An Interview With Hannah Grant?

When her son rose to military fame followed by being elected President of the United States, naturally the press would want to get an interview with Hannah Simpson Grant. It was all for naught, because she did not give interviews to inquiring journalists. Period. It was useless to ask. Consequently, the following exchange between a purported Mrs. Jesse R. Grant (Hannah) and a journalist, is somewhat suspect. Nevertheless, it is so unusual that it should be related here. Readers are cautioned to take this with a grain of salt.

It appears to be from a society column published in the


Hannah was living at this time with her daughter, Jennie (Virginia) Corbin, in New Jersey, her husband having passed away on June 29, 1873. Hannah lived until 1883, dying ten years after her husband and only two years before her eldest son.

In this interview, her reference to being frightened about Nellie refers to the false reports of Nellie’s demise in England. In actuality, it was her mother-in-law who died.
MRS. JESSE GRANT, the mother of our ex-President, and who is living quietly with her daughter, Mrs. Corbin, in Jersey City.

The ride up from the ferry leaves one with the impression that Jersey City is all hills, (it takes four horses to pull you up), graveyards and willow trees. The Corbins live on the Heights, in the vicinity of the old court house and jail, two great, old-fashioned, brown buildings, almost hidden by magnificent oaks and vines, the grounds prettily divided into shrubberies and flower-beds, and altogether looking too cozy and comfortable for the law and the justice.

Passing by them, and turning a corner onto Pavonia avenue, one comes to a pleasant, home-like looking frame house, standing a little way back from the street and approached by a walk hedged with blooming plants. It is safe to guess at the character of the inmates of a house from the garden in front, and here, instead of gorgeous foliage plants, delicate orchids, and "the last fling" in roses, instead of these I saw old-fashioned petunias, the chamber bean, mignonette, double balsams, and bachelor buttons. Afterward Mrs. Grant told me she had grown them herself, and always loved to raise the same flowers that she did nearly fifty years ago in Ohio.

There is an infinite variety of old ladies, and Mrs. Grant is one of a not common type, slight, short, and trim in figure. She has yet the bright eyes that belong to younger days, and are all the more striking from the snow-white, daintily arranged puffs of hair that peep out from a little lace cap and frame a face which, though wrinkled by time, is free from signs of ill-health or ill-temper. In a neat black dress, with a fresh white kerchief folded smoothly over her bosom, and a benign smile on her lips, she looked just like the grandma that children say
"IS GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT."

When we were talking, I inquired when she expected to see her son.

"Very soon now, certainly in ten or twelve days, and I guess he will be glad to see his mother again, and have a little peace and quiet. Ulysses never was a boy who liked fussing and noise, and if he gets back again without his digestion being spoiled with all their eating and drinking I shall be glad. I suppose you will think that is not a dignified speech for the mother of an ex-President to make, but, dear me, after all he is my son."

"As a child did he differ from your other children?"

"Well, I don't know that he was any better or any worse. I suppose if I had known what he would turn out to be I should have noted everything down, and thought all his doings wonderful, but to tell the truth, he was very much like any other boy."

"You have a good many descendants now," remarked the writer.

"Yes, I have four children, ten grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Now, wasn't that too bad," continued the old lady, with quivering lips "to frighten us so about Nellie. It made me sick for two days; for we were up in the country, and did not know the mistake until Jesse brought us word. I hope when my son comes home he will find out who was at the bottom of it."

"How has Mrs. Grant enjoyed her tour?"

"Well, I guess pretty well; you know (with a slight tinge of mother-in-law) women do like SHOW AND DRESS, and all that, but she has had enough of it by this time. Why, poor little Jesse got sick of it in six months."

"And where will the General pass the winter?"

"The Glaena folks want him to come there, and his home is all ready; but when he comes to see me, I shall try to persuade him to live nearer."
Mrs. Grant said it was a real gratification to her to have her son so warmly received abroad; but she said, with a touch of motherly pride, "The Europeans know how to appreciate an American and a soldier."