's broken friendships, when caused by himself, were due to incompatible obligations to two persons at the same time. This made him wary of making promises.

Buchanan's dislike of taking favors which he could not repay at once was another cause of his reputation for coolness. This trait was, as his niece, Miss Annie Buchanan, pointed out, due to dislike of being under obligations to people. He sometimes paid his obligations off so quickly that they may have looked too much like business transactions. It was painful for him not to be able to give his friends their due. For this reason he disliked the problem of patronage while he was President.

It is undeniable that he sometimes placed overconfidence in his friends. This was true of those who have been tried. In the main, however, he was too shrewd to be long deceived. His basic nature perhaps was

trustful, but his father had schooled him as a youth to beware of mankind. He passed the advice on by warning Miss Lane to beware of what she said in presence of strangers.

Buchanan's capacity for long and enduring friendships is proved by the friendships themselves. He lacked the effusiveness of Clay who could warm the heart of the whole Republic. He did not carry his heart on his sleeve but he was fond of his "cronies." His friendships were not restricted to males, for he had a number of lady confidantes. We have already mentioned Buchanan's life-long friend in Lancaster, Hiram Swarr. Another comrade was Senator King of Alabama. In Washington circles Buchanan and King were called the Siamese Twins because they were so much together. King was a tall, angular person of the Scotch-Irish type. He died in 1853. Buchanan paid high tribute to the purity of his character, when he visited the University of North Carolina, King's Alma Mater, in 1859. John Slidell was as much a personal friend as a political mentor. Dan Sickles was a "pet." Indeed, Buchanan cultivated the friendship of the younger men. Watterson mentions John Y. Mason as a strong personal friend. William B. Reed was a good example of the literary friendships of Buchanan. Plitt, one of the editors of the *Pennsylvanian*, was another. In the years of his retirement it is plain that he took much comfort in the letters of George Leiper, a fellow Pennsylvanian older than himself. Black comes in this classification in spite of disagreements which were mental rather than emotional. That Buchanan made an appeal to many people is clearly shown by the letters he received.

There are a number of instances which show that Buchanan would put himself out both in money and time to help a friend. He loaned money to Forney. He made a long journey to the remote home of a lumberman to attend a daughter's wedding. His letters

show he made grants and loans to relatives and friends in need.

Buchanan was fond of making friends among foreigners. He was able to adapt himself to foreign ways even while boasting of his Americanism. During the Civil War he was much hurt because Sir Henry Holland did not pay him a visit while in this country. He laid Holland's action to the hostility of the Republicans towards himself. Weed's erroneous story of his having been threatened with resignations in the cabinet offered in an insulting manner, aroused Buchanan the more because the libel would circulate in England where people did not properly discount American political tactics of that nature.

At home Buchanan was always glad to have his friends about him. If he did not have visitors for a while he complained about it. Yet he does not seem to have confided much in people, and seems to have done his daily work, in the main, independently. Hence another cause of his reputation for love of solitude.

At no place did Buchanan's engaging qualities as host display themselves to a better advantage than at the table. In Russia his "republican dinners" were a success. Andrew D. White declared him the best table talker he ever heard, after meeting him in England. A reporter, in 1868, said:

In social respects Wheatland has always been a delightful place for a short visit. The fund of anecdote possessed by Mr. Buchanan, and the length of his experience in public life, make him an admirable host. He was never original in his humor, generally of a very descriptiveness derived from actual observation. He had a way through life of keeping his head stiffly on one side, and of keeping one eye almost permanently closed. The effect is said to have been surprising when at rare times he opened both eyes suddenly [and] looked bolt upon you.

His anecdotes extended into remote times and abstruse public matters, and a publisher who heard him talking one night was so interested that he offered ten thousand dollars for a book of them. . . . At the table Mr. Buchanan was eminently at home. He was the most accomplished diner-out ever known in the State, not excepting Morton McMichael of Philadelphia. His

fondness for animal food, of which he ate enormously, was the cause of his ultimate decease, inducing rheumatic gout, which kept him from taking proper exercise during the final days of his life. He was fond of whiskey, of which he drank a great deal, but was never known to be affected by it. He often said that it was impossible for him to get inebriated. His sideboard was invariably thrown open to strangers, and he led the way to Bacchus himself, with his usual bland dignity of manner.*

It might be added that Buchanan was much opposed to intemperance, but then temperance with him was not so difficult. He sometimes made fun of persons who handled their liquor badly. He loved to act as host at his table, and his niece, who knew how graciously he filled the part, encouraged him. The latch string was always out at Wheatland and in the days when Buchanan was active in politics the place was a Mecca.

Alas the times! The banquet hall is indeed deserted. Wheatland is silent. The genial Mr. Willson has passed away, and the family feel unable to maintain the old home of Pennsylvania's once favorite son. The fine old mansion is for sale. The fine old furniture which is a delight to the eye may be scattered throughout the land, never to be reassembled. New and more modern homes now occupy the fields which once gave the estate its name. But Wheatland, though old, is still beautiful. In her now silent halls the political history of Pennsylvania was not only discussed but made for over half a century. To a State well versed in her traditions a rare opportunity is given to perpetuate the memory of one who served her long and faithfully. Miss Lane, who spent thousands of dollars to perpetuate her uncle's memory, is no longer alive to reclaim his home. What matters it that different leaders now hold the seats of the mighty? Succeeding generations may again find interest in those times just beyond our present horizon. Wheatland is not merely a fine old mansion fit for careful preservation. Wheatland is history.

* *Cincinnati Commercial*; letter from Lancaster of June 6, 1868.

As a kind of a postscript, it might be well to suggest that during the thirty years of Buchanan's political leadership in Pennsylvania his ideas were supported by a large following. There were over 178,000 votes cast for Breckenridge, who was supported by Buchanan, in 1860. In those days there were men of high character in the Keystone who were more outspoken upholders of States Rights and State Sovereignty than Buchanan himself. Some of them went to jail or were mobbed for this loyalty to their ideals during the Civil War. Such events did take place in the land of the Quakers.

If Buchanan's attitude toward the South and slavery seems apathetic to an abolitionized world, let it be called to mind that many of the "best people" in the 40's and 50's were of like opinion. They held that slavery was an economic and social problem to be settled by the people who were best acquainted with it. They were content to leave slavery as it had been settled by the Federal compact. It was the bargain which insured the making of the Union and was entitled to an honest observance. At least so thought Jeremiah Sullivan Black and George W. Woodward, two of Pennsylvania's greatest lawyers.

Perhaps at some future day some disturbing lady may write another *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. If we may believe certain reports of the *New Republic*, the scene for such a volume may not be staged in Kentucky but in the mining regions of the Keystone. Now if the people of peaceful Pennsylvania are so well pleased with their institutions of the present, why should they then be so severe with their once favorite son of another era? He was not anxious to disturb the labor situation and social institutions of a great section of our Union. Perhaps upon a more careful inspection he may prove but a reflection of much of Pennsylvania in the looking glass of yesterday.