

HENRY CABOT LODGE

GEORGE WASHINGTON,
VOLUME I

Henry Cabot Lodge
George Washington, Volume I

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PREFACE

This edition has been carefully revised, and although very little has been added of late years to our knowledge of the facts of Washington's life, I have tried to examine all that has appeared. The researches of Mr. Waters, which were published just after these volumes in the first edition had passed through the press, enable me to give the Washington pedigree with certainty, and have turned conjecture into fact. The recent publication in full of Lear's memoranda, although they tell nothing new about Washington's last moments, help toward a completion of all the details of the scene.

H.C. LODGE.

WASHINGTON, February 7, 1898.

INTRODUCTION

February 9 in the year 1800 was a gala day in Paris. Napoleon had decreed a triumphal procession, and on that day a splendid military ceremony was performed in the Champ de Mars, and the trophies of the Egyptian expedition were exultingly displayed. There were, however, two features in all this pomp and show which seemed strangely out of keeping with the glittering pageant and the sounds of victorious rejoicing. The standards and flags of the army were hung with crape, and after the grand parade the dignitaries of the land proceeded solemnly to the Temple of Mars, and heard the eloquent M. de Fontanes deliver an "Eloge Funèbre."¹

About the same time, if tradition may be trusted, the flags upon the conquering Channel fleet of England were lowered to half-mast in token of grief for the same event which had caused the armies of France to wear the customary badges of mourning.

If some "traveler from an antique land" had observed these manifestations, he would have wondered much whose memory it was that had called them forth from these two great nations, then struggling fiercely with each other for supremacy on land and sea. His wonder would not have abated had he been told that the man for whom they mourned had wrested an empire from one, and at the time of his death was arming his countrymen against the other.

These signal honors were paid by England and France to a simple Virginian gentleman who had never left his own country, and who when he died held no other office than the titular command of a provisional army. Yet although these marks of respect from foreign nations were notable and striking, they were slight and formal in comparison with the silence and grief which fell upon the people of the United States when they heard that Washington was dead. He had died in the fullness of time, quietly, quickly, and in his own house, and yet his death called out a display of grief which has rarely been equaled in history. The trappings and suits of woe were there of course, but what made this mourning memorable was that the land seemed hushed with sadness, and that the sorrow dwelt among the people and was neither forced nor fleeting. Men carried it home with them to their firesides and to their churches, to their offices and their workshops. Every preacher took the life which had closed as the noblest of texts, and every orator made it the theme of his loftiest eloquence. For more than a

¹ A report recently discovered shows that more even was intended than was actually done. The following is a translation of the paper, the original of which is Nos. 172 and 173 of volume 51 of the manuscript series known as *Etats-Unis*, 1799, 1800 (years 7 and 8 of the French republic):—"Report of Talleyrand, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the occasion of the death of George Washington. "A nation which some day will be a great nation, and which today is the wisest and happiest on the face of the earth, weeps at the bier of a man whose courage and genius contributed the most to free it from bondage, and elevate it to the rank of an independent and sovereign power. The regrets caused by the death of this great man, the memories aroused by these regrets, and a proper veneration for all that is held dear and sacred by mankind, impel us to give expression to our sentiments by taking part in an event which deprives the world of one of its brightest ornaments, and removes to the realm of history one of the noblest lives that ever honored the human race. "The name of Washington is inseparably linked with a memorable epoch. He adorned this epoch by his talents and the nobility of his character, and with virtues that even envy dared not assail. History offers few examples of such renown. Great from the outset of his career, patriotic before his country had become a nation, brilliant and universal despite the passions and political resentments that would gladly have checked his career, his fame is to-day imperishable,—fortune having consecrated his claim to greatness, while the prosperity of a people destined for grand achievements is the best evidence of a fame ever to increase. "His own country now honors his memory with funeral ceremonies, having lost a citizen whose public actions and unassuming grandeur in private life were a living example of courage, wisdom, and unselfishness; and France, which from the dawn of the American Revolution hailed with hope a nation, hitherto unknown, that was discarding the vices of Europe, which foresaw all the glory that this nation would bestow on humanity, and the enlightenment of governments that would ensue from the novel character of the social institutions and the new type of heroism of which Washington and America were models for the world at large,—France, I repeat, should depart from established usages and do honor to one whose fame is beyond comparison with that of others. "The man who, amid the decadence of modern ages, first dared believe that he could inspire degenerate nations with courage to rise to the level of republican virtues, lived for all nations and for all centuries; and this nation, which first saw in the life and success of that illustrious man a foreboding of its destiny, and therein recognized a future to be realized and duties to be performed, has every right to class him as a fellow-citizen. I therefore submit to the First Consul the following decree:—"Bonaparte, First Consul of the republic, decrees as follows:—"Article 1. A statue is to be erected to General Washington. "Article 2. This statue is to be placed in one of the squares of Paris, to be chosen by the minister of the interior, and it shall be his duty to execute the present decree."

year the newspapers teemed with eulogy and elegy, and both prose and poetry were severely taxed to pay tribute to the memory of the great one who had gone. The prose was often stilted and the verse was generally bad, but yet through it all, from the polished sentences of the funeral oration to the humble effusions of the obscurest poet's corner, there ran a strong and genuine feeling, which the highest art could not refine nor the clumsiest expression degrade.

From that time to this, the stream of praise has flowed on, ever deepening and strengthening, both at home and abroad. Washington alone in history seems to have risen so high in the estimation of men that criticism has shrunk away abashed, and has only been heard whispering in corners or growling hoarsely in the now famous house in Cheyne Row.

There is a world of meaning in all this, could we but rightly interpret it. It cannot be brushed aside as mere popular superstition, formed of fancies and prejudices, to which intelligent opposition would be useless. Nothing is in fact more false than the way in which popular opinions are often belittled and made light of. The opinion of the world, however reached, becomes in the course of years or centuries the nearest approach we can make to final judgment on human things. Don Quixote may be dumb to one man, and the sonnets of Shakespeare may leave another cold and weary. But the fault is in the reader. There is no doubt of the greatness of Cervantes or Shakespeare, for they have stood the test of time, and the voices of generations of men, from which there is no appeal, have declared them to be great. The lyrics that all the world loves and repeats, the poetry which is often called hackneyed, is on the whole the best poetry. The pictures and statues that have drawn crowds of admiring gazers for centuries are the best. The things that are "caviare to the general" often undoubtedly have much merit, but they lack quite as often the warm, generous, and immortal vitality which appeals alike to rich and poor, to the ignorant and to the learned.

So it is with men. When years after his death the world agrees to call a man great, the verdict must be accepted. The historian may whiten or blacken, the critic may weigh and dissect, the form of the judgment may be altered, but the central fact remains, and with the man, whom the world in its vague way has pronounced great, history must reckon one way or the other, whether for good or ill.

When we come to such a man as Washington, the case is still stronger. Men seem to have agreed that here was greatness which no one could question, and character which no one could fail to respect. Around other leaders of men, even around the greatest of them, sharp controversies have arisen, and they have their partisans dead as they had them living. Washington had enemies who assailed him, and friends whom he loved, but in death as in life he seems to stand alone, above conflict and superior to malice. In his own country there is no dispute as to his greatness or his worth. Englishmen, the most unsparing censors of everything American, have paid homage to Washington, from the days of Fox and Byron to those of Tennyson and Gladstone. In France his name has always been revered, and in distant lands those who have scarcely heard of the existence of the United States know the country of Washington. To the mighty cairn which the nation and the states have raised to his memory, stones have come from Greece, sending a fragment of the Parthenon; from Brazil and Switzerland, Turkey and Japan, Siam and India beyond the Ganges. On that sent by China we read: "In devising plans, Washington was more decided than Ching Shing or Woo Kwang; in winning a country he was braver than Tsau Tsau or Ling Pi. Wielding his four-footed falchion, he extended the frontiers and refused to accept the Royal Dignity. The sentiments of the Three Dynasties have reappeared in him. Can any man of ancient or modern times fail to pronounce Washington peerless?" These comparisons so strange to our ears tell of a fame which has reached farther than we can readily conceive.

Washington stands as a type, and has stamped himself deep upon the imagination of mankind. Whether the image be true or false is of no consequence: the fact endures. He rises up from the dust of history as a Greek statue comes pure and serene from the earth in which it has lain for centuries. We know his deeds; but what was it in the man which has given him such a place in the affection, the respect, and the imagination of his fellow men throughout the world?

Perhaps this question has been fully answered already. Possibly every one who has thought upon the subject has solved the problem, so that even to state it is superfluous. Yet a brilliant writer, the latest historian of the American people, has said: "General Washington is known to us, and President Washington. But George Washington is an unknown man." These are pregnant words, and that they should be true seems to make any attempt to fill the great gap an act of sheer and hopeless audacity. Yet there can be certainly no reason for adding another to the almost countless lives of Washington unless it be done with the object in view which Mr. McMaster indicates. Any such attempt may fail in execution, but if the purpose be right it has at least an excuse for its existence.

To try to add to the existing knowledge of the facts in Washington's career would have but little result beyond the multiplication of printed pages. The antiquarian, the historian, and the critic have exhausted every source, and the most minute details have been and still are the subject of endless writing and constant discussion. Every house he ever lived in has been drawn and painted; every portrait, and statue, and medal has been catalogued and engraved. His private affairs, his servants, his horses, his arms, even his clothes, have all passed beneath the merciless microscope of history. His biography has been written and rewritten. His letters have been drawn out from every lurking place, and have been given to the world in masses and in detachments. His battles have been fought over and over again, and his state papers have undergone an almost verbal examination. Yet, despite his vast fame and all the labors of the antiquarian and biographer, Washington is still not understood,—as a man he is unfamiliar to the posterity that reverences his memory. He has been misrepresented more or less covertly by hostile critics and by candid friends, and has been disguised and hidden away by the mistaken eulogy and erroneous theories of devout admirers. All that any one now can do, therefore, is to endeavor from this mass of material to depict the very man himself in the various conjunctures of his life, and strive to see what he really was and what he meant then, and what he is and what he means to us and to the world to-day.

In the progress of time Washington has become in the popular imagination largely mythical; for mythical ideas grow up in this nineteenth century, notwithstanding its boasted intelligence, much as they did in the infancy of the race. The old sentiment of humanity, more ancient and more lasting than any records or monuments, which led men in the dawn of history to worship their ancestors and the founders of states, still endures. As the centuries have gone by, this sentiment has lost its religious flavor, and has become more and more restricted in its application, but it has never been wholly extinguished. Let some man arise great above the ordinary bounds of greatness, and the feeling which caused our progenitors to bow down at the shrines of their forefathers and chiefs leads us to invest our modern hero with a mythical character, and picture him in our imagination as a being to whom, a few thousand years ago, altars would have been builded and libations poured out.

Thus we have to-day in our minds a Washington grand, solemn, and impressive. In this guise he appears as a man of lofty intellect, vast moral force, supremely successful and fortunate, and wholly apart from and above all his fellow-men. This lonely figure rises up to our imagination with all the imperial splendor of the Livian Augustus, and with about as much warmth and life as that unrivaled statue. In this vague but quite serious idea there is a great deal of truth, but not the whole truth. It is the myth of genuine love and veneration springing from the inborn gratitude of man to the founders and chiefs of his race, but it is not by any means the only one of its family. There is another, equally diffused, of wholly different parentage. In its inception this second myth is due to the itinerant parson, bookmaker, and bookseller, Mason Weems. He wrote a brief biography of Washington, of trifling historical value, yet with sufficient literary skill to make it widely popular. It neither appealed to nor was read by the cultivated and instructed few, but it reached the homes of the masses of the people. It found its way to the bench of the mechanic, to the house of the farmer, to the log cabins of the frontiersman and pioneer. It was carried across the continent on the first waves of advancing settlement. Its anecdotes and its simplicity of thought commended it to children both at home and at school, and, passing through edition after edition, its statements were widely spread, and it colored

insensibly the ideas of hundreds of persons who never had heard even the name of the author. To Weems we owe the anecdote of the cherry-tree, and other tales of a similar nature. He wrote with Dr. Beattie's life of his son before him as a model, and the result is that Washington comes out in his pages a faultless prig. Whether Weems intended it or not, that is the result which he produced, and that is the Washington who was developed from the wide sale of his book. When this idea took definite and permanent shape it caused a reaction. There was a revolt against it, for the hero thus engendered had qualities which the national sense of humor could not endure in silence. The consequence is, that the Washington of Weems has afforded an endless theme for joke and burlesque. Every professional American humorist almost has tried his hand at it; and with each recurring 22d of February the hard-worked jesters of the daily newspapers take it up and make a little fun out of it, sufficient for the day that is passing over them. The opportunity is tempting, because of the ease with which fun can be made when that fundamental source of humor, a violent contrast, can be employed. But there is no irreverence in it all, for the jest is not aimed at the real Washington, but at the Washington portrayed in the Weems biography. The worthy "rector of Mount Vernon," as he called himself, meant no harm, and there is a good deal of truth, no doubt, in his book. But the blameless and priggish boy, and the equally faultless and uninteresting man, whom he originated, have become in the process of development a myth. So in its further development is the Washington of the humorist a myth. Both alike are utterly and crudely false. They resemble their great original as much as Greenough's classically nude statue, exposed to the incongruities of the North American climate, resembles in dress and appearance the general of our armies and the first President of the United States.

Such are the myth-makers. They are widely different from the critics who have assailed Washington in a sidelong way, and who can be better dealt with in a later chapter. These last bring charges which can be met; the myth-maker presents a vague conception, extremely difficult to handle because it is so elusive.

One of our well-known historical scholars and most learned antiquarians, not long ago, in an essay vindicating the "traditional Washington," treated with scorn the idea of a "new Washington" being discovered. In one sense this is quite right, in another totally wrong. There can be no new Washington discovered, because there never was but one. But the real man has been so overlaid with myths and traditions, and so distorted by misleading criticisms, that, as has already been suggested, he has been wellnigh lost. We have the religious or statuesque myth, we have the Weems myth, and the ludicrous myth of the writer of paragraphs. We have the stately hero of Sparks, and Everett, and Marshall, and Irving, with all his great deeds as general and president duly recorded and set down in polished and eloquent sentences; and we know him to be very great and wise and pure, and, be it said with bated breath, very dry and cold. We are also familiar with the common-place man who so wonderfully illustrated the power of character as set forth by various persons, either from love of novelty or because the great chief seemed to get in the way of their own heroes.

If this is all, then the career of Washington and his towering fame present a problem of which the world has never seen the like. But this cannot be all: there must be more behind. Every one knows the famous Stuart portrait of Washington. The last effort of the artist's cunning is there employed to paint his great subject for posterity. How serene and beautiful it is! It is a noble picture for future ages to look upon. Still it is not all. There is in the dining-room of Memorial Hall at Cambridge another portrait, painted by Savage. It is cold and dry, hard enough to serve for the signboard of an inn, and able, one would think, to withstand all weathers. Yet this picture has something which Stuart left out. There is a rugged strength in the face which gives us pause, there is a massiveness in the jaw, telling of an iron grip and a relentless will, which has infinite meaning.

"Here's John the Smith's rough-hammered head. Great eye,
Gross jaw, and griped lips do what granite can
To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!"

In death as in life, there is something about Washington, call it greatness, dignity, majesty, what you will, which seems to hold men aloof and keep them from knowing him. In truth he was a most difficult man to know. Carlyle, crying out through hundreds of pages and myriads of words for the "silent man," passed by with a sneer the most absolutely silent great man that history can show. Washington's letters and speeches and messages fill many volumes, but they are all on business. They are profoundly silent as to the writer himself. From this Carlyle concluded apparently that there was nothing to tell,—a very shallow conclusion if it was the one he really reached. Such an idea was certainly far, very far, from the truth.

Behind the popular myths, behind the statuesque figure of the orator and the preacher, behind the general and the president of the historian, there was a strong, vigorous man, in whose veins ran warm, red blood, in whose heart were stormy passions and deep sympathy for humanity, in whose brain were far-reaching thoughts, and who was informed throughout his being with a resistless will. The veil of his silence is not often lifted, and never intentionally, but now and then there is a glimpse behind it; and in stray sentences and in little incidents strenuously gathered together; above all, in the right interpretation of the words, and the deeds, and the true history known to all men,—we can surely find George Washington "the noblest figure that ever stood in the forefront of a nation's life."

CHAPTER I

THE OLD DOMINION

To know George Washington, we must first of all understand the society in which he was born and brought up. As certain lilies draw their colors from the subtle qualities of the soil hidden beneath the water upon which they float, so are men profoundly affected by the obscure and insensible influences which surround their childhood and youth. The art of the chemist may discover perhaps the secret agent which tints the white flower with blue or pink, but very often the elements, which analysis detects, nature alone can combine. The analogy is not strained or fanciful when we apply it to a past society. We can separate, and classify, and label the various elements, but to combine them in such a way as to form a vivid picture is a work of surpassing difficulty. This is especially true of such a land as Virginia in the middle of the last century. Virginian society, as it existed at that period, is utterly extinct. John Randolph said it had departed before the year 1800. Since then another century, with all its manifold changes, has wellnigh come and gone. Most important of all, the last surviving institution of colonial Virginia has been swept away in the crash of civil war, which has opened a gulf between past and present wider and deeper than any that time alone could make.

Life and society as they existed in the Virginia of the eighteenth century seem, moreover, to have been sharply broken and ended. We cannot trace our steps backward, as is possible in most cases, over the road by which the world has traveled since those days. We are compelled to take a long leap mentally in order to land ourselves securely in the Virginia which honored the second George, and looked up to Walpole and Pitt as the arbiters of its fate.

We live in a period of great cities, rapid communication, vast and varied business interests, enormous diversity of occupation, great industries, diffused intelligence, farming by steam, and with everything and everybody pervaded by an unresting, high-strung activity. We transport ourselves to the Virginia of Washington's boyhood, and find a people without cities or towns, with no means of communication except what was afforded by rivers and wood roads; having no trades, no industries, no means of spreading knowledge, only one occupation, clumsily performed; and living a quiet, monotonous existence, which can now hardly be realized. It is "a far cry to Loch-Awe," as the Scotch proverb has it; and this old Virginian society, although we should find it sorry work living in it, is both pleasant and picturesque in the pages of history.

The population of Virginia, advancing toward half a million, and divided pretty equally between the free whites and the enslaved blacks, was densest, to use a most inappropriate word, at the water's edge and near the mouths of the rivers. Thence it crept backwards, following always the lines of the watercourses, and growing ever thinner and more scattered until it reached the Blue Ridge. Behind the mountains was the wilderness, haunted, as old John Lederer said a century earlier, by monsters, and inhabited, as the eighteenth-century Virginians very well knew, by savages and wild beasts, much more real and dangerous than the hobgoblins of their ancestors.

The population, in proportion to its numbers, was very widely distributed. It was not collected in groups, after the fashion with which we are now familiar, for then there were no cities or towns in Virginia. The only place which could pretend to either name was Norfolk, the solitary seaport, which, with its six or seven thousand inhabitants, formed the most glaring exception that any rule solicitous of proof could possibly desire. Williamsburg, the capital, was a straggling village, somewhat overweighted with the public buildings and those of the college. It would light up into life and vivacity during the season of politics and society, and then relapse again into the country stillness. Outside of Williamsburg and Norfolk there were various points which passed in the catalogue and on the map for towns, but which in reality were merely the shadows of a name. The most populous consisted of a few houses inhabited by storekeepers and traders, some tobacco warehouses, and a tavern, clustered

about the church or court-house. Many others had only the church, or, if a county seat, the church and court-house, keeping solitary state in the woods. There once a week the sound of prayer and gossip, or at longer intervals the voices of lawyers and politicians, and the shouts of the wrestlers on the green, broke through the stillness which with the going down of the sun resumed its sway in the forests.

There was little chance here for that friction of mind with mind, or for that quick interchange of thought and sentiment and knowledge which are familiar to the dwellers in cities, and which have driven forward more rapidly than all else what we call civilization. Rare meetings for special objects with persons as solitary in their lives and as ill-informed as himself, constituted to the average Virginian the world of society, and there was nothing from outside to supply the deficiencies at home. Once a fortnight a mail crawled down from the North, and once a month another crept on to the South. George Washington was four years old when the first newspaper was published in the colony, and he was twenty when the first actors appeared at Williamsburg. What was not brought was not sought. The Virginians did not go down to the sea in ships. They were not a seafaring race, and as they had neither trade nor commerce they were totally destitute of the inquiring, enterprising spirit, and of the knowledge brought by those pursuits which involve travel and adventure. The English tobacco-ships worked their way up the rivers, taking the great staple, and leaving their varied goods, and their tardy news from Europe, wherever they stopped. This was the sum of the information and intercourse which Virginia got from across the sea, for travelers were practically unknown. Few came on business, fewer still from curiosity. Stray peddlers from the North, or trappers from beyond the mountains with their packs of furs, chiefly constituted what would now be called the traveling public. There were in truth no means of traveling except on foot, on horseback, or by boat on the rivers, which formed the best and most expeditious highways. Stage-coaches, or other public conveyances, were unknown. Over some of the roads the rich man, with his six horses and black outriders, might make his way in a lumbering carriage, but most of the roads were little better than woodland paths; and the rivers, innocent of bridges, offered in the uncertain fords abundance of inconvenience, not unmixed with peril. The taverns were execrable, and only the ever-ready hospitality of the people made it possible to get from place to place. The result was that the Virginians stayed at home, and sought and welcomed the rare stranger at their gates as if they were well aware that they were entertaining angels.

It is not difficult to sift this home-keeping people, and find out that portion which was Virginia, for the mass was but an appendage of the small fraction which ruled, led, and did the thinking for the whole community. Half the people were slaves, and in that single wretched word their history is told. They were, on the whole, well and kindly treated, but they have no meaning in history except as an institution, and as an influence in the lives, feelings, and character of the men who made the state.

Above the slaves, little better than they in condition, but separated from them by the wide gulf of race and color, were the indented white servants, some convicts, some redemptioners. They, too, have their story told when we have catalogued them. We cross another gulf and come to the farmers, to the men who grew wheat as well as tobacco on their own land, sometimes working alone, sometimes the owners of a few slaves. Some of these men were of the class well known since as the "poor whites" of the South, the weaker brothers who could not resist the poison of slavery, but sank under it into ignorance and poverty. They were contented because their skins were white, and because they were thereby part of an aristocracy to whom labor was a badge of serfdom. The larger portion of this middle class, however, were thrifty and industrious enough. Including as they did in their ranks the hunters and pioneers, the traders and merchants, all the freemen in fact who toiled and worked, they formed the mass of the white population, and furnished the bone and sinew and some of the intellectual power of Virginia. The only professional men were the clergy, for the lawyers were few, and growing to importance only as the Revolution began; while the physicians were still fewer, and as a class of no importance at all. The clergy were a picturesque element in the social landscape, but they were as a body very poor representatives of learning, religion, and morality. They ranged from hedge parsons and Fleet chaplains, who had slunk away from England to find a desirable

obscurity in the new world, to divines of real learning and genuine piety, who were the supporters of the college, and who would have been a credit to any society. These last, however, were lamentably few in number. The mass of the clergy were men who worked their own lands, sold tobacco, were the boon companions of the planters, hunted, shot, drank hard, and lived well, performing their sacred duties in a perfunctory and not always in a decent manner.

The clergy, however, formed the stepping-stone socially between the farmers, traders, and small planters, and the highest and most important class in Virginian society. The great planters were the men who owned, ruled, and guided Virginia. Their vast estates were scattered along the rivers from the seacoast to the mountains. Each plantation was in itself a small village, with the owner's house in the centre, surrounded by outbuildings and negro cabins, and the pastures, meadows, and fields of tobacco stretching away on all sides. The rare traveler, pursuing his devious way on horseback or in a boat, would catch sight of these noble estates opening up from the road or the river, and then the forest would close in around him for several miles, until through the thinning trees he would see again the white cabins and the cleared fields of the next plantation.

In such places dwelt the Virginian planters, surrounded by their families and slaves, and in a solitude broken only by the infrequent and eagerly welcomed stranger, by their duties as vestrymen and magistrates, or by the annual pilgrimage to Williamsburg in search of society, or to sit in the House of Burgesses. They were occupied by the care of their plantations, which involved a good deal of riding in the open air, but which was at best an easy and indolent pursuit made light by slave labor and trained overseers. As a result the planters had an abundance of spare time, which they devoted to cock-fighting, horse-racing, fishing, shooting, and fox-hunting,—all, save the first, wholesome and manly sports, but which did not demand any undue mental strain. There is, indeed, no indication that the Virginians had any great love for intellectual exertion. When the amiable attorney-general of Charles II. said to the Virginian commissioners, pleading the cause of learning and religion, "Damn your souls! grow tobacco!" he uttered a precept which the mass of the planters seem to have laid to heart. For fifty years there were no schools, and down to the Revolution even the apologies bearing that honored name were few, and the college was small and struggling. In some of the great families, the eldest sons would be sent to England and to the great universities: they would make the grand tour, play a part in the fashionable society of London, and come back to their plantations fine gentlemen and scholars. Such was Colonel Byrd, in the early part of the eighteenth century, a friend of the Earl of Orrery, and the author of certain amusing memoirs. Such at a later day was Arthur Lee, doctor and diplomat, student and politician. But most of these young gentlemen thus sent abroad to improve their minds and manners led a life not materially different from that of our charming friend, Harry Warrington, after his arrival in England.

The sons who stayed at home sometimes gathered a little learning from the clergyman of the parish, or received a fair education at the College of William and Mary, but very many did not have even so much as this. There was not in truth much use for learning in managing a plantation or raising horses, and men get along surprisingly well without that which they do not need, especially if the acquisition demands labor. The Virginian planter thought little and read less, and there were no learned professions to hold out golden prizes and stimulate the love of knowledge. The women fared even worse, for they could not go to Europe or to William and Mary's, so that after exhausting the teaching capacity of the parson they settled down to a round of household duties and to the cares of a multitude of slaves, working much harder and more steadily than their lords and masters ever thought of doing.

The only general form of intellectual exertion was that of governing. The planters managed local affairs through the vestries, and ruled Virginia in the House of Burgesses. To this work they paid strict attention, and, after the fashion of their race, did it very well and very efficiently. They were an extremely competent body whenever they made up their minds to do anything; but they liked the life and habits of Squire Western, and saw no reason for adopting any others until it was necessary.

There were, of course, vast differences in the condition of the planters. Some counted their acres by thousands and their slaves by hundreds, while others scrambled along as best they might with one plantation and a few score of negroes. Some dwelt in very handsome houses, picturesque and beautiful, like Gunston Hall or Stratford, or in vast, tasteless, and extravagant piles like Rosewell. Others were contented with very modest houses, consisting of one story with a gabled roof, and flanked by two massive chimneys. In some houses there was a brave show of handsome plate and china, fine furniture, and London-made carriages, rich silks and satins, and brocaded dresses. In others there were earthenware and pewter, homespun and woolen, and little use for horses, except in the plough or under the saddle.

But there were certain qualities common to all the Virginia planters. The luxury was imperfect. The splendor was sometimes barbaric. There were holes in the brocades, and the fresh air of heaven would often blow through a broken window upon the glittering silver and the costly china. It was an easy-going aristocracy, unfinished, and frequently slovenly in its appointments, after the fashion of the warmer climates and the regions of slavery.

Everything was plentiful except ready money. In this rich and poor were alike. They were all ahead of their income, and it seems as if, from one cause or another, from extravagance or improvidence, from horses or the gaming-table, every Virginian family went through bankruptcy about once in a generation.

When Harry Warrington arrived in England, all his relations at Castlewood regarded the handsome young fellow as a prince, with his acres and his slaves. It was a natural and pleasing delusion, born of the possession of land and serfs, to which the Virginians themselves gave ready credence. They forgot that the land was so plentiful that it was of little value; that slaves were the most wasteful form of labor; and that a failure of the tobacco crop, pledged before it was gathered, meant ruin, although they had been reminded more than once of this last impressive fact. They knew that they had plenty to eat and drink, and a herd of people to wait upon them and cultivate their land, as well as obliging London merchants always ready to furnish every luxury in return for the mortgage of a crop or an estate. So they gave themselves little anxiety as to the future and lived in the present, very much to their own satisfaction.

To the communities of trade and commerce, to the mercantile and industrial spirit of to-day, such an existence and such modes of life appear distressingly lax and unprogressive. The sages of the bank parlors and the counting-rooms would shake their heads at such spendthrifts as these, refuse to discount their paper, and confidently predict that by no possibility could they come to good. They had their defects, no doubt, these planters and farmers of Virginia. The life they led was strongly developed on the animal side, and was perhaps neither stimulating nor elevating. The living was the reverse of plain, and the thinking was neither extremely high nor notably laborious. Yet in this very particular there is something rather restful and pleasant to the eye wearied by the sight of incessant movement, and to the ear deafened by the continual shout that nothing is good that does not change, and that all change must be good. We should probably find great discomforts and many unpleasant limitations in the life and habits of a hundred years ago on any part of the globe, and yet at a time when it seems as if rapidity and movement were the last words and the ultimate ideals of civilization, it is rather agreeable to turn to such a community as the eighteenth-century planters of Virginia. They lived contentedly on the acres of their fathers, and except at rare and stated intervals they had no other interests than those furnished by their ancestral domain. At the court-house, at the vestry, or in Williamsburg, they met their neighbors and talked very keenly about the politics of Europe, or the affairs of the colony. They were little troubled about religion, but they worshiped after the fashion of their fathers, and had a serious fidelity to church and king. They wrangled with their governors over appropriations, but they lived on good terms with those eminent persons, and attended state balls at what they called the palace, and danced and made merry with much stateliness and grace. Their every-day life ran on in the quiet of their plantations as calmly as one of their own rivers.

The English trader would come and go; the infrequent stranger would be received and welcomed; Christmas would be kept in hearty English fashion; young men from a neighboring estate would ride over through the darkening woods to court, or dance, or play the fiddle, like Patrick Henry or Thomas Jefferson; and these simple events were all that made a ripple on the placid stream. Much time was given to sports, rough, hearty, manly sports, with a spice of danger, and these, with an occasional adventurous dash into the wilderness, kept them sound and strong and brave, both in body and mind. There was nothing languid or effeminate about the Virginian planter. He was a robust man, quite ready to fight or work when the time came, and well fitted to deal with affairs when he was needed. He was a free-handed, hospitable, generous being, not much given to study or thought, but thoroughly public-spirited and keenly alive to the interests of Virginia. Above all things he was an aristocrat, set apart by the dark line of race, color, and hereditary servitude, as proud as the proudest Austrian with his endless quarterings, as sturdy and vigorous as an English yeoman, and as jealous of his rights and privileges as any baron who stood by John at Runnymede. To this aristocracy, careless and indolent, given to rough pleasures and indifferent to the finer and higher sides of life, the call came, as it comes to all men sooner or later, and in response they gave their country soldiers, statesmen, and jurists of the highest order, and fit for the great work they were asked to do. We must go back to Athens to find another instance of a society so small in numbers, and yet capable of such an outburst of ability and force. They were of sound English stock, with a slight admixture of the Huguenots, the best blood of France; and although for a century and a half they had seemed to stagnate in the New World, they were strong, fruitful, and effective beyond the measure of ordinary races when the hour of peril and trial was at hand.

CHAPTER II

THE WASHINGTONS

Such was the world and such the community which counted as a small fraction the Washington family. Our immediate concern is with that family, for before we approach the man we must know his ancestors. The greatest leader of scientific thought in this century has come to the aid of the genealogist, and given to the results of the latter's somewhat discredited labors a vitality and meaning which it seemed impossible that dry and dusty pedigrees and barren tables of descent should ever possess. We have always selected our race-horses according to the doctrines of evolution, and we now study the character of a great man by examining first the history of his forefathers.

Washington made so great an impression upon the world in his lifetime that genealogists at once undertook for him the construction of a suitable pedigree. The excellent Sir Isaac Heard, garter king-at-arms, worked out a genealogy which seemed reasonable enough, and then wrote to the president in relation to it. Washington in reply thanked him for his politeness, sent him the Virginian genealogy of his own branch, and after expressing a courteous interest said, in his simple and direct fashion, that he had been a busy man and had paid but little attention to the subject. His knowledge about his English forefathers was in fact extremely slight. He had heard merely that the first of the name in Virginia had come from one of the northern counties of England, but whether from Lancashire or Yorkshire, or one still more northerly, he could not tell. Sir Isaac was not thoroughly satisfied with the correctness of his own work, but presently Baker took it up in his history of Northamptonshire, and perfected it to his own satisfaction and that of the world in general. This genealogy derived Washington's descent from the owners of the manor of Sulgrave, in Northamptonshire, and thence carried it back to the Norman knight, Sir William de Hertburn. According to this pedigree the Virginian settlers, John and Lawrence, were the sons of Lawrence Washington of Sulgrave Manor, and this genealogy was adopted by Sparks and Irving, as well as by the public at large. Twenty years ago, however, Colonel Chester, by his researches, broke the most essential link in the chain forged by Heard and Baker, proving clearly that the Virginian settlers could not have been the sons of Lawrence of Sulgrave, as identified by the garter king-at-arms. Still more recently the mythical spirit has taken violent possession of the Washington ancestry, and an ingenious gentleman has traced the pedigree of our first president back to Thorfinn and thence to Odin, which is sufficiently remote, dignified, and lofty to satisfy the most exacting Welshman that ever lived. Still the breach made by Colonel Chester was not repaired, although many writers, including some who should have known better, clung with undiminished faith to the Heard pedigree. It was known that Colonel Chester himself believed that he had found the true line, coming, it is supposed, through a younger branch of the Sulgrave race, but he died before he had discovered the one bit of evidence necessary to prove an essential step, and he was too conscientiously accurate to leave anything to conjecture. Since then the researches of Mr. Henry E. Waters have established the pedigree of the Virginian Washingtons, and we are now able to know something of the men from whom George Washington drew his descent.

In that interesting land where everything, according to our narrow ideas, is upside down, it is customary, when an individual arrives at distinction, to confer nobility upon his ancestors instead of upon his children. The Washingtons offer an interesting example of the application of this Chinese system in the Western world, for, if they have not been actually ennobled in recognition of the deeds of their great descendant, they have at least become the subjects of intense and general interest. Every one of the name who could be discovered anywhere has been dragged forth into the light, and has had all that was known about him duly recorded and set down. By scanning family trees and pedigrees, and picking up stray bits of information here and there, we can learn in a rude and general fashion what manner of men those were who claimed descent from William of Hertburn, and who bore the

name of Washington in the mother-country. As Mr. Galton passes a hundred faces before the same highly sensitized plate, and gets a photograph which is a likeness of no one of his subjects, and yet resembles them all, so we may turn the camera of history upon these Washingtons, as they flash up for a moment from the dim past, and hope to obtain what Professor Huxley calls a "generic" picture of the race, even if the outlines be somewhat blurred and indistinct.

In the North of England, in the region conquered first by Saxons and then by Danes, lies the little village of Washington. It came into the possession of Sir William de Hertburn, and belonged to him at the time of the Boldon Book in 1183. Soon after, he or his descendants took the name of De Wessyngton, and there they remained for two centuries, knights of the palatinate, holding their lands by a military tenure, fighting in all the wars, and taking part in tournaments with becoming splendor. By the beginning of the fifteenth century the line of feudal knights of the palatinate was extinct, and the manor passed from the family by the marriage of Dionisia de Wessyngton. But the main stock had in the mean time thrown out many offshoots, which had taken firm root in other parts and in many counties of England. We hear of several who came in various ways to eminence. There was the learned and vigorous prior of Durham, John de Wessyngton, probably one of the original family, and the name appears in various places after his time in records and on monuments, indicating a flourishing and increasing race. Lawrence Washington, the direct ancestor of the first President of the United States, was, in the sixteenth century, the mayor of Northampton, and received from King Henry VIII. the manor of Sulgrave in 1538. In the next century we find traces of Robert Washington of the Adwick family, a rich merchant of Leeds, and of his son Joseph Washington, a learned lawyer and author, of Gray's Inn. About the same time we hear of Richard Washington and Philip Washington holding high places at University College, Oxford. The Sulgrave branch, however, was the most numerous and prosperous. From the mayor of Northampton were descended Sir William Washington, who married the half-sister of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham; Sir Henry Washington, who made a desperate defense of Worcester against the forces of the Parliament in 1646; Lieutenant-Colonel James Washington, who fell at the siege of Pontefract, fighting for King Charles; another James, of a later time, who was implicated in Monmouth's rebellion, fled to Holland and became the progenitor of a flourishing and successful family, which has spread to Germany and there been ennobled; Sir Lawrence Washington, of Garsdon, whose grand-daughter married Robert Shirley, Baron Ferrers; and others of less note, but all men of property and standing. They seem to have been a successful, thrifty race, owning lands and estates, wise magistrates and good soldiers, marrying well, and increasing their wealth and strength from generation to generation. They were of Norman stock, knights and gentlemen in the full sense of the word before the French Revolution, and we can detect in them here and there a marked strain of the old Norse blood, carrying with it across the centuries the wild Berserker spirit which for centuries made the adventurous Northmen the terror of Europe. They were a strong race evidently, these Washingtons, whom we see now only by glimpses through the mists of time, not brilliant apparently, never winning the very highest fortune, having their failures and reverses no doubt, but on the whole prudent, bold men, always important in their several stations, ready to fight and ready to work, and as a rule successful in that which they set themselves to do.

In 1658 the two brothers, John and Lawrence, appeared in Virginia. As has been proved by Mr. Waters, they were of the Sulgrave family, the sons of Lawrence Washington, fifth son of the elder Lawrence of Sulgrave and Brington. The father of the emigrants was a fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, and rector of Purleigh, from which living he was ejected by the Puritans as both "scandalous" and "malignant." That he was guilty of the former charge we may well doubt; but that he was, in the language of the time, "malignant," must be admitted, for all his family, including his brothers, Sir William Washington of Packington, and Sir John Washington of Thrapston, his nephew, Sir Henry Washington, and his nephew-in-law, William Legge, ancestor of the Earl of Dartmouth, were strongly on the side of the king. In a marriage which seems to have been regarded as beneath the dignity of

the family, and in the poverty consequent upon the ejection from his living, we can find the reason for the sons of the Rev. Lawrence Washington going forth into Virginia to find their fortune, and flying from the world of victorious Puritanism which offered just then so little hope to royalists like themselves. Yet what was poverty in England was something much more agreeable in the New World of America. The emigrant brothers at all events seem to have had resources of a sufficient kind, and to have been men of substance, for they purchased lands and established themselves at Bridges Creek, in Westmoreland County. With this brief statement, Lawrence disappears, leaving us nothing further than the knowledge that he had numerous descendants. John, with whom we are more concerned, figures at once in the colonial records of Maryland. He made complaint to the Maryland authorities, soon after his arrival, against Edward Prescott, merchant, and captain of the ship in which he had come over, for hanging a woman during the voyage for witchcraft. We have a letter of his, explaining that he could not appear at the first trial because he was about to baptize his son, and had bidden the neighbors and gossips to the feast. A little incident this, dug out of the musty records, but it shows us an active, generous man, intolerant of oppression, public-spirited and hospitable, social, and friendly in his new relations. He soon after was called to mourn the death of his English wife and of two children, but he speedily consoled himself by taking a second wife, Anne Pope, by whom he had three children, Lawrence, John, and Anne. According to the Virginian tradition, John Washington the elder was a surveyor, and made a location of lands which was set aside because they had been assigned to the Indians. It is quite apparent that he was a forehanded person who acquired property and impressed himself upon his neighbors. In 1667, when he had been but ten years in the colony, he was chosen to the House of Burgesses; and eight years later he was made a colonel and sent with a thousand men to join the Marylanders in destroying the "Susquehannocks," at the "Piscataway" fort, on account of some murdering begun by another tribe. As a feat of arms, the expedition was not a very brilliant affair. The Virginians and Marylanders killed half a dozen Indian chiefs during a parley, and then invested the fort. After repulsing several sorties, they stupidly allowed the Indians to escape in the night and carry murder and pillage through the outlying settlements, lighting up first the flames of savage war and then the fiercer fire of domestic insurrection. In the next year we hear again of John Washington in the House of Burgesses, when Sir William Berkeley assailed his troops for the murder of the Indians during the parley. Popular feeling, however, was clearly with the colonel, for nothing was done and the matter dropped. At that point, too, in 1676, John Washington disappears from sight, and we know only that as his will was proved in 1677, he must have died soon after the scene with Berkeley. He was buried in the family vault at Bridges Creek, and left a good estate to be divided among his children. The colonel was evidently both a prudent and popular man, and quite disposed to bustle about in the world in which he found himself. He acquired lands, came to the front at once as a leader although a new-comer in the country, was evidently a fighting man as is shown by his selection to command the Virginian forces, and was honored by his neighbors, who gave his name to the parish in which he dwelt. Then he died and his son Lawrence reigned in his stead, and became by his wife, Mildred Warner, the father of John, Augustine, and Mildred Washington.

This second son, Augustine, farmer and planter like his forefathers, married first Jane Butler, by whom he had three sons and a daughter, and second, Mary Ball, by whom he had four sons and two daughters. The eldest child of these second nuptials was named George, and was born on February 11 (O.S.), 1732, at Bridges Creek. The house in which this event occurred was a plain, wooden farmhouse of the primitive Virginian pattern, with four rooms on the ground floor, an attic story with a long, sloping roof, and a massive brick chimney. Three years after George Washington's birth it is said to have been burned, and the family for this or some other reason removed to another estate in what is now Stafford County. The second house was like the first, and stood on rising ground looking across a meadow to the Rappahannock, and beyond the river to the village of Fredericksburg, which was nearly opposite. Here, in 1743, Augustine Washington died somewhat suddenly, at the age of forty-nine, from an attack of gout brought on by exposure in the rain, and was buried with his fathers

in the old vault at Bridges Creek. Here, too, the boyhood of Washington was passed, and therefore it becomes necessary to look about us and see what we can learn of this important period of his life.

We know nothing about his father, except that he was kindly and affectionate, attached to his wife and children, and apparently absorbed in the care of his estates. On his death the children came wholly under the maternal influence and direction. Much has been written about the "mother of Washington," but as a matter of fact, although she lived to an advanced age, we know scarcely more about her than we do about her husband. She was of gentle birth, and possessed a vigorous character and a good deal of business capacity. The advantages of education were given in but slight measure to the Virginian ladies of her time, and Mrs. Washington offered no exception to the general rule. Her reading was confined to a small number of volumes, chiefly of a devotional character, her favorite apparently being Hale's "Moral and Divine Contemplations." She evidently knew no language but her own, and her spelling was extremely bad even in that age of uncertain orthography. Certain qualities, however, are clear to us even now through all the dimness. We can see that Mary Washington was gifted with strong sense, and had the power of conducting business matters providently and exactly. She was an imperious woman, of strong will, ruling her kingdom alone. Above all she was very dignified, very silent, and very sober-minded. That she was affectionate and loving cannot be doubted, for she retained to the last a profound hold upon the reverential devotion of her son, and yet as he rose steadily to the pinnacle of human greatness, she could only say that "George had been a good boy, and she was sure he would do his duty." Not a brilliant woman evidently, not one suited to shine in courts, conduct intrigues, or adorn literature, yet able to transmit moral qualities to her oldest son, which, mingled with those of the Washingtons, were of infinite value in the foundation of a great Republic. She found herself a widow at an early age, with a family of young children to educate and support. Her means were narrow, for although Augustine Washington was able to leave what was called a landed estate to each son, it was little more than idle capital, and the income in ready money was by no means so evident as the acres.

Many are the myths, and deplorably few the facts, that have come down to us in regard to Washington's boyhood. For the former we are indebted to the illustrious Weems, and to that personage a few more words must be devoted. Weems has been held up to the present age in various ways, usually, it must be confessed, of an unflattering nature, and "mendacious" is the adjective most commonly applied to him. There has been in reality a good deal of needless confusion about Weems and his book, for he was not a complex character, and neither he nor his writings are difficult to value or understand. By profession a clergyman or preacher, by nature an adventurer, Weems loved notoriety, money, and a wandering life. So he wrote books which he correctly believed would be popular, and sold them not only through the regular channels, but by peddling them himself as he traveled about the country. In this way he gratified all his propensities, and no doubt derived from life a good deal of simple pleasure. Chance brought him near Washington in the closing days, and his commercial instinct told him that here was the subject of all others for his pen and his market. He accordingly produced the biography which had so much success. Judged solely as literature, the book is beneath contempt. The style is turgid, overloaded, and at times silly. The statements are loose, the mode of narration confused and incoherent, and the moralizing is flat and common-place to the last degree. Yet there was a certain sincerity of feeling underneath all the bombast and platitudes, and this saved the book. The biography did not go, and was not intended to go, into the hands of the polite society of the great eastern towns. It was meant for the farmers, the pioneers, and the backwoodsmen of the country. It went into their homes, and passed with them beyond the Alleghanies and out to the plains and valleys of the great West. The very defects of the book helped it to success among the simple, hard-working, hard-fighting race engaged in the conquest of the American continent. To them its heavy and tawdry style, its staring morals, and its real patriotism all seemed eminently befitting the national hero, and thus Weems created the Washington of the popular fancy. The idea grew up with the country, and became so ingrained in the popular thought that finally everybody

was affected by it, and even the most stately and solemn of the Washington biographers adopted the unsupported tales of the itinerant parson and book-peddler.

In regard to the public life of Washington, Weems took the facts known to every one, and drawn for the most part from the gazettes. He then dressed them up in his own peculiar fashion and gave them to the world. All this, forming of course nine tenths of his book, has passed, despite its success, into oblivion. The remaining tenth described Washington's boyhood until his fourteenth or fifteenth year, and this, which is the work of the author's imagination, has lived. Weems, having set himself up as absolutely the only authority as to this period, has been implicitly followed, and has thus come to demand serious consideration. Until Weems is weighed and disposed of, we cannot even begin an attempt to get at the real Washington.

Weems was not a cold-blooded liar, a mere forger of anecdotes. He was simply a man destitute of historical sense, training, or morals, ready to take the slenderest fact and work it up for the purposes of the market until it became almost as impossible to reduce it to its original dimensions as it was for the fisherman to get the Afrit back into his jar. In a word, Weems was an approved myth-maker. No better example can be given than the way in which he described himself. It is believed that he preached once, and possibly oftener, to a congregation which numbered Washington among its members. Thereupon he published himself in his book as the rector of Mount Vernon parish. There was, to begin with, no such parish. There was Truro parish, in which was a church called indifferently Pohick or Mount Vernon church. Of this church Washington was a vestryman until 1785, when he joined the church at Alexandria. The Rev. Lee Massey was the clergyman of the Mount Vernon church, and the church at Alexandria had nothing to do with Mount Vernon. There never was, moreover, such a person as the rector of Mount Vernon parish, but it was the Weems way of treating his appearance before the great man, and of deceiving the world with the notion of an intimacy which the title implied.

Weems, of course, had no difficulty with the public life, but in describing the boyhood he was thrown on his own resources, and out of them he evolved the cherry-tree, the refusal to fight or permit fighting among the boys at school, and the initials in the garden. This last story is to the effect that Augustine Washington planted seeds in such a manner that when they sprouted they formed on the earth the initials of his son's name, and the boy being much delighted thereby, the father explained to him that it was the work of the Creator, and thus inculcated a profound belief in God. This tale is taken bodily from Dr. Beattie's biographical sketch of his son, published in England in 1799, and may be dismissed at once. As to the other two more familiar anecdotes there is not a scintilla of evidence that they had any foundation, and with them may be included the colt story, told by Mr. Custis, a simple variation of the cherry-tree theme, which is Washington's early love of truth. Weems says that his stories were told him by a lady, and "a good old gentleman," who remembered the incidents, while Mr. Custis gives no authority for his minute account of a trivial event over a century old when he wrote. To a writer who invented the rector of Mount Vernon, the further invention of a couple of Boswells would be a trifle. I say Boswells advisedly, for these stories are told with the utmost minuteness, and the conversations between Washington and his father are given as if from a stenographic report. How Mr. Custis, usually so accurate, came to be so far infected with the Weems myth as to tell the colt story after the Weems manner, cannot now be determined. There can be no doubt that Washington, like most healthy boys, got into a good deal of mischief, and it is not at all impossible that he injured fruit-trees and confessed that he had done so. It may be accepted as certain that he rode and mastered many unbroken thoroughbred colts, and it is possible that one of them burst a blood-vessel in the process and died, and that the boy promptly told his mother of the accident. But this is the utmost credit which these two anecdotes can claim. Even so much as this cannot be said of certain other improving tales of like nature. That Washington lectured his playmates on the wickedness of fighting, and in the year 1754 allowed himself to be knocked down in the presence

of his soldiers, and thereupon begged his assailant's pardon for having spoken roughly to him, are stories so silly and so foolishly impossible that they do not deserve an instant's consideration.

There is nothing intrinsically impossible in either the cherry-tree or the colt incident, nor would there be in a hundred others which might be readily invented. The real point is that these stories, as told by Weems and Mr. Custis, are on their face hopelessly and ridiculously false. They are so, not merely because they have no vestige of evidence to support them, but because they are in every word and line the offspring of a period more than fifty years later. No English-speaking people, certainly no Virginians, ever thought or behaved or talked in 1740 like the personages in Weems's stories, whatever they may have done in 1790, or at the beginning of the next century. These precious anecdotes belong to the age of Miss Edgeworth and Hannah More and Jane Taylor. They are engaging specimens of the "Harry and Lucy" and "Purple Jar" morality, and accurately reflect the pale didacticism which became fashionable in England at the close of the last century. They are as untrue to nature and to fact at the period to which they are assigned as would be efforts to depict Augustine Washington and his wife in the dress of the French revolution discussing the propriety of worshipping the Goddess of Reason.

To enter into any serious historical criticism of these stories would be to break a butterfly. So much as this even has been said only because these wretched fables have gone throughout the world, and it is time that they were swept away into the dust-heaps of history. They represent Mr. and Mrs. Washington as affected and priggish people, given to cheap moralizing, and, what is far worse, they have served to place Washington himself in a ridiculous light to an age which has outgrown the educational foibles of seventy-five years ago. Augustine Washington and his wife were a gentleman and lady of the eighteenth century, living in Virginia. So far as we know without guessing or conjecture, they were simple, honest, and straight-forward, devoted to the care of their family and estate, and doing their duty sensibly and after the fashion of their time. Their son, to whom the greatest wrong has been done, not only never did anything common or mean, but from the beginning to the end of his life he was never for an instant ridiculous or affected, and he was as utterly removed from canting or priggishness as any human being could well be. Let us therefore consign the Weems stories and their offspring to the limbo of historical rubbish, and try to learn what the plain facts tell us of the boy Washington.

Unfortunately these same facts are at first very few, so few that they tell us hardly anything. We know when and where Washington was born; and how, when he was little more than three years old,² he was taken from Bridges Creek to the banks of the Rappahannock. There he was placed under the charge of one Hobby, the sexton of the parish, to learn his alphabet and his pothooks; and when that worthy man's store of learning was exhausted he was sent back to Bridges Creek, soon after his father's death, to live with his half-brother Augustine, and obtain the benefits of a school kept by a Mr. Williams. There he received what would now be called a fair common-school education, wholly destitute of any instruction in languages, ancient or modern, but apparently with some mathematical training.

That he studied faithfully cannot be doubted, and we know, too, that he matured early, and was a tall, active, and muscular boy. He could outwalk and outrun and outride any of his companions. As he could no doubt have thrashed any of them too, he was, in virtue of these qualities, which are respected everywhere by all wholesome minds, and especially by boys, a leader among his school-fellows. We know further that he was honest and true, and a lad of unusual promise, not because of the goody-goody anecdotes of the myth-makers, but because he was liked and trusted by such men as his brother Lawrence and Lord Fairfax.

² There is a conflict about the period of this removal (see above, p. 37). Tradition places it in 1735, but the Rev. Mr. McGuire (*Religious Opinions of Washington*) puts it in 1739.

There he was, at all events, in his fourteenth year, a big, strong, hearty boy, offering a serious problem to his mother, who was struggling along with many acres, little money, and five children. Mrs. Washington's chief desire naturally was to put George in the way of earning a living, which no doubt seemed far more important than getting an education, and, as he was a sober-minded boy, the same idea was probably profoundly impressed on his own mind also. This condition of domestic affairs led to the first attempt to give Washington a start in life, which has been given to us until very lately in a somewhat decorated form. The fact is, that in casting about for something to do, it occurred to some one, very likely to the boy himself, that it would be a fine idea to go to sea. His masculine friends and relatives urged the scheme upon Mrs. Washington, who consented very reluctantly, if at all, not liking the notion of parting with her oldest son, even in her anxiety to have him earn his bread. When it came to the point, however, she finally decided against his going, determined probably by a very sensible letter from her brother, Joseph Ball, an English lawyer. In all the ornamented versions we are informed that the boy was to enter the royal navy, and that a midshipman's warrant was procured for him. There does not appear to be any valid authority for the royal navy, the warrant, or the midshipman. The contemporary Virginian letters speak simply of "going to sea," while Mr. Ball says distinctly that the plan was to enter the boy on a tobacco-ship, with an excellent chance of being pressed on a man-of-war, and a very faint prospect of either getting into the navy, or even rising to be the captain of one of the petty trading-vessels familiar to Virginian planters. Some recent writers have put Mr. Ball aside as not knowing what was intended in regard to his nephew, but in view of the difficulty at that time of obtaining commissions in the navy without great political influence, it seems probable that Mrs. Washington's brother knew very well what he was talking about, and he certainly wrote a very sensible letter. A bold, adventurous boy, eager to earn his living and make his way in the world, would, like many others before him, look longingly to the sea as the highway to fortune and success. To Washington the romance of the sea was represented by the tobacco-ship creeping up the river and bringing all the luxuries and many of the necessities of life from vaguely distant countries. No doubt he wished to go on one of these vessels and try his luck, and very possibly the royal navy was hoped for as the ultimate result. The effort was certainly made to send him to sea, but it failed, and he went back to school to study more mathematics.

Apart from the fact that the exact sciences in moderate degree were about all that Mr. Williams could teach, this branch of learning had an immediate practical value, inasmuch as surveying was almost the only immediately gainful pursuit open to a young Virginia gentleman, who sorely needed a little ready money that he might buy slaves and work a plantation. So Washington studied on for two years more, and fitted himself to be a surveyor. There are still extant some early papers belonging to this period, chiefly fragments of school exercises, which show that he already wrote the bold, handsome hand with which the world was to become familiar, and that he made geometrical figures and notes of surveys with the neatness and accuracy which clung to him in all the work of his life, whether great or small. Among those papers, too, were found many copies of legal forms, and a set of rules, over a hundred in number, as to etiquette and behavior, carefully written out. It has always been supposed that these rules were copied, but it was reserved apparently for the storms of a mighty civil war to lay bare what may have been, if not the source of the rules themselves, the origin and suggestion of their compilation. At that time a little volume was found in Virginia bearing the name of George Washington in a boyish hand on the fly-leaf, and the date 1742. The book was entitled, "The Young Man's Companion." It was an English work, and had passed through thirteen editions, which was little enough in view of its varied and extensive information. It was written by W. Mather, in a plain and easy style, and treated of arithmetic, surveying, forms for legal documents, the measuring of land and lumber, gardening, and many other useful topics, and it contained general precepts which, with the aid of Hale's "Contemplations," may readily have furnished the hints for the rules found in

manuscript among Washington's papers.³ These rules were in the main wise and sensible, and it is evident they had occupied deeply the boy's mind.⁴ They are for the most part concerned with the commonplaces of etiquette and good manners, but there is something not only apt but quite prophetic in the last one, "Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience." To suppose that Washington's character was formed by these sententious bits of not very profound wisdom would be absurd; but that a series of rules which most lads would have regarded as simply dull should have been written out and pondered by this boy indicates a soberness and thoughtfulness of mind which certainly are not usual at that age. The chief thought that runs through all the sayings is to practice self-control, and no man ever displayed that most difficult of virtues to such a degree as George Washington. It was no ordinary boy who took such a lesson as this to heart before he was fifteen, and carried it into his daily life, never to be forgotten. It may also be said that very few boys ever needed it more; but those persons who know what they chiefly need, and pursue it, are by no means common.

³ An account of this volume was given in the *New York Tribune* in 1866, and also in the *Historical Magazine* (x. 47).

⁴ The most important are given in Sparks' *Writings of Washington*, ii. 412, and they may be found complete in the little pamphlet concerning them, excellently edited by Dr. J.M. Toner, of Washington.

CHAPTER III ON THE FRONTIER

While Washington was working his way through the learning purveyed by Mr. Williams, he was also receiving another education, of a much broader and better sort, from the men and women among whom he found himself, and with whom he made friends. Chief among them was his eldest brother, Lawrence, fourteen years his senior, who had been educated in England, had fought with Vernon at Carthagen, and had then returned to Virginia, to be to him a generous father and a loving friend. As the head of the family, Lawrence Washington had received the lion's share of the property, including the estate at Hunting Creek, on the Potomac, which he christened Mount Vernon, after his admiral, and where he settled down and built him a goodly house. To this pleasant spot George Washington journeyed often in vacation time, and there he came to live and further pursue his studies, after leaving school in the autumn of 1747.

Lawrence Washington had married the daughter of William Fairfax, the proprietor of Belvoir, a neighboring plantation, and the agent for the vast estates held by his family in Virginia. George Fairfax, Mrs. Washington's brother, had married a Miss Gary, and thus two large and agreeable family connections were thrown open to the young surveyor when he emerged from school. The chief figure, however, in that pleasant winter of 1747-48, so far as an influence upon the character of Washington is concerned, was the head of the family into which Lawrence Washington had married. Thomas, Lord Fairfax, then sixty years of age, had come to Virginia to live upon and look after the kingdom which he had inherited in the wilderness. He came of a noble and distinguished race. Graduating at Oxford with credit, he served in the army, dabbled in literature, had his fling in the London world, and was jilted by a beauty who preferred a duke, and gave her faithful but less titled lover an apparently incurable wound. His life having been thus early twisted and set awry, Lord Fairfax, when well past his prime, had determined finally to come to Virginia, bury himself in the forests, and look after the almost limitless possessions beyond the Blue Ridge, which he had inherited from his maternal grandfather, Lord Culpeper, of unsavory Restoration memory. It was a piece of great good-fortune which threw in Washington's path this accomplished gentleman, familiar with courts and camps, disappointed, but not morose, disillusioned, but still kindly and generous. From him the boy could gain that knowledge of men and manners which no school can give, and which is as important in its way as any that a teacher can impart.

Lord Fairfax and Washington became fast friends. They hunted the fox together, and hunted him hard. They engaged in all the rough sports and perilous excitements which Virginia winter life could afford, and the boy's bold and skillful riding, his love of sports and his fine temper, commended him to the warm and affectionate interest of the old nobleman. Other qualities, too, the experienced man of the world saw in his young companion: a high and persistent courage, robust and calm sense, and, above all, unusual force of will and character. Washington impressed profoundly everybody with whom he was brought into personal contact, a fact which is one of the most marked features of his character and career, and one which deserves study more than almost any other. Lord Fairfax was no exception to the rule. He saw in Washington not simply a promising, brave, open-hearted boy, diligent in practicing his profession, and whom he was anxious to help, but something more; something which so impressed him that he confided to this lad a task which, according to its performance, would affect both his fortune and his peace. In a word, he trusted Washington, and told him, as the spring of 1748 was opening, to go forth and survey the vast Fairfax estates beyond the Ridge, define their boundaries, and save them from future litigation. With this commission from Lord Fairfax, Washington entered on the first period of his career. He passed it on the frontier, fighting nature, the Indians, and the French. He went in a schoolboy; he came out the first soldier in the colonies, and one of the leading men of

Virginia. Let us pause a moment and look at him as he stands on the threshold of this momentous period, rightly called momentous because it was the formative period in the life of such a man.

He had just passed his sixteenth birthday. He was tall and muscular, approaching the stature of more than six feet which he afterwards attained. He was not yet filled out to manly proportions, but was rather spare, after the fashion of youth. He had a well-shaped, active figure, symmetrical except for the unusual length of the arms, indicating uncommon strength. His light brown hair was drawn back from a broad forehead, and grayish-blue eyes looked happily, and perhaps a trifle soberly, on the pleasant Virginia world about him. The face was open and manly, with a square, massive jaw, and a general expression of calmness and strength. "Fair and florid," big and strong, he was, take him for all in all, as fine a specimen of his race as could be found in the English colonies.

Let us look a little closer through the keen eyes of one who studied many faces to good purpose. The great painter of portraits, Gilbert Stuart, tells us of Washington that he never saw in any man such large eye-sockets, or such a breadth of nose and forehead between the eyes, and that he read there the evidences of the strongest passions possible to human nature. John Bernard the actor, a good observer, too, saw in Washington's face, in 1797, the signs of an habitual conflict and mastery of passions, witnessed by the compressed mouth and deeply indented brow. The problem had been solved then; but in 1748, passion and will alike slumbered, and no man could tell which would prevail, or whether they would work together to great purpose or go jarring on to nothingness. He rises up to us out of the past in that early springtime a fine, handsome, athletic boy, beloved by those about him, who found him a charming companion and did not guess that he might be a terribly dangerous foe. He rises up instinct with life and strength, a being capable, as we know, of great things whether for good or evil, with hot blood pulsing in his veins and beating in his heart, with violent passions and relentless will still undeveloped; and no one in all that jolly, generous Virginian society even dimly dreamed what that development would be, or what it would mean to the world.

It was in March, 1748, that George Fairfax and Washington set forth on their adventures, and passing through Ashby's Gap in the Blue Ridge, entered the valley of Virginia. Thence they worked their way up the valley of the Shenandoah, surveying as they went, returned and swam the swollen Potomac, surveyed the lands about its south branch and in the mountainous region of Frederick County, and finally reached Mount Vernon again on April 12. It was a rough experience for a beginner, but a wholesome one, and furnished the usual vicissitudes of frontier life. They were wet, cold, and hungry, or warm, dry, and well fed, by turns. They slept in a tent, or the huts of the scattered settlers, and oftener still beneath the stars. They met a war party of Indians, and having plied them with liquor, watched one of their mad dances round the camp-fire. In another place they came on a straggling settlement of Germans, dull, patient, and illiterate, strangely unfit for the life of the wilderness. All these things, as well as the progress of their work and their various resting-places, Washington noted down briefly but methodically in a diary, showing in these rough notes the first evidences of that keen observation of nature and men and of daily incidents which he developed to such good purpose in after-life. There are no rhapsodies and no reflections in these hasty jottings, but the employments and the discomforts are all set down in a simple and matter-of-fact way, which omitted no essential thing and excluded all that was worthless. His work, too, was well done, and Lord Fairfax was so much pleased by the report that he moved across the Blue Ridge, built a hunting lodge preparatory to something more splendid which never came to pass, and laid out a noble manor, to which he gave the name of Greenway Court. He also procured for Washington an appointment as a public surveyor, which conferred authority on his surveys and provided him with regular work. Thus started, Washington toiled at his profession for three years, living and working as he did on his first expedition. It was a rough life, but a manly and robust one, and the men who live it, although often rude and coarse, are never weak or effeminate. To Washington it was an admirable school. It strengthened his muscles and hardened him to exposure and fatigue. It accustomed him to risks and perils of various kinds, and made him fertile in expedients and confident of himself, while the

nature of his work rendered him careful and industrious. That his work was well done is shown by the fact that his surveys were considered of the first authority, and stand unquestioned to this day, like certain other work which he was subsequently called to do. It was part of his character, when he did anything, to do it in a lasting fashion, and it is worth while to remember that the surveys he made as a boy were the best that could be made.

He wrote to a friend at this time: "Since you received my letter of October last, I have not slept above three or four nights in a bed, but, after walking a good deal all the day, I have lain down before the fire upon a little hay, straw, fodder, or a bearskin, whichever was to be had, with man, wife, and children, like dogs and cats; and happy is he who gets the berth nearest the fire. Nothing would make it pass off tolerably but a good reward. A doubloon is my constant gain every day that the weather will permit of my going out, and sometimes six pistoles." He was evidently a thrifty lad, and honestly pleased with honest earnings. He was no mere adventurous wanderer, but a man working for results in money, reputation, or some solid value, and while he worked and earned he kept an observant eye upon the wilderness, and bought up when he could the best land for himself and his family, laying the foundations of the great landed estate of which he died possessed.

There was also a lighter and pleasanter side to this hard-working existence, which was quite as useful, and more attractive, than toiling in the woods and mountains. The young surveyor passed much of his time at Greenway Court, hunting the fox and rejoicing in all field sports which held high place in that kingdom, while at the same time he profited much in graver fashion by his friendship with such a man as Lord Fairfax. There, too, he had a chance at a library, and his diaries show that he read carefully the history of England and the essays of the "Spectator." Neither in early days nor at any other time was he a student, for he had few opportunities, and his life from the beginning was out of doors and among men. But the idea sometimes put forward that Washington cared nothing for reading or for books is an idle one. He read at Greenway Court and everywhere else when he had an opportunity. He read well, too, and to some purpose, studying men and events in books as he did in the world, for though he never talked of his reading, preserving silence on that as on other things concerning himself, no one ever was able to record an instance in which he showed himself ignorant of history or of literature. He was never a learned man, but so far as his own language could carry him he was an educated one. Thus while he developed the sterner qualities by hard work and a rough life, he did not bring back the coarse habits of the backwoods and the camp-fire, but was able to refine his manners and improve his mind in the excellent society and under the hospitable roof of Lord Fairfax.

Three years slipped by, and then a domestic change came which much affected Washington's whole life. The Carthagen campaign had undermined the strength of Lawrence Washington and sown the seeds of consumption, which showed itself in 1749, and became steadily more alarming. A voyage to England and a summer at the warm springs were tried without success, and finally, as a last resort, the invalid sailed for the West Indies, in September, 1751. Thither his brother George accompanied him, and we have the fragments of a diary kept during this first and last wandering outside his native country. He copied the log, noted the weather, and evidently strove to get some idea of nautical matters while he was at sea and leading a life strangely unfamiliar to a woodsman and pioneer. When they arrived at their destination they were immediately asked to breakfast and dine with Major Clarke, the military magnate of the place, and our young Virginian remarked, with characteristic prudence and a certain touch of grim humor, "We went,—myself with some reluctance, as the smallpox was in the family." He fell a victim to his good manners, for two weeks later he was "strongly attacked with the smallpox," and was then housed for a month, getting safely and successfully through this dangerous and then almost universal ordeal. Before the disease declared itself, however, he went about everywhere, innocently scattering infection, and greatly enjoying the pleasures of the island. It is to be regretted that any part of this diary should have been lost, for it is pleasant reading, and exhibits the writer in an agreeable and characteristic fashion. He commented on the country and the scenery, inveighed against the extravagance of the charges for board and

lodging, told of his dinner-parties and his friends, and noted the marvelous abundance and variety of the tropical fruits, which contrasted strangely with the British dishes of beefsteak and tripe. He also mentioned being treated to a ticket to see the play of "George Barnwell," on which he offered this cautious criticism: "The character of Barnwell and several others were said to be well performed. There was music adapted and regularly conducted."

Soon after his recovery Washington returned to Virginia, arriving there in February, 1752. The diary concluded with a brief but perfectly effective description of Barbadoes, touching on its resources and scenery, its government and condition, and the manners and customs of its inhabitants. All through these notes we find the keenly observant spirit, and the evidence of a mind constantly alert to learn. We see also a pleasant, happy temperament, enjoying with hearty zest all the pleasures that youth and life could furnish. He who wrote these lines was evidently a vigorous, good-humored young fellow, with a quick eye for the world opening before him, and for the delights as well as the instruction which it offered.

From the sunshine and ease of this tropical winter Washington passed to a long season of trial and responsibility at home and abroad. In July, 1752, his much-loved brother Lawrence died, leaving George guardian of his daughter, and heir to his estates in the event of that daughter's death. Thus the current of his home life changed, and responsibility came into it, while outside the mighty stream of public events changed too, and swept him along in the swelling torrent of a world-wide war.

In all the vast wilderness beyond the mountains there was not room for both French and English. The rival nations had been for years slowly approaching each other, until in 1749 each people proceeded at last to take possession of the Ohio country after its own fashion. The French sent a military expedition which sank and nailed up leaden plates; the English formed a great land company to speculate and make money, and both set diligently to work to form Indian alliances. A man of far less perception than Lawrence Washington, who had become the chief manager of the Ohio Company, would have seen that the conditions on the frontier rendered war inevitable, and he accordingly made ready for the future by preparing his brother for the career of a soldier, so far as it could be done. He brought to Mount Vernon two old companions-in-arms of the Carthage time, Adjutant Muse, a Virginian, and Jacob Van Braam, a Dutch soldier of fortune. The former instructed Washington in the art of war, tactics, and the manual of arms, the latter in fencing and the sword exercise. At the same time Lawrence Washington procured for his brother, then only nineteen years of age, an appointment as one of the adjutants-general of Virginia, with the rank of major. To all this the young surveyor took kindly enough so far as we can tell, but his military avocations were interrupted by his voyage to Barbadoes, by the illness and death of his brother, and by the cares and responsibilities thereby thrust upon him.

Meantime the French aggressions had continued, and French soldiers and traders were working their way up from the South and down from the North, bullying and cajoling the Indians by turns, taking possession of the Ohio country, and selecting places as they went for that chain of forts which was to hem in and slowly strangle the English settlements. Governor Dinwiddie had sent a commissioner to remonstrate against these encroachments, but his envoy had stopped a hundred and fifty miles short of the French posts, alarmed by the troublous condition of things, and by the defeat and slaughter which the Frenchmen had already inflicted upon the Indians. Some more vigorous person was evidently needed to go through the form of warning France not to trespass on the English wilderness, and thereupon Governor Dinwiddie selected for the task George Washington, recently reappointed adjutant-general of the northern division, and major in the Virginian forces. He was a young man for such an undertaking, not yet twenty-two, but clearly of good reputation. It is plain enough that Lord Fairfax and others had said to the governor, "Here is the very man for you; young, daring, and adventurous, but yet sober-minded and responsible, who only lacks opportunity to show the stuff that is in him."

Thus, then, in October, 1753, Washington set forth with Van Braam, and various servants and horses, accompanied by the boldest of Virginian frontiersmen, Christopher Gist. He wrote a report in the form of a journal, which was sent to England and much read at the time as part of the news of the day, and which has an equal although different interest now. It is a succinct, clear, and sober narrative. The little party was formed at Will's Creek, and thence through woods and over swollen rivers made its way to Logstown. Here they spent some days among the Indians, whose leaders Washington got within his grasp after much speech-making; and here, too, he met some French deserters from the South, and drew from them all the knowledge they possessed of New Orleans and the military expeditions from that region. From Logstown he pushed on, accompanied by his Indian chiefs, to Venango, on the Ohio, the first French outpost. The French officers asked him to sup with them. The wine flowed freely, the tongues of the hosts were loosened, and the young Virginian, temperate and hard-headed, listened to all the conversation, and noted down mentally much that was interesting and valuable. The next morning the Indian chiefs, prudently kept in the background, appeared, and a struggle ensued between the talkative, clever Frenchmen and the quiet, persistent Virginian, over the possession of these important savages. Finally Washington got off, carrying his chiefs with him, and made his way seventy miles further to the fort on French Creek. Here he delivered the governor's letter, and while M. de St. Pierre wrote a vague and polite answer, he sketched the fort and informed himself in regard to the military condition of the post. Then came another struggle over the Indians, and finally Washington got off with them once more, and worked his way back to Venango. Another struggle for the savages followed, rum being always the principal factor in the negotiation, and at last the chiefs determined to stay behind. Nevertheless, the work had been well done, and the important Half-King remained true to the English cause.

Leaving his horses, Washington and Gist then took to the woods on foot. The French Indians lay in wait for them and tried to murder them, and Gist, like a true frontiersman, was for shooting the scoundrel whom they captured. But Washington stayed his hand, and they gave the savage the slip and pressed on. It was the middle of December, very cold and stormy. In crossing a river, Washington fell from the raft into deep water, amid the floating ice, but fought his way out, and he and his companion passed the night on an island, with their clothes frozen upon them. So through peril and privation, and various dangers, stopping in the midst of it all to win another savage potentate, they reached the edge of the settlements and thence went on to Williamsburg, where great praise and glory were awarded to the youthful envoy, the hero of the hour in the little Virginia capital.

It is worth while to pause over this expedition a moment and to consider attentively this journal which recounts it, for there are very few incidents or documents which tell us more of Washington. He was not yet twenty-two when he faced this first grave responsibility, and he did his work absolutely well. Cool courage, of course, he showed, but also patience and wisdom in handling the Indians, a clear sense that the crafty and well-trained Frenchmen could not blind, and a strong faculty for dealing with men, always a rare and precious gift. As in the little Barbadoes diary, so also in this journal, we see, and far more strongly, the penetration and perception that nothing could escape, and which set down all things essential and let the "huddling silver, little worth," go by. The clearness, terseness, and entire sufficiency of the narrative are obvious and lie on the surface; but we find also another quality of the man which is one of the most marked features in his character, and one which we must dwell upon again and again, as we follow the story of his life. Here it is that we learn directly for the first time that Washington was a profoundly silent man. The gospel of silence has been preached in these latter days by Carlyle, with the fervor of a seer and prophet, and the world owes him a debt for the historical discredit which he has brought upon the man of mere words as compared with the man of deeds. Carlyle brushed Washington aside as "a bloodless Cromwell," a phrase to which we must revert later on other grounds, and, as has already been said, failed utterly to see that he was the most supremely silent of the great men of action that the world can show. Like Cromwell and Frederic, Washington wrote countless letters, made many speeches, and was agreeable in conversation. But this

was all in the way of business, and a man may be profoundly silent and yet talk a great deal. Silence in the fine and true sense is neither mere holding of the tongue nor an incapacity of expression. The greatly silent man is he who is not given to words for their own sake, and who never talks about himself. Both Cromwell, greatest of Englishmen, and the great Frederic, Carlyle's especial heroes, were fond of talking of themselves. So in still larger measure was Napoleon, and many others of less importance. But Washington differs from them all. He had abundant power of words, and could use them with much force and point when he was so minded, but he never used them needlessly or to hide his meaning, and he never talked about himself. Hence the inestimable difficulty of knowing him. A brief sentence here and there, a rare gleam of light across the page of a letter, is all that we can find. The rest is silence. He did as great work as has fallen to the lot of man, he wrote volumes of correspondence, he talked with innumerable men and women, and of himself he said nothing. Here in this youthful journal we have a narrative of wild adventure, wily diplomacy, and personal peril, impossible of condensation, and yet not a word of the writer's thoughts or feelings. All that was done or said important to the business in hand was set down, and nothing was overlooked, but that is all. The work was done, and we know how it was done, but the man is silent as to all else. Here, indeed, is the man of action and of real silence, a character to be much admired and wondered at in these or any other days.

Washington's report looked like war, and its author was shortly afterwards appointed lieutenant-colonel of a Virginian regiment, Colonel Fry commanding. Now began that long experience of human stupidity and inefficiency with which Washington was destined to struggle through all the years of his military career, suffering from them, and triumphing in spite of them to a degree unequalled by any other great commander. Dinwiddie, the Scotch governor, was eager enough to fight, and full of energy and good intentions, but he was hasty and not overwise, and was filled with an excessive idea of his prerogatives. The assembly, on its side, was sufficiently patriotic, but its members came from a community which for more than half a century had had no fighting, and they knew nothing of war or its necessities. Unaccustomed to the large affairs into which they were suddenly plunged, they displayed a narrow and provincial spirit. Keenly alive to their own rights and privileges, they were more occupied in quarreling with Dinwiddie than in prosecuting the war. In the weak proprietary governments of Maryland and Pennsylvania there was the same condition of affairs, with every evil exaggerated tenfold. The fighting spirit was dominant in Virginia, but in Quaker-ridden Pennsylvania it seems to have been almost extinct. These three were not very promising communities to look to for support in a difficult and costly war.

With all this inertia and stupidity Washington was called to cope, and he rebelled against it in vigorous fashion. Leaving Colonel Fry to follow with the main body of troops, Washington set out on April 2, 1754, with two companies from Alexandria, where he had been recruiting amidst most irritating difficulties. He reached Will's Creek three weeks later; and then his real troubles began. Captain Trent, the timid and halting envoy, who had failed to reach the French, had been sent out by the wise authorities to build a fort at the junction of the Alleghany and Monongahela, on the admirable site selected by the keen eye of Washington. There Trent left his men and returned to Will's Creek, where Washington found him, but without the pack-horses that he had promised to provide. Presently news came that the French in overwhelming numbers had swept down upon Trent's little party, captured their fort, and sent them packing back to Virginia. Washington took this to be war, and determined at once to march against the enemy. Having impressed from the inhabitants, who were not bubbling over with patriotism, some horses and wagons, he set out on his toilsome march across the mountains.

It was a wild and desolate region, and progress was extremely slow. By May 9 he was at the Little Meadows, twenty miles from his starting-place; by the 18th at the Youghiogany River, which he explored and found unnavigable. He was therefore forced to take up his weary march again for the Monongahela, and by the 27th he was at the Great Meadows, a few miles further on. The extreme

danger of his position does not seem to have occurred to him, but he was harassed and angered by the conduct of the assembly. He wrote to Governor Dinwiddie that he had no idea of giving up his commission. "But," he continued, "let me serve voluntarily; then I will, with the greatest pleasure in life, devote my services to the expedition, without any other reward than the satisfaction of serving my country; but to be slaving dangerously for the shadow of pay, through woods, rocks, mountains, —I would rather prefer the great toil of a daily laborer, and dig for a maintenance, provided I were reduced to the necessity, than serve upon such ignoble terms; for I really do not see why the lives of his Majesty's subjects in Virginia should be of less value than those in other parts of his American dominions, especially when it is well known that we must undergo double their hardship." Here we have a high-spirited, high-tempered young gentleman, with a contempt for shams that it is pleasant to see, and evidently endowed also with a fine taste for fighting and not too much patience.

Indignant letters written in vigorous language were, however, of little avail, and Washington prepared to shift for himself as best he might. His Indian allies brought him news that the French were on the march and had thrown out scouting parties. Picking out a place in the Great Meadows for a fort, "a charming field for an encounter," he in his turn sent out a scouting party, and then on fresh intelligence from the Indians set forth himself with forty men to find the enemy. After a toilsome march they discovered their foes in camp. The French, surprised and surrounded, sprang to arms, the Virginians fired, there was a sharp exchange of shots, and all was over. Ten of the French were killed and twenty-one were taken prisoners, only one of the party escaping to carry back the news.

This little skirmish made a prodigious noise in its day, and was much heralded in France. The French declared that Jumonville, the leader, who fell at the first fire, was foully assassinated, and that he and his party were ambassadors and sacred characters. Paris rang with this fresh instance of British perfidy, and a M. Thomas celebrated the luckless Jumonville in a solemn epic poem in four books. French historians, relying on the account of the Canadian who escaped, adopted the same tone, and at a later day mourned over this black spot on Washington's character. The French view was simple nonsense. Jumonville and his party, as the papers found on Jumonville showed, were out on a spying and scouting expedition. They were seeking to surprise the English when the English surprised them, with the usual backwoods result. The affair has a dramatic interest because it was the first blood shed in a great struggle, and was the beginning of a series of world-wide wars and social and political convulsions, which terminated more than half a century later on the plains of Waterloo. It gave immortality to an obscure French officer by linking his name with that of his opponent, and brought Washington for the moment before the eyes of the world, which little dreamed that this Virginian colonel was destined to be one of the principal figures in the great revolutionary drama to which the war then beginning was but the prologue.

Washington, for his part, well satisfied with his exploit, retraced his steps, and having sent his prisoners back to Virginia, proceeded to consider his situation. It was not a very cheerful prospect. Contrecoeur, with the main body of the French and Indians, was moving down from the Monongahela a thousand strong. This of course was to have been anticipated, and it does not seem to have in the least damped Washington's spirits. His blood was up, his fighting temper thoroughly roused, and he prepared to push on. Colonel Fry had died meanwhile, leaving Washington in command; but his troops came forward, and also not long after a useless "independent" company from South Carolina. Thus reinforced Washington advanced painfully some thirteen miles, and then receiving sure intelligence of the approach of the French in great force fell back with difficulty to the Great Meadows, where he was obliged by the exhausted condition of his men to stop. He at once resumed work on Fort Necessity, and made ready for a desperate defense, for the French were on his heels, and on July 3 appeared at the Meadows. Washington offered battle outside the fort, and this being declined withdrew to his trenches, and skirmishing went on all day. When night fell it was apparent that the end had come. The men were starved and worn out. Their muskets in many cases were rendered useless by the rain, and their ammunition was spent. The Indians had deserted, and the foe

outnumbered them four to one. When the French therefore offered a parley, Washington was forced reluctantly to accept. The French had no stomach for the fight, apparently, and allowed the English to go with their arms, exacting nothing but a pledge that for a year they would not come to the Ohio.

So ended Washington's first campaign. His friend the Half-King, the celebrated Seneca chief, Thanacarishon, who prudently departed on the arrival of the French, has left us a candid opinion of Washington and his opponents. "The colonel," he said, "was a good-natured man, but had no experience; he took upon him to command the Indians as his slaves, and would have them every day upon the scout and to attack the enemy by themselves, but would by no means take advice from the Indians. He lay in one place from one full moon to the other, without making any fortifications, except that little thing on the meadow; whereas, had he taken advice, and built such fortifications as I advised him, he might easily have beat off the French. But the French in the engagement acted like cowards, and the English like fools."⁵

There is a deal of truth in this opinion. The whole expedition was rash in the extreme. When Washington left Will's Creek he was aware that he was going to meet a force of a thousand men with only a hundred and fifty raw recruits at his back. In the same spirit he pushed on; and after the Jumonville affair, although he knew that the wilderness about him was swarming with enemies, he still struggled forward. When forced to retreat he made a stand at the Meadows and offered battle in the open to his more numerous and more prudent foes, for he was one of those men who by nature regard courage as a substitute for everything, and who have a contempt for hostile odds. He was ready to meet any number of French and Indians with cheerful confidence and with real pleasure. He wrote, in a letter which soon became famous, that he loved to hear bullets whistle, a sage observation which he set down in later years as a folly of youth. Yet this boyish outburst, foolish as it was, has a meaning to us, for it was essentially true. Washington had the fierce fighting temper of the Northmen. He loved battle and danger, and he never ceased to love them and to give way to their excitement, although he did not again set down such sentiments in boastful phrase that made the world laugh. Men of such temper, moreover, are naturally imperious and have a fine disregard of consequences, with the result that their allies, Indian or otherwise, often become impatient and finally useless. The campaign was perfectly wild from the outset, and if it had not been for the utter indifference to danger displayed by Washington, and the consequent timidity of the French, that particular body of Virginians would have been permanently lost to the British Empire.

But we learn from all this many things. It appears that Washington was not merely a brave man, but one who loved fighting for its own sake. The whole expedition shows an arbitrary temper and the most reckless courage, valuable qualities, but here unrestrained, and mixed with very little prudence. Some important lessons were learned by Washington from the rough teachings of inexorable and unconquerable facts. He received in this campaign the first taste of that severe experience which by its training developed the self-control and mastery of temper for which he became so remarkable. He did not spring into life a perfect and impossible man, as is so often represented. On the contrary, he was educated by circumstances; but the metal came out of the furnace of experience finely tempered, because it was by nature of the best and with but little dross to be purged away. In addition to all this he acquired for the moment what would now be called a European reputation. He was known in Paris as an assassin, and in England, thanks to the bullet letter, as a "fanfaron" and brave braggart. With these results he wended his way home much depressed in spirits, but not in the least discouraged, and fonder of fighting than ever.

Virginia, however, took a kinder view of the campaign than did her defeated soldier. She appreciated the gallantry of the offer to fight in the open and the general conduct of the troops, and her House of Burgesses passed a vote of thanks to Washington and his officers, and gave money to his

⁵ *Enquiry into the Causes and Alienations of the Delaware and Shawanee Indians*, etc. London, 1759. By Charles Thomson, afterwards Secretary of Congress.

men. In August he rejoined his regiment, only to renew the vain struggle against incompetence and extravagance, and as if this were not enough, his sense of honor was wounded and his temper much irritated by the governor's playing false to the prisoners taken in the Jumonville fight. While thus engaged, news came that the French were off their guard at Fort Duquesne, and Dinwiddie was for having the regiment of undisciplined troops march again into the wilderness. Washington, however, had learned something, if not a great deal, and he demonstrated the folly of such an attempt in a manner too clear to be confuted.

Meantime the Burgesses came together, and more money being voted, Dinwiddie hit on a notable plan for quieting dissensions between regulars and provincials by dividing all the troops into independent companies, with no officer higher than a captain. Washington, the only officer who had seen fighting and led a regiment, resented quite properly this senseless policy, and resigning his commission withdrew to Mount Vernon to manage the estate and attend to his own affairs. He was driven to this course still more strongly by the original cause of Dinwiddie's arrangement. The English government had issued an order that officers holding the king's commission should rank provincial officers, and that provincial generals and field officers should have no rank when a general or field officer holding a royal commission was present. The degradation of being ranked by every whipper-snapper who might hold a royal commission by virtue, perhaps, of being the bastard son of some nobleman's cast-off mistress was more than the temper of George Washington at least could bear, and when Governor Sharpe, general by the king's commission, and eager to secure the services of the best fighter in Virginia, offered him a company and urged his acceptance, he replied in language that must have somewhat astonished his excellency. "You make mention in your letter," he wrote to Colonel Fitzhugh, Governor Sharpe's second in command, "of my continuing in the service, and retaining my colonel's commission. This idea has filled me with surprise; for, if you think me capable of holding a commission that has neither rank nor emolument annexed to it, you must entertain a very contemptible opinion of my weakness, and believe me to be more empty than the commission itself.... In short, every captain bearing the king's commission, every half-pay officer, or others, appearing with such a commission, would rank before me.... Yet my inclinations are strongly bent to arms."

It was a bitter disappointment to withdraw from military life, but Washington had an intense sense of personal dignity; not the small vanity of a petty mind, but the quality of a proud man conscious of his own strength and purpose. It was of immense value to the American people at a later day, and there is something very instructive in this early revolt against the stupid arrogance which England has always thought it wise to display toward this country. She has paid dearly for indulging it, but it has seldom cost her more than when it drove Washington from her service, and left in his mind a sense of indignity and injustice.

Meantime this Virginian campaigning had started a great movement. England was aroused, and it was determined to assail France in Nova Scotia, from New York and on the Ohio. In accordance with this plan General Braddock arrived in Virginia February 20, 1755, with two picked regiments, and encamped at Alexandria. Thither Washington used to ride and look longingly at the pomp and glitter, and wish that he were engaged in the service. Presently this desire became known, and Braddock, hearing of the young Virginian's past experience, offered him a place on his staff with the rank of colonel where he would be subject only to the orders of the general, and could serve as a volunteer. He therefore accepted at once, and threw himself into his new duties with hearty goodwill. Every step now was full of instruction. At Annapolis he met the governors of the other colonies, and was interested and attracted by this association with distinguished public men. In the army to which he was attached he studied with the deepest attention the best discipline of Europe, observing everything and forgetting nothing, thus preparing himself unconsciously to use against his teachers the knowledge he acquired.

He also made warm friends with the English officers, and was treated with consideration by his commander. The universal practice of all Englishmen at that time was to behave contemptuously

to the colonists, but there was something about Washington which made this impossible. They all treated him with the utmost courtesy, vaguely conscious that beneath the pleasant, quiet manner there was a strength of character and ability such as is rarely found, and that this was a man whom it was unsafe to affront. There is no stronger instance of Washington's power of impressing himself upon others than that he commanded now the respect and affection of his general, who was the last man to be easily or favorably affected by a young provincial officer.

Edward Braddock was a veteran soldier, a skilled disciplinarian, and a rigid martinet. He was narrow-minded, brutal, and brave. He had led a fast life in society, indulging in coarse and violent dissipations, and was proud with the intense pride of a limited intelligence and a nature incapable of physical fear. It would be difficult to conceive of a man more unfit to be entrusted with the task of marching through the wilderness and sweeping the French from the Ohio. All the conditions which confronted him were unfamiliar and beyond his experience. He cordially despised the provincials who were essential to his success, and lost no opportunity of showing his contempt for them. The colonists on their side, especially in Pennsylvania, gave him, unfortunately, only too much ground for irritation and disgust. They were delighted to see this brilliant force come from England to fight their battles, but they kept on wrangling and holding back, refusing money and supplies, and doing nothing. Braddock chafed and delayed, swore angrily, and lingered still. Washington strove to help him, but defended his country fearlessly against wholesale and furious attacks.

Finally the army began to move, but so slowly and after so much delay that they did not reach Will's Creek until the middle of May. Here came another exasperating pause, relieved only by Franklin, who, by giving his own time, ability, and money, supplied the necessary wagons. Then they pushed on again, but with the utmost slowness. With supreme difficulty they made an elaborate road over the mountains as they marched, and did not reach the Little Meadows until June 16. Then at last Braddock turned to his young aide for the counsel which had already been proffered and rejected many times. Washington advised the division of the army, so that the main body could hurry forward in light marching order while a detachment remained behind and brought up the heavy baggage. This plan was adopted, and the army started forward, still too heavily burdened, as Washington thought, but in somewhat better trim for the wilderness than before. Their progress, quickened as it was, still seemed slow to Washington, but he was taken ill with a fever, and finally was compelled by Braddock to stop for rest at the ford of Youghiogany. He made Braddock promise that he should be brought up before the army reached Fort Duquesne, and wrote to his friend Orme that he would not miss the impending battle for five hundred pounds.

As soon as his fever abated a little he left Colonel Dunbar, and, being unable to sit on a horse, was conveyed to the front in a wagon, coming up with the army on July 8. He was just in time, for the next day the troops forded the Monongahela and marched to attack the fort. The splendid appearance of the soldiers as they crossed the river roused Washington's enthusiasm; but he was not without misgivings. Franklin had already warned Braddock against the danger of surprise, and had been told with a sneer that while these savages might be a formidable enemy to raw American militia, they could make no impression on disciplined troops. Now at the last moment Washington warned the general again and was angrily rebuked.

The troops marched on in ordered ranks, glittering and beautiful. Suddenly firing was heard in the front, and presently the van was flung back on the main body. Yells and war-whoops resounded on every side, and an unseen enemy poured in a deadly fire. Washington begged Braddock to throw his men into the woods, but all in vain. Fight in platoons they must, or not at all. The result was that they did not fight at all. They became panic-stricken, and huddled together, overcome with fear, until at last when Braddock was mortally wounded they broke in wild rout and fled. Of the regular troops, seven hundred, and of the officers, who showed the utmost bravery, sixty-two out of eighty-six, were killed or wounded. Two hundred Frenchmen and six hundred Indians achieved this signal victory. The only thing that could be called fighting on the English side was done by the Virginians, "the raw

American militia," who, spread out as skirmishers, met their foes on their own ground, and were cut off after a desperate resistance almost to a man.

Washington at the outset flung himself headlong into the fight. He rode up and down the field, carrying orders and striving to rally "the dastards," as he afterwards called the regular troops. He endeavored to bring up the artillery, but the men would not serve the guns, although to set an example he aimed and discharged one himself. All through that dreadful carnage he rode fiercely about, raging with the excitement of battle, and utterly exposed from beginning to end. Even now it makes the heart beat quicker to think of him amid the smoke and slaughter as he dashed hither and thither, his face glowing and his eyes shining with the fierce light of battle, leading on his own Virginians, and trying to stay the tide of disaster. He had two horses shot under him and four bullets through his coat. The Indians thought he bore a charmed life, while his death was reported in the colonies, together with his dying speech, which, he dryly wrote to his brother, he had not yet composed.

When the troops broke it was Washington who gathered the fugitives and brought off the dying general. It was he who rode on to meet Dunbar, and rallying the fugitives enabled the wretched remnants to take up their march for the settlements. He it was who laid Braddock in the grave four days after the defeat, and read over the dead the solemn words of the English service. Wise, sensible, and active in the advance, splendidly reckless on the day of battle, cool and collected on the retreat, Washington alone emerged from that history of disaster with added glory. Again he comes before us as, above all things, the fighting man, hot-blooded and fierce in action, and utterly indifferent to the danger which excited and delighted him. But the earlier lesson had not been useless. He now showed a prudence and wisdom in counsel which were not apparent in the first of his campaigns, and he no longer thought that mere courage was all-sufficient, or that any enemy could be despised. He was plainly one of those who could learn. His first experience had borne good fruit, and now he had been taught a series of fresh and valuable lessons. Before his eyes had been displayed the most brilliant European discipline, both in camp and on the march. He had studied and absorbed it all, talking with veterans and hearing from them many things that he could have acquired nowhere else. Once more had he been taught, in a way not to be forgotten, that it is never well to underrate one's opponent. He had looked deeper, too, and had seen what the whole continent soon understood, that English troops were not invincible, that they could be beaten by Indians, and that they were after all much like other men. This was the knowledge, fatal in after days to British supremacy, which Braddock's defeat brought to Washington and to the colonists, and which was never forgotten. Could he have looked into the future, he would have seen also in this ill-fated expedition an epitome of much future history. The expedition began with stupid contempt toward America and all things American, and ended in ruin and defeat. It was a bitter experience, much heeded by the colonists, but disregarded by England, whose indifference was paid for at a heavy cost.

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