

# Mount Vernon Place

by John Dorsey

There," wrote Henry James in 1904, "were the best houses, the older, the ampler, the more blandly quadrilateral; which in spite of their still faces met one's arrest, at their commodious corners and other places of vantage, with an unmistakable *manner*. . . . A certain vividness of high decency seemed . . . to possess them, and this suggestion of the real Southern glow, yet with no Southern looseness, was clearly something by itself. . . ."

The "there" referred to by James in his great essay on Baltimore was Mount Vernon Place, or more correctly Mount Vernon and Washington Places, the four squares with their enclosing buildings which provide a cruciform setting for the Washington Monument. They are handsome, these squares; taken together, they comprise what has been called one of the finest urban spaces in America. But Mount Vernon Place, the name generally used to denote all four squares, is more than that. Baltimoreans have long thought of it as the heart of their city, its Piazza San Marco, for reasons deeper than the physical. If one were to attempt to know a city one would perhaps begin by walking its streets and looking at its buildings, and go on from there to a study of its history. But the real search would be for things less palpable, more fundamental: its character, its spirit, itself. In Mount Vernon Place are to be found all of those things.

It is not a matter of age. There are older parts of Baltimore. But it is a matter of time, or one might better say of timing. The history of the growth and prominence of Mount Vernon Place belongs to the Nineteenth Century, and the Nineteenth Century also stands at the center of Baltimore's history. The city traces its beginnings to 1729, but it was not until after the Revolution that Baltimore was anything more than a little port overshadowed by Annapolis. Between 1800 and 1900 Baltimore became one of the major cities of the United States. That was when most of the great fortunes were made here, most of the great philanthropies bestowed. That was when the city formed its architectural character and its historical essence, which, despite the changes of our own century, remain much as they were. Baltimore, that is to say, became an adult in the Nineteenth Century, and, like you or me, no matter how long it may live after that development, its character is not likely to change much.

One of the reasons Mount Vernon Place is so representative of that character is that, while many other parts of the city have been visited by the builders and rebuilders since 1900, these squares have changed hardly at all in terms of their buildings. Thus one can see here a fascinating record of many of the Nineteenth Century's architectural styles. In the early decades Baltimore was a leader of the neoclassical style popularly known as Greek Revival, and one of that style's best architects, Robert Mills, made his name here with the Washington Monument before going on to bigger com-

missions in the nation's capital, including the great obelisk on the Mall. From Mills's column and the Greek Revival townhouse, the architectural record of Mount Vernon Place proceeds through echoes of the Italian Renaissance, a passion for brownstone facades, the Gothic Revival, and on down to Stanford White's fashionable eclecticism, the Beaux Arts, the Chateausque, and even a touch of John Russell Pope, whose Roman pomp was popular at the turn of the century and for decades afterwards. If Mills, White and Pope are in national terms the most important architects associated with Mount Vernon Place, others whose names are known locally and beyond include Niernsee and Neilson, Josias Pennington, Edmund G. Lind, Dixon and Carson, Charles E. Cassell, Joseph Evans Sperry, E. H. Glidden, Delano and Aldrich, Carrere and Hastings.

But what was built here is only the beginning of what Mount Vernon Place has to reveal. It is the history, the accumulated life, that gives the Place its depth of sensation. G. K. Chesterton, after he visited here, wrote of "the thronging of thousands of living thoughts and things" which made their presence felt on Mount Vernon Place. Henry James called it the city's "parlour," and compared the Washington Monument to an overlarge antique clock that sits in the "parlour" generation after generation, silently witnessing the family history. As the "parlour" is the most important room in the house, so from the mid-Nineteenth Century until the First World War Mount Vernon Place was the most important, the most desirable, and probably the most expensive place in town to live. It was the home of many of the most eminent members of the upper class when that class ran things, here as elsewhere. And so it was where a disproportionate number of significant events took place, a disproportionate number of important visitors visited, a disproportionate number of those perhaps minor but delightful stories which give a city's history its liveliness had their origin. Gertrude Stein said of Oakland, California, "There is no there there." One can say of Mount Vernon Place that there is more *there* there than there is anywhere else in town.

There the Walterses collected and Peabody built and Francis Scott Key died and Thackeray ate terrapin and Henry Pratt Janes sued over a vestibule and the men of the 29th Division marched when they came home from the war to end war.

There the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, was entertained; and the Duke of Windsor, formerly Edward VIII, stayed when he visited Baltimore with his wife, formerly Wallis Warfield, who played there as a child. There a boarding house was host to Jerome Bonaparte, grandson of that other Jerome Bonaparte (brother of Napoleon) who married that other Baltimorean, Betsy Patterson. The same boarding house was also host to Woodrow Wilson in the 1880's when he was studying at Johns Hopkins (just up the street in those days); thirty years later, when he was President, Wilson again stayed on Mount Vernon Place, this time in the house of Theodore Marburg, where, it is said, the two men drafted the covenant of the League of Nations. Other Presidents came to Mount Vernon Place, too, as we shall see.

There Harry Lehr and Louise Morris went wading through a fountain on their way home from a ball in the Nineties, and everybody was *terribly amused*; but when in the

1940's another man, who later gave his name as Smith, took off all his clothes and went dancing in the fountain, no one was amused and he spent the night in jail despite his protest that "there are statues up there with no clothes on."

There a member of Congress was journalistically transported one night early in this century, because it was so respectable. He had got into a fight in a house of ill repute in a less distinguished neighborhood, and was bashed over the head with a spittoon. The injury necessitated a trip to the hospital, so it couldn't be kept out of the newspapers; but H. L. Mencken and the other young journalists of the day, more discreet than present-day reporters, agreed to save the poor man embarrassment and ascribed the accident to a fall on the ice on Mount Vernon Place. But some 30 years later the Place had its own house of ill repute for a time, when it was at its lowest ebb.

Mount Vernon Place has had its ups and downs. Had it not, it would reflect its city less well. But the fact that it remains, intact, is more than a testament to the latter-day preservationists, though it is certainly that. The commemorative statues, which led one resident to call the Place "our municipal Pantheon," have been accumulating there for a hundred years or more; they show that even a century ago Mount Vernon Place was thought of as more than a nice address—then as now it had a special significance to Baltimore.

The sense of the special comes in part from the beauty of design, in part from the presence of major institutions, in part from the sense of history; but this Place reflects Baltimore, is indeed its symbolic embodiment, because of other things, too, things that have to do with living, and with scale, and with attitude.

Back in the Twenties Mencken wrote a piece in which he deplored the building of skyscrapers in Baltimore. Baltimore, his argument went, shouldn't try to be like New York because it couldn't be. It should be satisfied with being Baltimore, which he thought was better anyway. New York was a place where people transacted business; if they had to reside there, they did so meanly, in big impersonal apartment houses. Baltimore, on the other hand, was a place where people lived — in houses, which were of human scale and which made the people in them feel comfortable, at home.

Mount Vernon Place says just that. It is to a great degree a place of houses, where people lived; people still do live in many of them. New York is often symbolized by Wall Street, where people do business. Washington is usually symbolized by the Capitol, where people govern. Baltimore is symbolized by Mount Vernon Place, where people live.

Moreover, because the scale of Mount Vernon Place is that of the house — with but a couple of exceptions the buildings are no taller than the townhouse of a well-to-do person — it is a scale in which the human being can feel comfortable and at home rather than overwhelmed and insignificant.

And that is the kind of place Baltimore is. Those of us who love the city will tell you that we love it precisely because it is not New York or London or Paris. It is smaller, quieter, more comfortable and homey, more conservative in its ways; the mind is better able to compass it and feel, in some nonphysical sense, secure here. There is

nothing particularly exciting about Mount Vernon Place, but Baltimoreans don't especially like excitement, and the tension that goes with it. They like to be comfortable. And they like to be at home. Literally. Baltimoreans are stay-at-homes to an astonishing degree for inhabitants of a city this large. And when they do go out the place they like best to go is to somebody else's home, for dinner. As the "parlour," in James's singularly apt image, is the center of the home, so Mount Vernon Place in its scale and in its meaning is the spiritual center of this very homey city.

But that isn't all. Mount Vernon Place also reflects the Baltimorean's self-serving reserve, what I have elsewhere called his smug inhibition. We are often accused, when we talk of liking our city because it isn't bigger and more exciting, of a provincial defensiveness. And to a degree that may be true. Now and then we may be secretly inclined to wish that Baltimore were, well, at least a little more important, more noticed among the cities of the world. But we would never admit that to a New Yorker. There is in us, as there is in everybody, that which wants to be noticed; but there is in us also, and more strongly, that which doesn't want to *seem* to want to be noticed. So our public attitude must be that we like our city just as it is; were it more it would be — not quite proper. Mount Vernon Place says — above all and precisely — that.

The scale of these little squares, both of the parks and of the buildings facing them, is such that it projects, and as a virtue, that it is not *more*. The houses are large, for they were the houses of the rich, but they never matched in size or grandeur the palaces of upper Fifth Avenue or Newport — and not only because Baltimoreans were not, by and large, as rich as Vanderbilts or Rockefellers. No, these facades have about them a certain reserve, a certain disinclination to demand attention. Taken together, they suggest the traditional Baltimore attitude: partly English, partly Southern, partly that of the wallflower who has convinced herself that it's better not to have a crowd of men around. From a history of being overlooked, Baltimoreans have decided that being overlooked was what they had in mind all the time. "Admire me if you will," say the houses on Mount Vernon Place, "but don't get the idea that I care." Even the biggest house there, designed by Stanford White and John Russell Pope for the most pretentious of Baltimore's socialites, exhibits that quality of, in James's phrase, the "blandly quadrilateral." And, as he also implied, the blandly complacent.

Not, however, for the lack of expenditure. I am speaking, of course, of *the* house on Mount Vernon Place, which is just what *the* house most anywhere is: not the oldest or the most beautiful, but the biggest and the most expensive. Its facade stretches 117 feet along the square and takes in three addresses: numbers 7, 9, and 11 West. It is even deeper than it is long, and has been the object of a great many superlatives including "the longest rowhouse in the world" — which, conveniently, it would be difficult to check.

The house, with everything in it, is said to have cost up to \$6 million. When you consider that in today's terms that might be 20 times as much, it seems impossible to believe that such a sum could have been spent on it. But the more you know about the



house, its mistress, and all that went into it, the less impossible it seems.

Let us take ourselves back to the year when James visited and gathered the impressions for his essay, 1904; the Place was at its apogee, and the final part of the great mansion at 7, 9, and 11 had just been completed. Let us pretend that we have been invited by the mistress of the house to take a tour — quite an honor, as we shall see. The house, as we have been told in preparation for our visit, was originally three separate rowhouses, built at mid-century. In 1872 the lady who is our hostess married one of Baltimore's richer men, whose father bought the newlyweds number 11 as a wedding present. In time, though they had no children, the house became too small for their style of living; so they bought the house next door, number 9, and hired one of America's leading architects, Stanford White of New York, to turn both into a single residence. Some years later our hostess's first husband died, and in 1902 she married the man who had been his doctor. At that point, though there were still no children, the house again seemed too small, and the lady whom we are visiting, since she's the rich one, bought the next house down, number 7, and hired the presently popular young architect John Russell Pope to make it an addition to her already ample mansion.

We note as we approach that Pope has extended the brownstone facade across the front of the third house in a manner entirely in keeping with White's design. The entrance is in the westernmost portion, one of the two thirds designed by White. We pass through curved doors of oak and poplar into a vestibule with a mosaic floor, a fountain, and a huge Tiffany window on the front. From there we go into the hall, two stories high, with more Tiffany windows on the upper floor, with oak paneling and an immense fireplace, and with a second-floor gallery running around three sides of the room.

From this room a tight, spiral oak staircase ascends to another Tiffany window two floors above, and beside the staircase there is a rather narrow hall that leads to the family dining room, gloomily impressive with its tapestried walls and elaborately carved, black-painted fireplace and sideboard. Across one corner is one of the house's big vaults, this one no doubt for the family silver. There is plenty of it.

Off the dining room is the ladies' withdrawing room, much lighter in feeling, its domed ceiling delicately decorated with plasterwork and its walls covered in our hostess's favorite color: red.

Going back to the front hall, we pass from there to the second section of the house, originally number 9, also part of the Stanford White design. Here there were two rooms, but they have recently been made into one great drawing room. It is lighter and more airy in feeling this way, though heavy curtains still hang at doors as well as windows and the room is filled with French furniture ordered by Mr. White from Jules Allard Freres in Paris.

From this room two doors lead to the Pope section of the house. One of them goes to the library in front, with its paneling and built-in bookcases, the other to a hall, from which a wide, open marble stairway descends to the ground floor. Looking at this

stairway, and comparing it in our minds with White's twisting, wooden design in the other hall, we realize that while Pope may have made his part of the facade conform to White's, he has here expressed his own, very different vision.

To the rear of the hall is a great ballroom, 30 feet wide by 70 feet long, with a large stage at the far end, and a partially gilded ceiling inset with glass panels lighted from above. The upper walls of the room are painted with scenes, and below them are red damask panels on which hang a part of the collection of Old Master paintings which will, when it is complete, include works by Hals, Rembrandt, Van Dyke, Fragonard, Sully, Canaletto, Chardin and others.

Returning to the hall and descending that marble stairway, we come, under the ballroom, to the elegant supper room, where 120 can be seated and where mirrored walls reflect beautiful Meissen chandeliers and sconces.

Overwhelming as this short tour of one floor and one room below has been, we have not seen the house in its final form. In 1913, it will acquire a grand gallery across the back of the main floor which will enclose the square around the house's central, roofed, three-story conservatory, with its cascades of greenery down the walls and its claustrophobia of orchids and other exotic flowers, the whole relieved by a splashing fountain and canaries.

Nor have we met our hostess, the person more responsible than any other for the mansion we have seen and a figure who is in the process of becoming almost legendary among the upper reaches of Baltimore Society. She is, by 1904, Mrs. Henry Barton Jacobs, queen of Society; but she began, 53 years ago, as Mary Sloan Frick.

It was no mean beginning. Miss Frick was the daughter of a well-known lawyer in Baltimore, and came of an old family with connections to the New York Fricks. When she married Robert Garrett in 1872 and moved into number 11 West, Garrett was already a well-known name on the squares. Robert's grandfather, the founder of a famous Baltimore banking house, had earlier lived at 14 or 16 East; and had built for Robert's father, John W., president of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, a mansion at the southwest corner of Cathedral and Monument Streets, where the Mount Vernon Place Apartments stand today. The house later belonged to Robert's sister, Miss Mary Garrett, who founded Bryn Mawr School, and eventually the house became the first home of the Baltimore Museum of Art.

When Mary Frick married Robert Garrett she was a good catch. For all their money, the Garretts had not been in Baltimore Society long, and they needed to make alliances with old families.\* With Mary Frick, Robert Garrett got a class name, and with the present of the house at 11 West he got a class address to go with it. The house, built about the middle of the Nineteenth Century, had belonged to Samuel K. George, from whom the Garretts bought it. They lived there for a decade before buying 9 West, which had belonged to Captain James Ryan. Captain Ryan was married to Susan Fitzhugh Gordon, which establishes one of the Gordon family connections with the four squares.

*\*See note next page.*

The Garretts promptly hired Stanford White to turn the two houses into a single mansion, and turn it he did, to the alarm of the neighbors. If we, today, can see in the Garrett-Jacobs mansion an example of Baltimore reserve, to the owners of its staid, mid-century neighbors it was too, too modern.

Especially opposed to it was the Garretts' next-door neighbor, Henry Pratt Janes, who lived at 13 West. When it became evident that the Garretts' vestibule would protrude from the former building line and cut off Mr. Janes's view of the Washington Monument from his first floor windows, he sued — on the basis of deprivation of view and deprivation of "air and sunlight." Lest those reasons sound silly, rowhouses do need as much sunlight as possible through their front windows, as they don't have side windows in the front rooms; and after all, one of the reasons people wanted to live on Mount Vernon Place was for the view of the nationally-famous Washington Monument.

A lower court took Mr. Janes's suit seriously, and decided in his favor. But the Garretts appealed and finally prevailed in a higher court after the testimony of John R. Niernsee that there was nothing wrong with the house or its vestibule. Thirty years later Mrs. Garrett, who was by then Mrs. Jacobs, was to buy 13 West and tear down all but the front part of it for the final addition to her house, a pantry. Oh, yes, and to provide the west side of her house with additional "light and air." The mills of the rich sometimes grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly well.

If Stanford White is the architect of record of the first two parts of the house, it is said that there were many disputes with the imperious Mary Garrett, and some think she is equally responsible for its appearance. In any case, as we have seen, when she bought number 7 West in 1902 she hired not Stanford White, who was still alive, but John Russell Pope as architect.

By that time, she was Mrs. Jacobs. Robert Garrett did not enjoy good health. In the

*\*The Garretts had, of course, bought their way into Society just the way everybody else has for thousands of years. Many of today's oldest and most distinguished families are descended from people who, in medieval times, bought their way in by scraping together enough money to buy a horse, the prerequisite for becoming a knight and starting up the ladder. Buying your way in got a bad name in America because the only real class system in this country is economic; at some point, therefore, those who had been rich but no longer were had to create some fiction other than money to keep themselves in. They therefore created the fiction of blood. The fiction was reinforced in the South, to which Baltimore has strong ties, after the Civil War, when there were an awful lot of people down there who had been rich but no longer were. The term "genteel poverty" became quite popular. But of course the strongest advocates of the fiction of blood have always been the sons and daughters of those who bought their way in. The standard procedure is to make enough money to buy your way in so that your children can try and keep their generation's nouveaux riches out with the fiction that Society is based on blood, not money. They don't succeed, and so the wheel rolls on.*

late 1880's his health broke down completely. At that point Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs, a Boston specialist, was brought in to be his personal physician. To be near his patient, Dr. Jacobs moved to Baltimore and maintained an office in the Garrett house, entered through the still-existing door to the ground floor at the west end of it. Dr. Jacobs no doubt prolonged Mr. Garrett's life, but could not do so indefinitely. Robert Garrett died in 1896. Six years later — after a suitable interval even for those days — the widow married Dr. Jacobs, who gave up the active practice of medicine and settled down to being a civic-minded citizen.

Even better bred than his wife — he was directly descended from John and Priscilla Alden and related to five other Mayflower passengers — Dr. Jacobs was a quiet, intelligent, conservative, beautifully-educated man. He was a founder of the Maryland Tuberculosis Association, a contributor to numerous medical societies, a longterm vestryman of Grace and St. Peter's Church, vice president and president of the board of the Baltimore Museum, a member of every important club in the city and of at least 20 boards of directors, a well-known figure in European as well as American medical circles, and the collector of 5,000 books on medical subjects, which filled the shelves in the big library.

But withal he did not compete — indeed, he did not try to — with his wife. Their marriage on April 2, 1902 came as something of a shock to the community, despite many rumors. A week before, the then Mrs. Garrett (51) had been asked by a newspaper if her engagement to Dr. Jacobs (43) was about to be announced. "There will be no such announcement," she replied succinctly, and that seemed to settle the matter. True to her word, there was no such announcement. One day they just went over to Grace and St. Peter's and got married. Even the household servants were taken by surprise.

The previous day, the couple had signed a legal agreement that neither would ever claim any of the other's possessions. That must have been to satisfy the lady, for she had many times the money he had. She was reputed to be worth \$20,000,000 in 1902, and some have put her fortune, at its greatest, at a much higher figure.

It has been said that she made most of it herself. The story goes that at the time of the near-collapse of the B. & O., in the 1880's, she offered to buy all of Miss Mary Garrett's stock in the railroad, and did, when it was selling very low. It was a gamble, for the line went into a form of receivership, and Mrs. Garrett is said to have spent many hours pacing the floor in anxiety over whether she had done the right thing. She had. The B. & O.'s finances were put in order, the railroad subsequently prospered, and Mrs. Garrett made a fortune. Or so the story goes.

She spent her money, or a lot of it, consolidating her position at the acme of Baltimore Society — efforts which only continued after she married Dr. Jacobs. It was Mrs. Henry Barton Jacobs, the papers reported, who bought the house at 7 West and rebuilt it as an addition to *her* mansion. It was Mrs. Jacobs who owned a villa at Newport (also designed by John Russell Pope), who owned an estate called Uplands near Catonsville, who kept an apartment in Paris, who collected the notable paintings



— or at least paid for them — which decorated those gold and red walls of hers.

(About the art collection, it has been reported that in 1908 René Gimpel, a Paris art dealer, informed Mrs. Jacobs that a number of her French paintings were fakes. Presumably she got rid of them, and subsequently, it is reported, she bought through M. Gimpel.)

She not only collected art. She collected more than 100 Oriental rugs for her floors, loads and loads of furniture (most of it, curiously, seems to have been reproduction, not authentic Eighteenth Century French furniture), and enough other stuff to outfit a moderate-sized town. A catalogue of the auction sale of the effects of the house, held in 1940 after both Jacobses had died, is revealing.

The auction, which went on for days, contained 1,210 lots. Among them were 107 lots of china (many of them whole services) including 232 entree plates, 485 dinner plates, and 664 dessert plates; 1,147 wine glasses and finger bowls; 124 lots of linens; 78 lots of silver plus 49 lots of Georgian silver and Sheffield plate; 58 lots of decorative porcelain and faience; 46 lots of bronzes, ormolu and terra cottas; 155 gilded music room chairs (the ballroom was also used for recitals and musicales); 86 table cloths of various sizes, not counting a 7-yard banquet cloth and a 9-yard banquet cloth, and on and on. And Mrs. Jacobs had two other houses and an apartment in Paris.

She also had a staff of servants, for the Mount Vernon Place mansion, which numbered between 16 and 24. The lower, plainer level of the now-disused two-level elevator was for the menials; the upper level, plushly upholstered, was for family and guests. This was one of the curiosities of the house, another of which was the interesting early form of air conditioning. Above the ballroom stage there remains a huge fan, which the present owners of the building made the mistake of turning on when they moved in. It pulled clouds of accumulated soot out of the hot-air heating ducts, and the cleanup job took days.

Mrs. Jacobs seems to have been a restless person, always changing the decorations of her various residences. As soon as something was finished, she wanted to change it. And like the others of her time who had the money to do so, she was always moving from place to place. The summer was spent in Newport, the fall at Uplands, the winter "season" at Mount Vernon Place, the spring in Europe. But getting to Europe, for Mrs. Jacobs, was less than half the fun: she got seasick. And so to make the ordeal as bearable as possible she had her staterooms, in whatever ship she decided to take, redecorated with her own furniture and hangings. On board with her went also a special supply of the foods she liked best, which were prepared in a special galley by special stewards.

When she traveled by carriage, and later by car, she was accompanied by two servants, a chauffeur and a footman. Once, going to Bar Harbor on vacation, she took along 8 horses, 2 Victorias, a dog cart, a vis-a-vis, 4 wagons, and 100 trunks and boxes. When she went to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 the arrangements for the accommodations for her party of 8 required 40 letters and 16 telegrams. She reserved 2 single bedrooms, 3 double bedrooms, 3 servants' rooms, 3 bathrooms, and, oddly enough,

only 1 sitting room. Her rooms, she specified, "are to have fireplaces and to face the lake."

Mary Frick Garrett Jacobs had her rivals in Baltimore Society from time to time. "Almighty Lou" Gill was the principal one for a time (and wouldn't it be nice to know more about someone with a nickname like that?), and there was a fun-loving crowd gathered around the "Allie" (Alexander) Browns who didn't go in for the stuffiness of the Jacobs set. (Indeed, Douglas Gordon recalls that "Mrs. Alexander Brown once said, 'I could sleep with a different man every night and people would still come to my parties.' And she was right, because she was a fascinating woman.")

But stuffy or not, Mrs. Jacobs spent money on a scale that was simply beyond serious competition in Baltimore. And so, of course, she was the queen of Society, the grandest ever of our grande dames (for as the late William B. Marye once succinctly put it, "Baltimore loves money"). If she so much as acknowledged you, with a little bow in your direction at the opera or the races, you felt your social position rise a little. If she dropped in on your party for a few minutes it was a success. And if she invited you to her house you had it made. After she and a group of other ladies founded the Assembly — still one of the most exclusive functions of the social season (some would say *the* most exclusive) — it was said that the committee designated to decide on who got invitations never really had the final say: Mrs. Jacobs did.

Mrs. John Nicholas Brown, who grew up in Baltimore as Anne Kinsolving, recalls a story about the Assembly and Mrs. Jacobs. "I remember somebody wrote a play about a meeting of the Assembly committee. In the play the meeting took place in the 'throne room' of the Henry Barton Jacobs house, and Queen Mary Jacobs was sitting on the throne and Mathilde Manly, the first lady-in-waiting, entered singing, 'Hail, Mary, full of checks.' "

There is a story, perhaps apochryphal but from more than one source, that one day a lady was ushered into The Presence of Mrs. Jacobs and seated herself in a large arm-chair. The visitor thought she felt something wriggling under her, but was far too self-conscious in The Presence to jump up; so she reasoned that she was imagining things. After a few minutes the wriggling stopped and the lady relaxed, thinking her aberration had passed. When she rose to leave it was discovered that she had smothered one of Mrs. Jacobs's pet Pekingese dogs. (I wish I knew what she did then.)

Another lady, who made her debut in the Teens and was entertained by Mrs. Jacobs, has recalled her tellingly as "a formal and a formidable woman." But if her formality and all that went with it seems a bit ridiculous to the present generation, it wasn't to our grandfathers and great-grandfathers. It was what people, at least people in Society, did. No one thought Mrs. Jacobs absurd; she was a representative product of her time, a time when rich people thought nothing of sitting down several times a week to sumptuous meals of seven courses, including oysters, terrapin at \$12 a portion, and canvasback ducks. If Mrs. Jacobs had more servants than anybody else in Baltimore, those who lived on Mount Vernon Place couldn't possibly get by without at least seven.

But people didn't only spend on themselves. Mrs. Jacobs, for instance, was conscious of her social obligations. She gave \$40,000 to this charity, \$50,000 to that one. Childless herself, she enjoyed endowing hospitals for children, and every Christmas gave a party at her house for all Baltimore's messenger boys. Before she died she gave her art collection, then appraised at \$2,000,000, to the Baltimore Museum of Art. And when she died in 1936 she left Uplands as a home for aged Episcopal women and most of the rest of her \$6,000,000 estate (it would have been many times that before the Depression) to charity. Furthermore she did not, by the standards of her time, flaunt her wealth or her position. We have lingered long with her because her style of living was indicative of, if grander than, the way most people on Mount Vernon Place lived in those days. They lived big but they didn't advertise it. They were shy about that, and with reason. The lower classes, you know. The story is told of the newly-rich man in New York who built a mansion with gold-plated doors on the front. When a friend suggested he change to a duller metal so as not to invite the resentment of the lower classes, he did so. He changed to platinum. Mrs. Jacobs's doors were neither gold nor platinum. She never sought publicity; when she could, she shunned it. She never gave interviews to the newspapers. Perish the thought.

If she was shy of the press, however, she was not so shy as her next-door neighbor, Henry Walters. He lived in the smaller but handsome house at number 5 West. When, during the First World War, Henry Walters had his picture taken as a member of the Railway Advisory Board, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that it was the first picture taken of him since he was four years old (the *Wall Street Journal*, for once, was wrong). He was then in his sixties, controlled major railroads in the South, was considered the richest man living below the Mason-Dixon line and owned one of the greatest private art collections in the world. Yet he was so self-effacing that the *Journal* reported, "Walters might be called the Wall Street mystery if enough were known about him to stimulate general curiosity. But... he is not even a mystery. He is an unknown."

So great was his passion for anonymity that he would not even answer letters from *Who's Who* and similar publications, though they threatened to print the misinformation they had if he would not correct it. On the other hand, he built his own gallery to house his immense collections and periodically threw it open to the public (always charging a nominal admission, which he always gave to charity), and the range of his buying was far greater than that of more famous collectors such as Mrs. Isabella Stewart Gardner of Boston or Mrs. Potter Palmer of Chicago.

He did not buy indiscriminately, but there were times when he bought voluminously. In 1902, for instance, he bought the Dom Marcello Massarenti collection of early Italian art, up to and including Raphael. It consisted of some 900 works, and Mr. Walters chartered a ship to transport it to America. He usually bought whole collections, in fact — George Lucas, who had been his father's agent, sold him some things, too, but he also bought from Leon Gruel, Dikran Kelekian and other dealers. But his