

(which nowadays we call sherry), port and madeira (imported by way of England) and "Brazil wine," which came from South America. At that period it was not the fashion for unmarried women to touch wine, and the matrons contented themselves with a sip or two; but the men drank heavily. Washington himself rarely went beyond a single glass. While his guests were drinking wine he would accompany them with cider, of which he was extremely fond, and which was made in great quantity from Mount Vernon apples.

In the evening after the men had left their wine to rejoin the ladies there were games such as "blind man's buff" and "hunt the slipper," with much romping among the young men and maidens, and perhaps some kissing. It was all in the fashion of old-time Virginia entertainments, with cards for the older people (played for small stakes), and, it is likely, a dance to follow, winding up, of course, with the Virginia reel. The music was furnished by a white-haired old negro slave, who kept time by thumping the floor with his big foot.

At 10:30 o'clock at the latest it was time for bed.

Alas, for the contrast! Fifty years later the house stood empty and deserted, undergoing a slow decay and exhibiting every sign of neglect. Window shutters hung from a single hinge; the grounds about the mansion, which had been so carefully kept, were overgrown with tall weeds. The servants' quarters and other detached buildings were literally falling to pieces. To such a point had ruin progressed that the melancholy condition of Mount Vernon was plainly visible to passengers on the Potomac steamboats going up and down the river.

How had such a state of affairs come about? The matter is easily explained. Washington when he died left the property to his nephew, Bushrod Washington, who was a Justice of the United States Supreme Court, making provision, however, that his wife, Martha, should retain ownership of it during her lifetime. She survived him two and a half years. Bushrod took little interest in the place and visited it scarce a dozen times. The slaves were scattered, having been freed by a clause in the master's will.

Bushrod, and after him his heirs, sold off the land piece by piece, until only the house and 204 acres were left. Such was the state of affairs in 1853, when a woman, Ann Pamela Cunningham, of South Carolina, started the movement which was destined to preserve for the Nation the most valued of its historic memorials. At that time Mt. Vernon belonged to John Augustine Washington (Bushrod's son), and to him Miss Cunningham wrote, asking what price he would accept for the property. His answer was a refusal to sell. Nevertheless five years later he agreed to accept the sum of \$200,000.