

Entering the mansion, they are admitted to its domestic intimacies. They even behold the room in which Washington died, and its old-fashioned bed, with four tall and slender posts, hung with the original white dimity curtains, and covered with the same spread that was used for his couch. The furniture of the room is the same—even to a liquor case in a corner holding three bottles of two quarts each. This, however, must have been for emergency use, inasmuch as Washington was certainly not addicted to stimulants. Washington's bedroom, by the way, is said to be haunted. It is not that any recognizable apparition has ever been seen there; the few persons who have occupied the chamber for sleeping purposes have been almost unanimous in asserting that they were beset by a consciousness of the nearness of some strange and brooding specter—presumed, of course, to be that of the former proprietor of the mansion.

Although Mt. Vernon in Washington's day was equipped with all the latest luxuries then known, it knew no carpets or rugs. On one occasion Washington did import a carpet which was intended for his library, but the cost of it was so great that his political opponents advertised the matter as a scandal. No president of the United States has been more abused and vilified than Washington, and he, in order to put a stop to the talk in this instance, refused to receive the carpet or to pay duty on it. It was bought in at auction by a Philadelphia woman, and a descendant of hers gave it not long ago to the Mt. Vernon Association, so that it finds itself by a curious chain of circumstances in the place for which it was originally intended.

When the ladies of the association are "camping out" for their annual week at Mt. Vernon they take their meals in the old library and the cooking is done for them by an aged woman named Sarah, who is a great-grandchild of one of Washington's slaves. She has a farm of her own, but it delights her to come and minister unto those who have made themselves caretakers in these days of the ancient mansion. Another old colored woman, of similar ancestry, occupies the spinning house and gives lessons in spinning with the wheel and in weaving after the old-fashioned method.

The only fear for the future of Mt. Vernon lies in the possibility of fire. Against this danger every imaginable precaution is taken. No lights, save candles, are allowed on the premises. In a vault near the house are kept four chemical engines, and there are four tanks of bicarbonate of soda and water, over each of which is suspended a receptacle containing a gallon of sulphuric acid. In case of emergency the sulphuric acid would be upset into the soda solution, generating quantities of carbonic acid gas, in the presence of which fire cannot live. In addition there are scattered through the mansion a number of portable fire extinguishers.