

acquired again; buildings which had fallen into ruin have been restored; the deer park under the hill has been restocked; the mansion has been repaired; many articles of furniture and adornment have been restored to the several rooms; and numbers of valuable relics and mementoes of George and Martha Washington and of their times have been deposited here. The restoration, equipment, and keeping of the respective rooms have been entrusted to the pious care of the women of the different States represented in the Board of Vice-Regents. The privilege of visiting Mount Vernon, and the satisfaction of knowing that it is a possession of the nation for all time, we owe to this Ladies' Association, and beyond it to Ann Pamela Cunningham. The home and the tomb of Washington will have for us added interest if thus we see in them a monument of the patriotic impulse, courage, and achievement of the women of America.

It has been well said:—"No gilded dome swells from the lowly roof to catch the morning or evening beam; but the love and gratitude of united America settle upon it in one eternal sunshine. From beneath that humble roof went forth the intrepid, unselfish warrior, the magistrate who knew no glory but his country's good; to that he returned, happiest when his work was done. There he lived in noble simplicity, there he died in glory and peace. While it stands, the latest generations of the grateful children of America will make this pilgrimage to it as to a shrine; and when it shall fall, if fall it must, the memory and the name of Washington shall shed an eternal glory on the spot."

The main hall of the house extends through from front to back, and six charming rooms, all furnished as they were in the eighteenth century, are on the ground floor—the banquet room, music room, west parlour, family dining-room, Mrs. Washington's sitting room, and the library. The several rooms all over the house have been assigned to the care of twelve States, and by others various restorations have been made; and how life-like has been this labour of love only those who visit this spot, and go reverently from room to room, can realise.

It would take a volume to describe in detail the beauty and charm of Mount Vernon, and all the homely and historic treasures it contains; to lovers of the heroic it is sublime.

As I pass into the hall I am instantly attracted by a wrought-iron key, labelled "The Key of the Bastille." This fateful instrument was sent by Lafayette to Washington after the capture of the prison; with it came the model of the Bastille which is in the Banquet Hall. Lafayette wrote with the gift: "Give me leave, my dear General, to present you with a picture of the Bastille, just as it looked a few days after I ordered its demolition, with the main key of the fortress of despotism. It is a gift which I owe as a son to my adopted father, as an aide-de-camp to my general, as a missionary of liberty to its patriarch." How highly honoured art thou, O Key! wrenched from devil's work, to hang in the Halls of Liberty, side by side with the Swords of Heroes!

In the Library one notes, not without curiosity, the titles of the books which made up the reading of the master of Mount Vernon, as soldier, statesman, and farmer, for, while the books are not those actually owned by Washington, they are for the most part duplicates of such works as were here in his day. Nearly the whole of the original Washington library is now in the Boston Athenæum.

Within the book-case are his silver inkstand and silver snuffers and tray; also the printed copy of the Farewell Address, with corrections in his own handwriting—the reading of which before Congress has been immortalised by Trumbull in one of his four masterpieces hung in the Rotunda of the Capitol.

In the Banquet Hall the central ornament is the priceless mantelpiece of Carrara and Siena marble, carved in Italy. The story goes that on its way to America the mantel was taken by French pirates, who sent it to its destination uninjured when they learned that it belonged to Washington. Here I was greatly interested to find on the splendid mahogany doors the old-fashioned locks of solid blocks of brass, such as we had in our old country home at Thoroton Hall in England, and which I have seen in no other place. Housed in this beautiful room are innumerable most precious relics.

On ascending the wide, shallow staircase from the ground to the first floor we come presently to the South Room, where Washington died. Here one gets very close to the man—has not his hand touched the homely furniture and left it sacred? Here is the very bed—a four-poster—with its simple white dimity hangings, on which he lay a-dying; and close by the chair on which at the supreme moment of his passing was placed the Bible from which his devoted wife had been reading aloud.

After the death of Washington this room was closed, in accordance with the custom of the time, to be left vacant for a space of three years, and Mrs. Washington occupied the room directly above, in the attic, choosing it because the dormer window overlooked the grave of her beloved. It was here that she died, and the furniture and hangings now in the room are reproductions of the originals.

In Lafayette's room, the River room, and in many others, one seems to step back into a bygone century—all is realistic and most touching.

Once again in the open, we pass along the colonnade to the kitchen. Here the culinary art is no longer practised, but the crane still hangs in the great fireplace, and the brick oven is well preserved. The old hominy mortar is in the superintendent's office, and we then see the outbuildings which comprised the customary offices of a Virginian home in former days—butter's house, meat-house, wash-house, ice-house, spinning-house, green-house and barn—all beautifully designed, coloured, and fitted in harmony with the central homestead; and at some distance are the "quarters" where lived the happy darkies who served so great a master. The sun-dial on the west lawn was erected by the citizens of Rhode Island to replace the one which stood on the exact spot. *Hores non numero nisi serenos*, runs the motto—"I record but sunny hours."

We pass along the sunny garden path, and going to the right, over mossy grass and under the greenwood tree, come to the tomb of Washington. It is severely plain, as should be the tombs of the truly great. A marble slab above the arched gateway is inscribed, "Within this enclosure rest the remains of General George Washington." Above the door of the tomb are the words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." In the ante-chamber are seen the two marble sarcophagi; the one on the right bears on its face the name of Washington, with chiselled coat of arms of the United States and a draped flag. The other sarcophagus is inscribed, "Martha, Consort of Washington."

Thus in a green and sunny space the happy and heroic dead are at peace; where they lived nobly, so they rest serenely, and their house-place knows them as of yore.

Here about their lovely homestead, in their spacious grounds, in their quaint box-bordered flower garden, their spirits linger. Here still grows the Kentucky coffee tree sent to Washington by his friend Jefferson from Monticello; the hydrangea planted by Lafayette in 1824; and at the foot of the garden still flourishes the famous rose named by Washington for his mother. So we leave them, taking with us lavender-scented memories of exquisite intangible things.

ETHEL G. FENWICK.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)