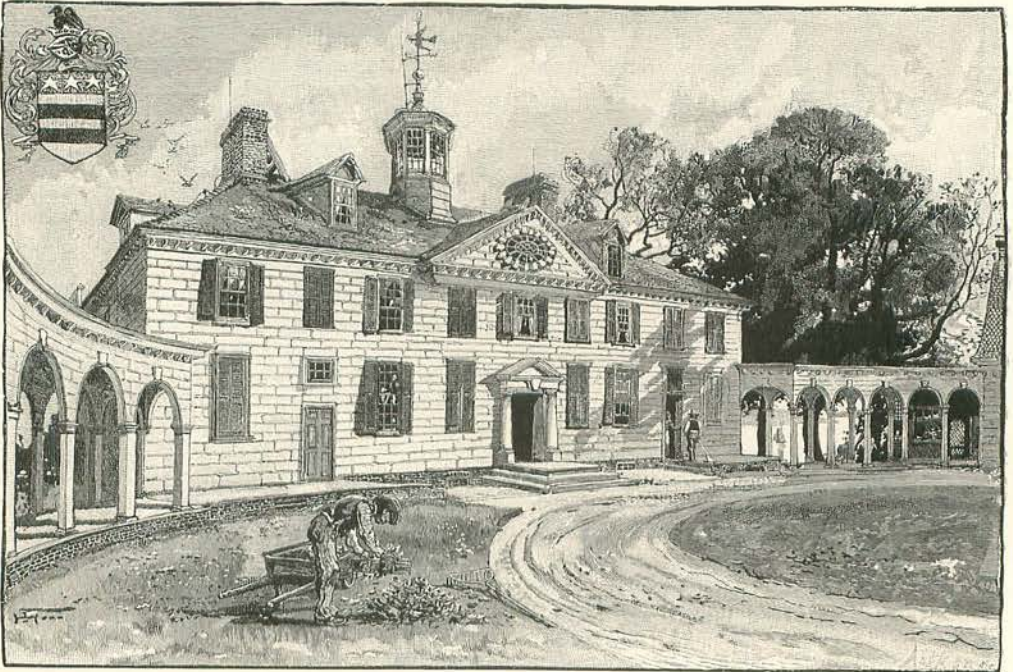


WASHINGTON AT MOUNT VERNON AFTER THE REVOLUTION.



MOUNT VERNON—SOUTH FRONT.



HERE are two seasons of the year when the hilly shores of the lower Potomac River become an earthly paradise wherein, till summer heats return to coax him from his lair, the serpent of malaria lies torpid and restrained from active demonstration. One of them is the late autumn, after frost has set the woods afire and filled the pale red globes of the tricksy persimmon with luscious sweetness. Then the sleepy sun lingers upon the landscape loath to leave, and life is a delight. The other "time of joyance" is in early spring, when the swelling slopes on each side the broad silver river are first reclad in verdure. Who that has ever known it can forget the jubilee of Nature in Virginia's woods in April—the self-assertion of every growing thing in whose green veins the sap is running; the riotous blossoming of trees and shrubs close of kin to Virginia's soil, and nurtured accordingly by the Virginian climate; the singing of innumerable birds?

Viewed from the high ground around Mount Vernon, and from the openings in the wood-road along which, just a century ago, Washington was wont to take his daily gallops,

the scene that met his eyes was as fair as man could ask to look upon. Many acres of the wide, rolling country were his own, and for years had known his care. Hither, while in camp or afield, throughout the turmoil of the war, his fancy had continually turned. All the poetry of his self-contained nature went out to these familiar haunts. None of the more grandiose scenery in Western solitudes, nothing he had seen while in command of the army, had disturbed his dream of Mount Vernon sitting like a queen enthroned on grassy hilltops, her feet laved by the beautiful Potomac.

As is inevitable to the survivor of early associations, there was an element of sadness in these rides of the spring of 1789. Every rock and tree spoke to him of old pleasures of the chase, with old friends, neither to be recalled. Truly there had been seen in the county no such sport as that before the war, the memory of which, while under fierce fire at Princeton, made Washington, at sight of the enemy in full retreat downhill, put spurs to horse and, uttering the view halloo of the Fairfax hunt, leap over a stone wall, crying out exultingly, "A perfect fox-chase!"

Good to look at still when in the saddle was

he whom Lafayette thus described, long after the brave knight was dust: "Our beloved chief, mounted on a splendid charger, rode along the ranks at Monmouth amid the shouts of the soldiers, and I thought I had never seen so superb a man." Jefferson, too, spoke of him in a letter to Dr. Walter Jones as "the best horseman of his age, and the most graceful figure that could be seen on horseback."

Although somewhat faded was the huntsman's bravery of blue and scarlet worn in the gala-days of yore, the man inside of it sat with the old ease upon his fiery "Blue-skin"—Will Lee, on "Chinkling," closely following. These two rode straight forward, over brake and brier, from sunrise, when the gray fox of Virginia was unkenneled, till—no matter what hour—the fate of her ladyship was settled, and her followers drew rein before one house or the other of their belongings, to seek pot-luck. Custis says that Washington required of a horse "but one good quality, and that was to *go along*. He ridiculed the idea that he could be unhorsed, provided the animal kept on his legs."

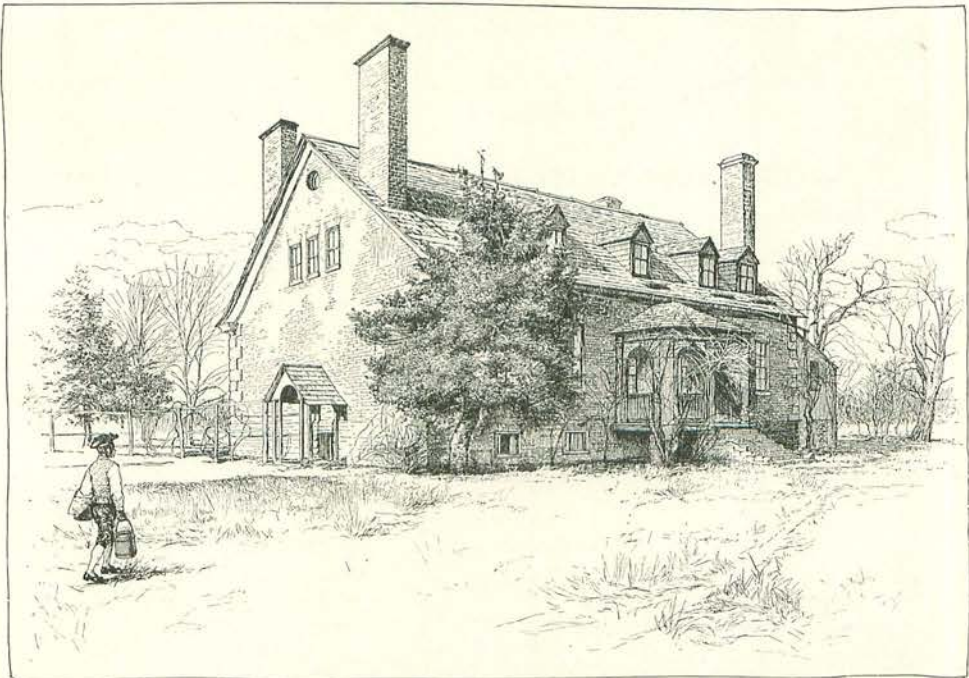
The hounds used in these latter days of chase were a pack sent, in 1785, to Mount Vernon by Lafayette. A fierce, big-mouthed, savage breed, absurdly disproportioned to their prey, were the French dogs, built to grapple with the stag in his death-agony or with the maddened boar. Mrs. Washington never

fancied having such monsters near the house, and after one of them, Vulcan by name, was discovered in the act of carrying off a ham, just out of the oven, their reign was short. The general soon after "parted with" his pack!

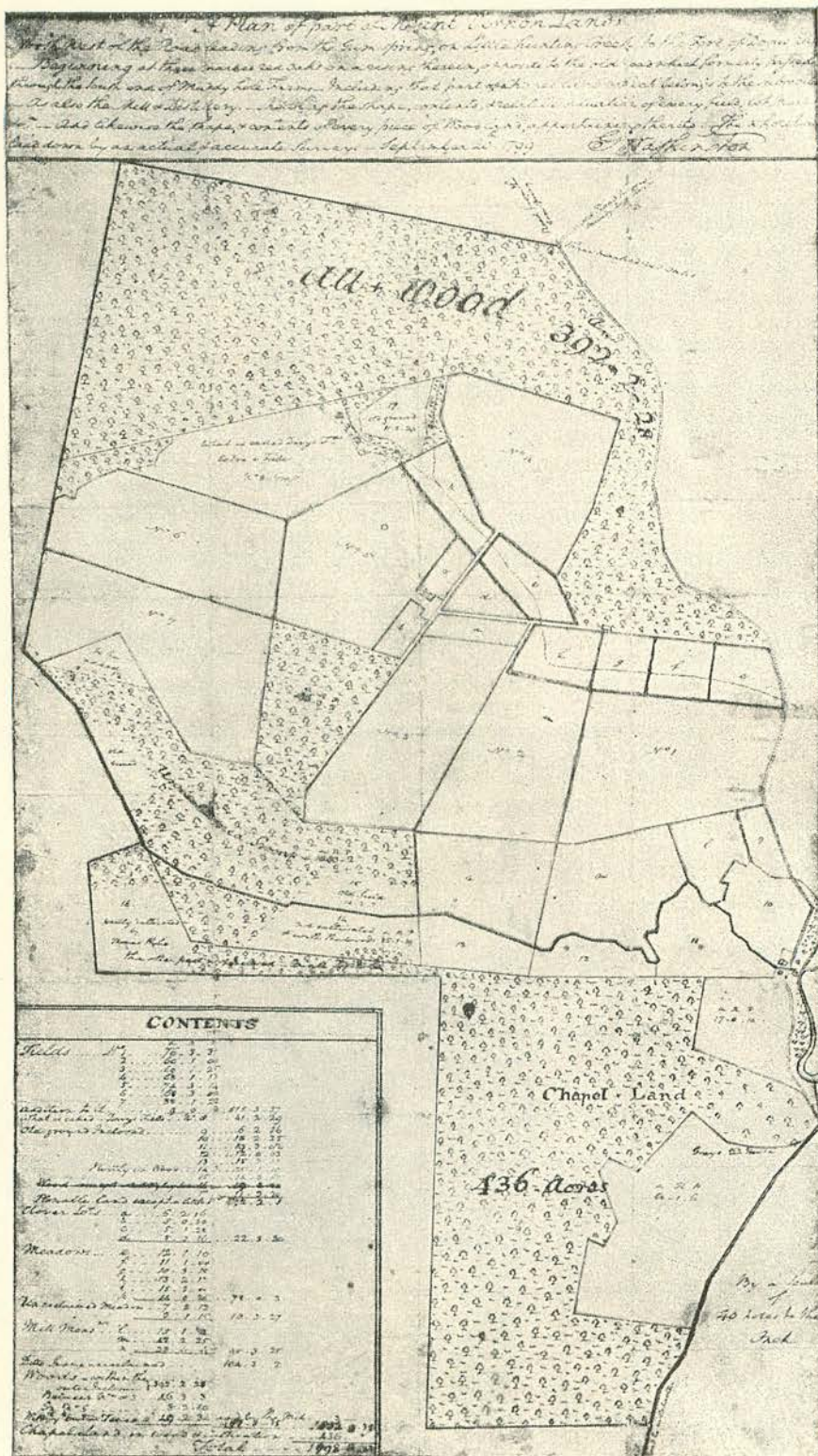
Other causes there were for the decline of hunting. Time and war had lessened the number of the riders. The stalwart old lord of Greenway Court, chief leader in the chase, who knew not fatigue in saddle or weariness in sport, had been laid these eight years back under a great stone in Winchester church chancel. It would need more than the music of horn and hounds to break the sleep he slept. Of the other Fairfaxes, Washington's constant comrades, only Bryan was left, and that good gentleman was getting on in life, and was making up his mind to take orders in the Church. I found but recently a pleasant letter to him,



THOMAS, SIXTH LORD FAIRFAX, OF GREENWAY COURT. (FROM AN OLD PAINTING AT WASHINGTON LODGE, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA.)



GUNSTON HALL, RESIDENCE OF GEORGE MASON.



WASHINGTON'S SURVEY OF HIS FARMS, MADE BY HIMSELF SEPTEMBER 20, 1799; THREE MONTHS BEFORE HIS DEATH. (IN POSSESSION OF DR. T. A. EMMET.)

dated 1786, sent with willow cuttings from Mount Vernon, and discoursing upon the death of a litter of hound puppies, of which one had been promised to Bryan Fairfax.

But the friend most missed of all was the one who in boyhood had slept under the same blanket side by side with him by light of stars or before wigwam fire in the Shenandoah wilderness—George William Fairfax, whose father had been as a father to him, who had married Sally Cary, the lady of Washington's first love, the true "lowland beauty" of his boyish sighs. Fairfax, a loyalist in sympathy, had gone with his wife, before the actual clash of arms, to England, where, taking possession of an estate in Yorkshire coming to him by inheritance, he had resided until his death, in 1787. Washington's deep regret at the severance of their families tinges many of his letters of the time. Belvoir House—the old mansion,

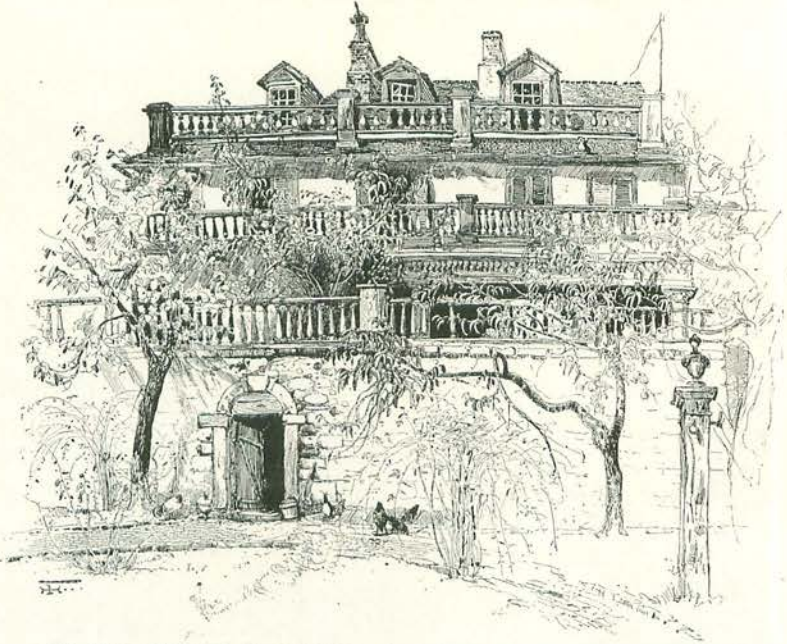
built by the sturdy colonel, who, except his uncle's son, the lord of Greenway Court, was the only Fairfax to settle in America in whose veins ran the blood of the hero of Marston Moor, and at whose lips Washington had learned his first lessons of how a soldier may serve his country—had been destroyed by fire in 1783, after the departure of its owners to live in England. Its melancholy ruin faced the master of Mount Vernon whenever he looked from his river portico southward across Dogue Creek, which like a glistening ribbon ran between. In a letter written in the last year of his life to his old love, Sarah Fairfax, then at Bath in England, Washington dwells upon the prin-

<sup>1</sup> This letter is published in Sparks's "Writings of George Washington."

Here I may say, in answer to repeated inquiries upon the subject of Belvoir, that the house was never rebuilt. The property descending to my grandfather, Thomas, eldest grandson of William Fairfax, and afterwards ninth lord, was for reasons unexplained to his children forsaken in favor of his other places, Ashgrove and Vaucuse. Clements Markham, Esq., the English historian, who is a connection of the family of Fairfax, visited the ruins of Belvoir a year or two ago, and wrote to me of it as follows: "All was a tangle

of brushwood and fallen trees, but such an enchanting view over the river! There were some heaps of bricks and a poor old fig-tree in the clearing, which, I suppose, was once the garden." Among these heaps of bricks was found, about twelve years ago, an antique fire-back of wrought iron, bearing the Fairfax monogram, which was transferred to the house of a member of the family, Colonel Arthur Herbert of Muckcross, in Fairfax County. It is to be regretted that such a relic of colonial days as old Belvoir is no longer standing, to tell its own story of the early life of Washington.

Of Washington's other neighbors, the most important one still living within easy reach of



MRS. HERBERT'S HOME IN ALEXANDRIA. (THE OLD CARLYLE HOUSE IN ALEXANDRIA.)

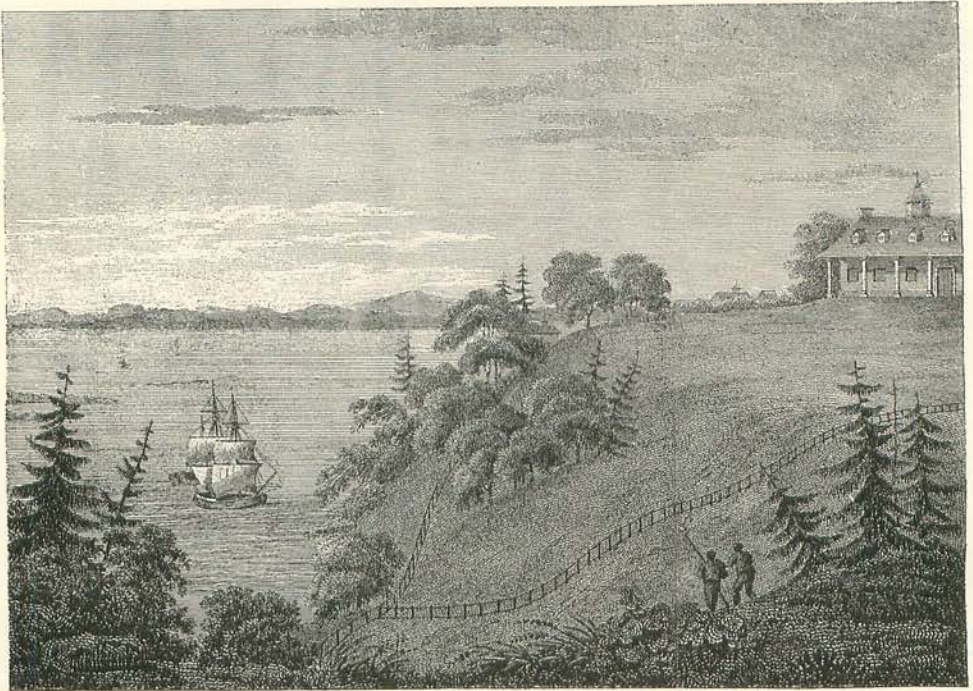
Mount Vernon was George Mason of Gunston Hall, a patriot of the finest type, the author of that noble paper "The Virginia Bill of Rights," and who in the intervals of distinguished service in the Continental Congress returned to his home on the Potomac. To this old manor-house of the Masons, built, in 1739, of Scotch brick brought to the colony as ballast in empty tobacco-ships, and richly ornamented inside with wood-carvings, the Washington family was accustomed to resort for tea-drinkings and "dining-days," returned in kind before the week was out.

To the lover of old times and houses it may be of interest to know that Gunston Hall still

of brushwood and fallen trees, but such an enchanting view over the river! There were some heaps of bricks and a poor old fig-tree in the clearing, which, I suppose, was once the garden." Among these heaps of bricks was found, about twelve years ago, an antique fire-back of wrought iron, bearing the Fairfax monogram, which was transferred to the house of a member of the family, Colonel Arthur Herbert of Muckcross, in Fairfax County. It is to be regretted that such a relic of colonial days as old Belvoir is no longer standing, to tell its own story of the early life of Washington.

stands, although no longer in possession of the Mason family. The ancient tobacco-fields that surround it are now blossoming with the April snow of apple, peach, and pear trees; and some of the Potomac boats stop at Gunston Landing, below Alexandria, to take on to Washington the excellent milk, cream, and poultry for which Fairfax County farmers are renowned. Indeed, this business is a survival of the days when Washington set his neighbors a good example by running a market cart be-

neath the eye of the master. All the busy life of the negro world was regulated by his personal directions to overseers and bailiff. No item was too insignificant to bring before his notice. The minutest contract for work agreed upon was put into writing. How curious, for example, the agreement with Philip Barter, the gardener, found among Washington's papers, wherein Philip binds himself to keep sober for a year, and to fulfill his duties on the place, if allowed



VIEW OF MOUNT VERNON. (PUBLISHED DECEMBER 18, 1798, BY I. STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY.)

tween Mount Vernon and the town. "These old Alexandrians," says Parson Weems, "filled their coach-houses with gilt carriages and their dining-rooms with gilt glasses, and then sat down to a dinner of salt meat and johnny-cake," because nobody had been found to furnish supplies for the market.

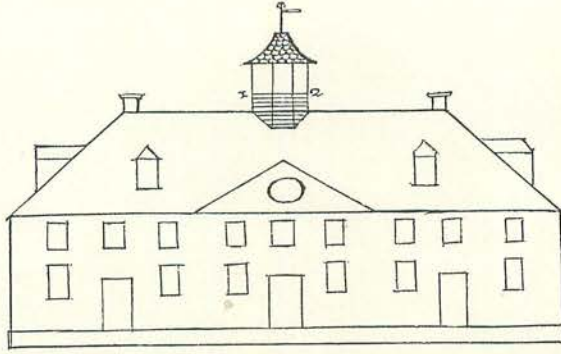
Good reason had M. Brissot de Warville, the traveler and author (the "brisk little Frenchman" who became chief of the Girondists and died by the guillotine in 1793), to cry out in astonishment at the general's success in farming, when he went the rounds of Mount Vernon in the autumn of 1788. The estates were then at the highest pitch of improvement they ever attained, crops of wheat, tobacco, corn, barley, and buckwheat "burdening the ground." What excited the Frenchman's chief surprise was that every barn and cabin, grove and clearing, field and orchard, passed daily

four dollars at Christmas, with which to be drunk four days and four nights; two dollars at Easter, to effect the same purpose; two dollars at Whitsuntide, to be drunk for two days; a dram in the morning, and a drink of grog at dinner, at noon. For the true and faithful performance of all these things, the parties have hereunto set their hands, this twenty-third day of April, Anno Domini, 1787.

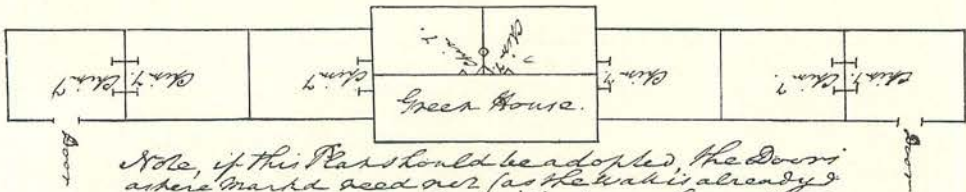
his  
 PHILIP BARTER, X  
 mark.  
 GEORGE WASHINGTON.

Witness:  
 GEORGE A. WASHINGTON,  
 TOBIAS LEAR.

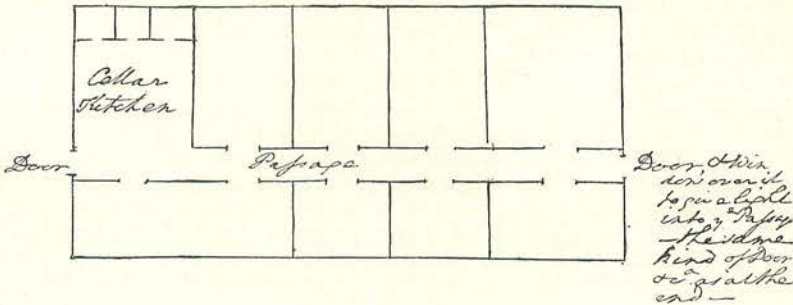
And now, forgetting, as did he, the leader world renowned, we may follow the Virginian squire, riding from mill to smithy, quaffing when thirsty the water of his favorite "gum spring"; stopping to note, here, the growth of a chestnut from the Monongahela, there, one



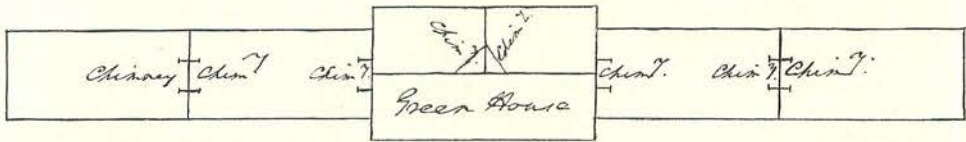
Plan N<sup>o</sup>. 1.



*Note, if this Plan should be adopted, the Doors  
where marked need not be cut over as the walls already  
built be cut over it may be done hereafter*



Plan N<sup>o</sup>. 2

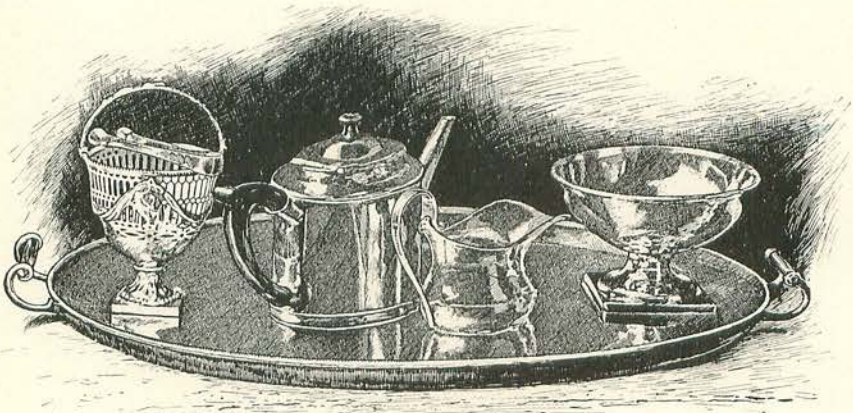


ORIGINAL SUGGESTION BY GEORGE WASHINGTON TO HIS ARCHITECT FOR DESIGN OF MOUNT VERNON.  
(OWNED BY S. L. M. BARLOW, ESQ.)

of "Dickey" Lee's honey-locusts from Chantilly. Here his eye lights on the slant of a cabin roof soliciting repairs; now it is a furrow running crooked under a careless negro's hand; again, with a boy's agility, he dismounts to put in place a rail fallen from a "snake" fence.

In barn-yard, kennels, stables, there is continual interest. He makes experiments in breeding mules with the jacks sent him by the King of Spain; and Washington's letter of "homage to his Catholic majesty" for this "gift of jack-

asses," sent through the Prime Minister of Spain in 1785, has a diverting ring. So also has the correspondence between Gouverneur Morris and Washington in 1788, when Morris writes from Morrisania to announce that he will forward to Mount Vernon, if acceptable, a couple of Chinese pigs, "and in company with the pigs shall be sent a pair of Chinese geese, which are really the foolishest geese I ever beheld; for they choose all times for setting but in the spring, and one of them is



TEA-SET OF MARTHA WASHINGTON.

now [November] actually engaged in that business." To which Washington responds, "You will be pleased to accept my thanks for the *exotic animals* which you are meditating to send me."

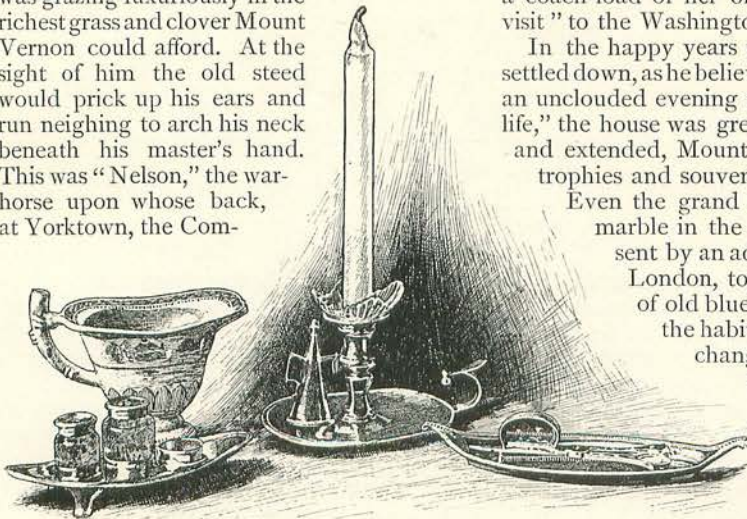
In the summer of 1788 we find Washington endeavoring to capture or buy a healthy family of opossums to export alive to his friend Sir Edward Newenham ("exotic animals" these must have proved to the English climate); George Fairfax proposes to send him English deer; Lafayette had forwarded the boar-hounds already mentioned. Washington's care of his horses is too well known to need mention here. One ceremony of his daily round—for, rain or shine, he made the circuit of his farms, between twelve and fifteen miles—was, in season, never omitted by the chief. It was to lean over the fence around the field wherein a tall old sorrel horse, with white face and legs, was grazing luxuriously in the richest grass and clover Mount Vernon could afford. At the sight of him the old steed would prick up his ears and run neighing to arch his neck beneath his master's hand. This was "Nelson," the war-horse upon whose back, at Yorktown, the Com-

mander-in-Chief of the American armies had received the surrender of Lord Cornwallis. The war ended, "Nelson's" work was over. Turned out to graze in summer, in winter carefully groomed and stabled, he lived to a good old age, but by his master's strict command was never again allowed to feel the burden of a saddle.

These stories are familiar enough to dwellers in and about Alexandria, who, as the common saying goes, were "brought up on" General Washington. My own early views of the great man and his family were tinged with familiarity through hearing them discussed across the table as if they still lived within driving distance. Some of the features of Mount Vernon life here revived were depicted by my grandmother and great-aunts, whose mother, Mrs. Herbert of Alexandria, was often asked, after the liberal fashion of the State, to fetch a coach-load of her offspring for a "staying visit" to the Washingtons.

In the happy years when Washington had settled down, as he believed and hoped, "to pass an unclouded evening after the stormy day of life," the house was greatly altered. Restored and extended, Mount Vernon was filled with trophies and souvenirs of its owner's glory.

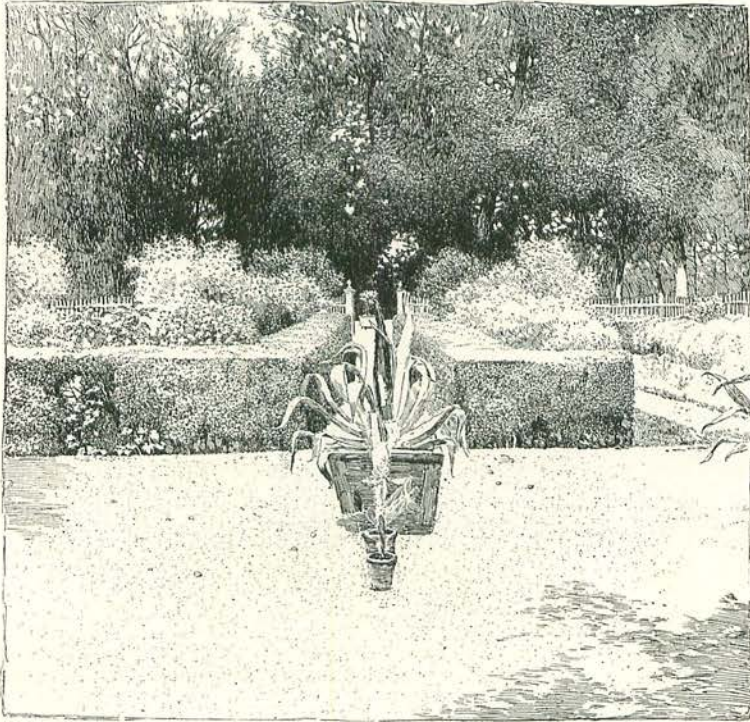
Even the grand mantelpiece of Italian marble in the chief parlor had been sent by an admirer of the general in London, together with two vases of old blue Indian porcelain. But the habits of his family were unchanged, remaining always on the unostentatious old Virginian lines. After an early breakfast Madam Washington, a stout, kindly dame, wearing in



WASHINGTON'S INKSTAND, CANDLESTICK, SNUFFERS, ETC.

winter homespun, in summer a gown of crisp white dimity, went to her store-room. "My dear old grandfather,"<sup>1</sup> writes Miss Mildred Lee, "used to tell me, when I ran in from play with a dirty frock at Arlington, that his grandmamma, Mrs. Washington, wore always one white gown a week, and that when she

Afterwards the house was opened to visits from the "quarter." Disputes were settled, eggs and chickens bought at the valuation of the seller, advice and medicine given to a succession of grown-up children — a family, varying in hue from tawny brown to the black of darkness visible, the care of whose health and welfare,



IN THE GARDEN AT MOUNT VERNON.

took it off it was as spotless as the day she put it on."

A mob-cap covering her gray hair, and key-basket in hand, the wife of Washington must have offered a pleasant picture of the days when housekeepers were not ashamed to weigh their own supplies, and butcher's books and lounging grocer's boys were not. In their stead were seen the black cook and her myrmidons, smiling, goggling, courtesying, holding their wooden pails and "piggins" to receive the day's allowance. If there were a "sugar loaf" to crack, a tall glittering monument like an aiguille of the Alps, emerging stainless from its dark-blue wrapper, it was the mistress of the house who brought her strength to bear on it; there were "whips" and "floating-islands" and jellies to compound; and to "tie down" the preserves was no small piece of work.

The rites of the store-room at an end, it was Mrs. Washington's practice to retire to her closet for the exercise of private devotions.

<sup>1</sup> The late G. W. P. Custis, Esq., of Arlington House.

however onerous, was accepted as naturally by generations of Southern housewives as was the responsibility for their own flesh and blood.

This business of reception went on intermittingly during the morning hours; but it is not to be supposed that Madam Washington sat with idle hands the while. Scattered about the room were black women engaged in work that must be overlooked: Flavia cutting out innumerable garments of domestic cotton for "quarter" use, Sylvia at her seam, Myrtila at her wheel—not to mention the small dark creatures with wool betwigged, perched upon crickets round about the hearth, learning to sew, to mend, to darn, with "ole miss" for a teacher. During the late war Mrs. Washington's boast had been that she had kept as many as sixteen wheels at a time whirring on the plantation. A favorite gown had been woven by her maids, of cotton, striped with silk procured by raveling the general's discarded stockings, and enlivened by a line of crimson from some worn-out chair-covers of satin damask.





G. W. P. CUSTIS WHEN A BOY. (FROM A PAINTING OWNED BY GENERAL G. W. C. LEE.)

In the intervals Madam was at leisure to chat with her guest about patterns, chickens, small-pox, husbands, and such like. The management of growing children was also a fruitful theme. There were the general's two Washington nephews, who had been put to school to Mr. Hanson in Alexandria. George had but lately run off to Mount Vernon, showing his stripes and vowing he'd be flogged by no schoolmaster. Little Washington, her own poor dear Jackey Custis's son, was as good as good could be; but Nelly—*girls*, you know! (Lovely Eleanor Custis, scarcely less beautiful in old age as Mrs. Laurence Lewis, was living, until just before the war between the States, near Berryville, in Clarke County, Virginia.) Mrs. Washington was greatly exercised because Miss Nelly preferred running in the shrubbery and mounting half-broken colts to practicing five hours a day upon the harpsichord. The anxious lady would ask Mrs. Herbert's advice as to the best method of inducing music where restless nature proved reluctant. Miss Nancy, doubtless, was more amenable; though, to be sure, Nelly was but a child yet, and was less wont to pout and cry than when first set to the spinet. And oh! *had* Nancy learned to make a shirt?

When these ladies did not drive out in the

afternoon, their custom was to take a discreet walk in the shrubbery. At the right time of the year they would gather rose leaves to fill the muslin bags that lay in every drawer, on every shelf; or sprays of honesty (they called it "silver shilling") to deck the vases on the parlor mantelpiece. After reading a bit out of the "Tatler," the "Sentimental Magazine," or the "Letters of Lady Montagu," they would take their forty winks—the beauty-sleep of a woman Southern born.

Everybody looked forward to the evening, when the general sat with them. This was the children's hour, when, by the uncertain twinkle of home-made candles, lighting but dimly the great saloon, while their elders turned trumps around the card-tables, the young people were called upon to show their steps, to strum their pieces, to sing their quavering little songs. The curled darling of the house was "Master Washington." Lafayette, during his last visit to America, told Mr. G. W. P. Custis he had seen him first on the portico at Mount

Vernon in 1784—"a very little gentleman, with a feather in his hat, holding fast to one finger of the good general's remarkable hand, which (so large that hand!) was all, my dear sir, you could well do at the time!"

All old Alexandrians remember kindly the master of Arlington House, simple and trustful, as chivalrous and as hospitable as a Spaniard of high degree, entertaining his guests with presents of the relics they admired. His reverence for his adoptive father amounted to a cult. He was fond of poetry and of painting, at times embellishing with heroic scenes so many yards of canvas that, like the Vicar of Wakefield's family piece, there was hardly room for it indoors. Mr. Custis was possessed of the true Southern gift of easy eloquence, and his orations on the birthday of Washington were events in Alexandria. His granddaughter tells me that she remembers his gentleness to all within his household and his devotion to cats, having frequently seen the old gentleman "sit on the edge of his chair to allow Pussy undisputed possession." Most of the Washington souvenirs used for the illustration of this paper were carried away by the Lee family in their hasty departure from Arlington at the outbreak of our war; what else they had—furniture, books, silver, china, prints, trunks of letters, Mrs.

Washington's wardrobe, etc.—became the spoils of war. Beautiful Arlington, as everybody knows, is now a vast graveyard for soldiers of the Union. The home and property of Washington's adopted son have passed—forever, and bitterly regretted—from his heirs.

In Grandmamma Washington's eyes this youngster was a paragon. The girls were glad when he was under notice, since it deferred their own dread hour of exhibition. Our great-aunt said she had never recovered from her alarm at being perched by Mrs. Washington upon a cross-stitch tabouret and bid to sing "Ye Dalian God" to the general, who gravely nodded time. Ah, me! the lapse of years! Hard it was to identify the "Miss Nancy" who romped and ran over corridors and lawns with Nelly Custis in the stern-visaged, hawk-eyed old lady—Miss Nancy still—who lived in the ancient brick house in King street, Alexandria, where her young relatives must needs leave their posies outside the street-door because their great-aunt could not abide the scent of any flower. Miss Herbert was a picturesque figure in the ante-bellum days of Alexandrian society; a social autocrat, kindly, despite her severity of mien. She had removed to live at Vacluse, a few miles out of town, and shortly after the beginning of the war in 1861 was, with her sister and their servants, notified that the place would be used as a site for Union fortifications. When the time came to vacate the house, the old lady sat dumb and stricken in her chair, heedless of all entreaties to arouse herself to action. In this chair she was finally carried between two soldiers, and not ungently placed in the vehicle waiting at the door to conduct the sisters to a place of safety with friends in Alexandria. She died in Alexandria at an advanced age not long after this event.



G. W. P. CUSTIS. (PAINTING OWNED BY GENERAL G. W. C. LEE.)

The chapter of Nelly Custis's relations with her adoptive father is a perfectly rounded whole, of which Washington's biographers have made less than it deserves. No one born among her Virginian relatives and the descendants of her contemporaries in Fairfax County could fail to be impressed with the softening and inspiring influence of her lovely life. Her niece, Mrs. Lee of Arlington, spoke of her as beautiful in face and form, tender and loving in disposition, and of a quick and active wit. However careworn or apparently unapproachable Washington might be, Nelly could always win a smile from him. Standing on tiptoe to hold the button of his coat, she would pour out her girlish confidences about balls and beaux, gowns and ribbons. His letter to her on the occasion of her first ball at Georgetown is Chesterfieldian in its stilted courtesy, yet practical enough in the matter of how "Eleanor Parke Custis, spinster," having caught her "hare," shall serve him. "When the fire is beginning to kindle," says he, "and your heart growing warm, propound these questions to it: Who is this invader? Have I a competent knowledge of him? Is he a man of good character—a man of sense? For, be assured, a sensible woman can never be happy with a fool. What has been his walk in life? Is he a gambler, a spendthrift, a drunkard? Is his fortune sufficient to maintain me in the manner I have been accustomed to live," etc. All of these questions would seem to have



SUGAR-BOWL BELONGING TO A DINNER-SET PRESENTED TO MARTHA WASHINGTON BY LAFAYETTE.



MRS. LAURENCE LEWIS (NELLY CUSTIS). (FROM A PAINTING BY GILBERT STUART, OWNED BY GENERAL G. W. C. LEE.)

been satisfactorily solved by the young beauty when she gave her hand to Laurence Lewis, son of Washington's sister Elizabeth. At their wedding, on February 22, 1798, Nelly pleaded with the general to grace the day by wearing his "grand embroidered uniform." To this request the chief, though smiling, shook his head, compromising with his tyrant by bestowing on her the splendid military plume given him by General Pinckney, as well as the harpsichord still standing now at Mount Vernon. When the hour came the tall majestic figure emerged from his bedroom clad in the old, worn Continental blue and buff, and Nelly, clinging to his neck, told him she loved him better so. Thus equipped he stood behind

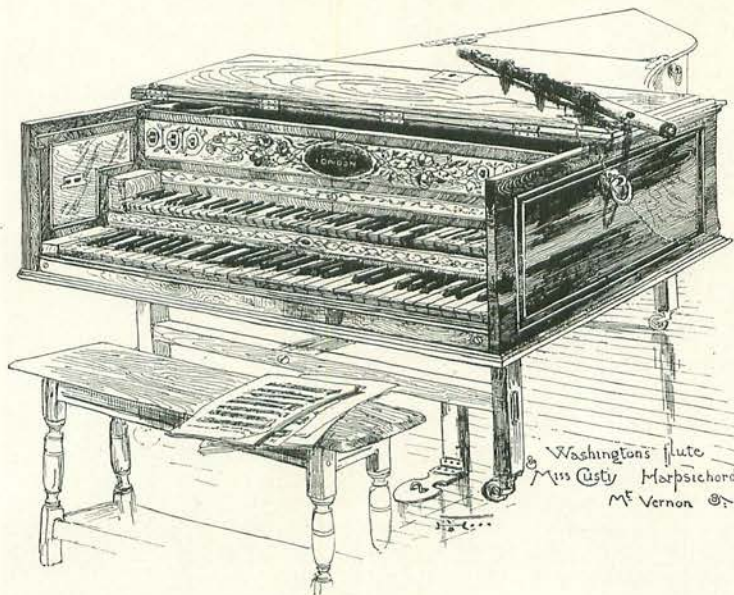
the bride, and at the appointed moment gave the pretty, blushing creature, with her wild-rose cheeks and dark and liquid eyes, into the keeping of his trusted nephew Laurence.

To assure his nephew of his devise to him by will of two thousand acres of land, on which he might at once (in September, 1799) begin to build, thus providing for the young couple a home near Mount Vernon, was one of the last acts of business in Washington's life. At his death, in the following December, his favorite Nelly, with her newborn babe beside her, lay in her chamber at Mount Vernon. There is no record as to whether the general had the pleasure of taking the child in his arms before he

lay down to his eternal sleep.<sup>1</sup> Such aspects of the character of Washington—the remembrance of his “dearest Patsey’s” miniature, worn through life around his neck; of the love, passing a brother’s, that he bore for Greene, for Knox, for Lafayette, for Nelson, for Robert Morris, for George Fairfax—incline one to think twice before accepting the modern creed that his was a heart of ice.

I do not purpose to enter into details about what we in the South call “family company” at Mount Vernon. As well attempt to impose

A life-long visitor at Mount Vernon had been that favorite divine and witty comrade, the Rev. Lee Massey of Pohick Church. He had succeeded Parson Green, first rector of Truro Parish, one of those card-playing, horse-racing representatives of the colonial Church over whom Bishops Meade and Johns, from the stronghold of their own pure religion and undefiled, used to lament in later days. Mr. Green had, nevertheless, his corner at the fire-sides of Mount Vernon, Belvoir, and Gunston, and, could Thackeray have captured him, would



upon an unoffending public a table of Virginian genealogy. Friends may come and go, but cousins go on forever in our State. Kinsmen there were who rode up to the gate, hallooed for grooms, and stabled their steeds with unshaken confidence in their own acceptability. Second cousins once-removed unpacked their band-boxes in the spare chambers. Pretty Dandridges and Custises and Washingtons put on their patches before the high-swung mirrors. Occasionally was seen there Mrs. Fielding Lewis, Washington's “Sister Betty,” a lady so like her illustrious brother that it was a family jest to throw around her a military cloak, put a cocked hat on her head, and file by, saluting her as “general.” Her son Laurence it was who married Nelly Custis; and her great-grandson Colonel Edward Parke Custis Lewis is the present minister of the United States to Portugal.

<sup>1</sup> The mother of Mrs. Laurence Lewis and of G. W. P. Custis, Esq., of Arlington, who was the girl bride of John Parke Custis, Mrs. Washington's son, married Dr. Stuart of Virginia soon after her first

be now a fly in amber embalmed in the pages of “The Virginians”! Parson Massey was of finer metal far; he had been ordained in London by Lord Bishop Porteous, was handsome, cultivated, and eloquent. He married a lady noted for the exuberance of her temper; and his success in converting her into a Patient Griselda won him applause among the husbands in Virginia. However tempted any of these gentlemen might feel to challenge the soundness of his doctrine in the pulpit, none were heard to demur to Mr. Massey's well-known domestic maxim that “a bride should be taken down while she wears her wedding-slippers.” Parson Massey's follower in the pulpit of Pohick was the Rev. Charles Kemp, a worthy man and an excellent scholar, of whom, unfortunately, sad traditions still hover around the county, showing him to have been over-fond of the cup compounded of French brandy and that husband's death. She had two older daughters, married respectively to Mr. Law, a brother of Lord Ellenborough, and to Mr. Peter. All of these ladies, with their husbands, were frequently at Mount Vernon.



MARTHA WASHINGTON. (FROM AN ENGRAVING IN SPARKS'S "LIFE OF WASHINGTON," AFTER A PAINTING BY WOOLASTON.)

plant said to flourish best on the grave of a good Virginian—in other words, mint-julep. A sad lapse from clerical dignity caused the retirement into private life of poor Mr. Kemp, who proved a better pedagogue than preacher, successfully thereafter birching Latin and Greek into a couple of generations of F. F. V.'s. Ere this event, however, the Washingtons had betaken themselves to be parishioners of Christ Church in Alexandria, and were sitting under the hour-glass pulpit in which the Rev. Bryan Fairfax preached the sermons, now in their tawny old age more revered than read by his descendants. Mr. Fairfax was esteemed by the county ladies to have a very pretty taste in literature. He had made several translations in verse from the French tongue, and had written an Oriental love-tale in a series of letters to Usbek from his friend Nessir in Ispahan. This romance, handed about in manuscript among the elect, the good gentleman would, if urged, read aloud to the circle at Mount Ver-

non—his daughter, Miss Sally, snuffing the candles and leading in the claque. Parson Fairfax, when in 1798 he went to England to make good his claim to be the eighth Lord Fairfax, Baron of Cameron, is thus described by one of his cousins at Leeds Castle: "He was a portly, handsome man, wearing a full suit of purple, the custom of the clergy of Virginia." The Rev. Bryan, Lord Fairfax, and his son Thomas were the last visitors to Mount Vernon who are mentioned in the general's diary but a few days before his short and fatal illness; they returned to lead the procession of mourners to the tomb.

But of all the clericos, particularly welcome to the young people were the meteoric appearances at Mount Vernon of the Rev. Mason Weems, whose arrival was sure to set house and plantation in a grin—poor, dear Parson Weems, whose claim upon the title-page of his quaint "Life of Washington, with curious anecdotes, equally honorable to himself and exemplary to his young countrymen," to style

himself "rector of Mount Vernon Parish" is gently but firmly demolished by Bishop Meade. First seen in the neighborhood of Alexandria as a book-peddler for a Philadelphia firm, driving his own chaise and fiddling at every stopping, by nothing was he so much pleased as when he could set roadside groups to capering. Once, hidden behind the calico curtain of a puppet show, the parson supplied the music for Punch and Judy. Weems was the ideal of a strolling preacher, having been actually ordained to be a clergyman.<sup>1</sup> The joy of Cuff and Cupid, some of his exhortations were alarmingly apt to plunge white hearers into mirth unquenchable. The black people fairly reveled in seeing him wag his pow, in pulpit or out of it. Although not always to be trusted as an historian of their proceedings, he was on terms of good-fellowship with the clergy and the gentry of the State. In addition to the "Washington," which contains the original story of the cherry-tree and the hatchet,—as well as that long religious conversation between little George and the gentleman frequently apostrophized with "High, pa!" on the subject of his name sown in cress upon the garden bed,—the "fiddling parson" published a "Life of Marion," also "The Drunkard's Mirror." He was a great interpreter of dreams, and could tell fortunes by coffee-grounds and cards. At the time of the French Revolution he parted with his pig-tail, and imported the tune of "Ça ira," to play upon his fiddle before the cross-roads audiences. Despite his eccentricity, Mr. Weems was recognized to be a good and self-denying man. Madam Washington, who in an adapted epitaph is by him extolled to the skies as his benefactress, was unfailingly kind to the queer gentleman—always contriving to give him a double spoonful of egg sauce when it fell to her to carve the chickens.

A sharp contrast to the country folk were the foreign visitors who from time to time brought letters of introduction to Mount Vernon. These courtiers, exhaling perfume, taking snuff with womanish finger-tips, putting their heels together for a bow, smirking, eulogizing, amused the Virginians mightily. After the Revolution there were frequent arrivals of statesmen and diplomatists from home and from abroad, though a journey to Virginia from New York in those days was as much of an enterprise as jumping aboard a Cunarder to make a three-days' visit at an English country house would now be. There came even "a celebrated authoress and champion of liberty," Mistress Catharine Macaulay Graham, who "crossed the Atlantic on purpose to testify in her own person her ad-

miration of the character and deeds of Washington." We cannot but suppose the day of her advent at Mount Vernon to have been one of those occasions when, leaving Mr. Lear and the ladies to serve as chorus to his praiseful guest, Washington went early to his bed.

Most callers, of course, were from Alexandria, once Belhaven, now a prosperous commer-



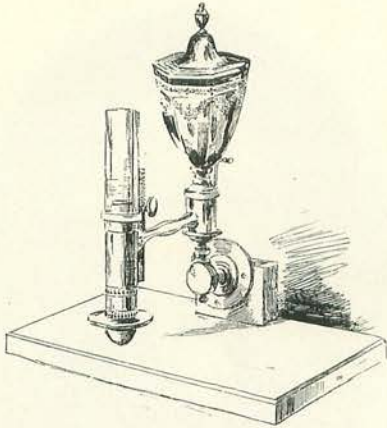
BRYAN, EIGHTH LORD FAIRFAX.

cial center—its citizens, to quote Washington, "Federal to a man." The town was well sprinkled with the general's old officers, who took delight in fighting the battles of the Revolution over again and again while puffing their pipes of the choice Virginian leaf, on chairs ailt in the Mount Vernon portico. The rising lawyer of the place was Colonel Charles Simms, who, having fought with credit as an officer of the 6th Regiment of the Virginia line, and marrying, while in camp at Valley Forge, the daughter of a Tory sire, Major Douglas of Trenton, had chosen Alexandria as his home. Rapidly becoming one of the leading jurists of the State, Colonel Simms already held several positions of honor; he was a member of the Society of the Cincinnati, and a pall-bearer at the funeral of Washington.

Colonel William Payne, also late of the Continental army, "a cub in size, but a lion at heart," as he is styled by Weems, was the same little gentleman who years before, in an election contest over a seat in the House of Burgesses,—in which Washington supported George William Fairfax, Payne another,—had knocked down Colonel Washington in the market-place of Alexandria. The latter was in the wrong, and next day apologized to his doughty assailant.

<sup>1</sup> See the chapter in the life of Mason L. Weems told in "The Critical Period of American History," by John Fiske, p. 83.

Of a pleasant scene, long after this event, we have the naïve recital, quoted by Weems as coming from Payne. It was immediately after the war, when the conquering hero had returned to live at Mount Vernon, that his old adversary resolved to pay him his respects. "As I drew near the house I began to experience a rising fear lest he should call to mind the blow



WASHINGTON'S LAMP, NOW IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM.

I had given him in former days. However, animating myself, I pushed on. Washington met me at the door with a smiling welcome, and presently led me into an adjoining room where Mrs. Washington sat. 'Here, my dear,' said he, presenting me to his lady—'here is the little man you have so often heard me talk of—and who, in a difference between us one day, had the resolution to knock me down, big as I am. I know you will honor him as he deserves, for I assure you he has the heart of a true Virginian'; and Mrs. Washington looked at him, I thought, with a something in her eyes which showed that he appeared to her greater and lovelier than ever."

Payne continued to be Washington's warm friend through life, was often at Mount Vernon,—where it is recorded that he played chess with the ladies,—and at the funeral of Washington was selected to be a pall-bearer.

Still another ex-soldier living in Alexandria was Major Henry Piercy, late aide-de-camp to the Commander-in-Chief, and at his side in every battle but the final assault at Yorktown, having been, the day before, carried wounded from the field. The gallant Piercy, having allied himself with Mary Burroughs, the charming grandniece of Lord Sherlock, made with his wife an important addition to the society of the town. He too had the right to wear the golden eagle on his heart.

Other friends were the Dulany of Shuter's Hill, the Johnstons of West Grove, good Dr. Craik and his daughters, the Hunters, Dades,

Ramsays, Fitzhughs, Wests, Stuarts, Dr. Dick's family, and a score besides.

The society of Alexandria, always conservative, had not in 1788–89 parted with its aristocratic flavor. The Fairfaxes, though withdrawn perforce into their Tory shell, had stamped strongly upon the place they helped to found certain outward fashions of the Georgian court. The Washingtons, Masons, Carlyles, and other patriotic families had not seen fit to dismiss their Old World habits, and still clung to the hair-powder and silk stockings, outriders and fine equipages, imported a trifle after date from England. Long years after the new century was well advanced, such waifs and strays of past grandeur continued to be seen in Alexandria. These eyes have beheld there, just before our war, stopping the way in front of the principal haberdashery of King street, Cinderella's chariot, pumpkin-colored, high-swung, an ancient negro in rusty livery seated upon the box, and all plentifully splashed with Fairfax County mud—to recall it now is like touching the key of a leathery old spinet!

During these years of quiet many minor schemes engaged Washington's attention. Through Lafayette he promised her Imperial Majesty to secure a vocabulary of certain Indian tribes on the frontier, but besought the great lady to have patience with the time consumed in getting it. On February 8, 1787, he inclosed to R. H. Lee the plan of the Countess of Huntingdon to evangelize the Indians of the Western territory, a voluminous manuscript, sent through Sir James Jay, which Washington apologizes for *not copying*, on the ground that he is much pressed in correspondence. It is to be feared the good countess got little comfort from her Indians, whatever she may have derived from the courtesy of Lee and Washington.

Although his reading was chiefly military or agricultural, Washington dipped now and then into belles-lettres. The same faithful Dickey Lee to whom once, in childish round-hand, he had written, "I am going to get a whip-top, and you may see it and whip it too," has left a letter wherein Washington acknowledges a certain "packet," regretting that his "want of knowledge of the language" prevents him from forming an opinion of his own about the "dramatic performances" of "Monsieur Serviteur le Barbier."

The general's charities were of the least conspicuous yet most judicious character. Careful in minute expenditure, he was never known to turn a deaf ear to the county poor—and their number was not small—who begged of him audience. For their use he kept a granary on the estate filled with corn, and a boat with seine moored in one of his best her-

ring-fisheries. Governor Johnson cites an example of his secret bounty to a number of miserably poor mountaineers in the neighborhood of one of the "Virginia Springs," to whom the baker of the place was ordered to supply a daily dole of bread without revealing the giver's name, which was found out, quite by chance, to be that of Washington. His foundation of the school for boys in Alexandria, mentioned in his will, was a boon heartily appreciated then, and even now, by his townspeople.

No sketch of Washington's home life should omit mention of his servants. Chief among these, dean of the corps in point of dignity and right of precedence, was Bishop, the English soldier who had been Braddock's body-servant at the fatal Monongahela, and was by him dying commended to the care of Washington. Bishop literally grew gray in the service of Mount Vernon, marrying there, and living in a house on the estate till his death, at the age of eighty-odd years. As he got on in life, the ex-militaire became something whimsical: more than once Washington fell upon the too transparent device of bidding him seek elsewhere for a master if not satisfied with him. But the old fox held his own; and to his retreat choice bits continued to be sent from the house-table, while all visitors made a point of paying their respects to him. Bishop will be remembered as the go-between of Cupid in the humble capacity of holding Washington's horse while the smitten colonel tarried at Mr. Chamberlayne's house in conversation with the widow Custis. He was also present at the colonel's marriage by the Rev. Dr. Mossom, January 6, 1759, in old St. Peter's Church, New Kent; and at the festivities after that event, at the White House, on the Pamunkey River, in the counties of King William and New Kent. He was esteemed too old to follow his master in the Revolution, and by that time, indeed, had settled into life quarters at Mount Vernon.

Billy, or Will, Lee, the mulatto ex-huntsman of the Fairfax County chase, pompous and alert, stood behind his master's chair at meals. Off duty, it was his pride, especially with military visitors, to assume an easy air of intimacy with the executive proceedings of the Revolutionary War. He had transient glory at Monmouth as commander of a mounted corps of officers' valets, and in the heat of the battle had brought a laugh to the lips of Washington. Billy, exploiting his volunteers and taking observations of the enemy through his master's telescope until suddenly put to flight by an uncivil British shot, was irresistible. He survived Washington many years, was freed and provided for by his master's will, but lived on

at Mount Vernon, making shoes but enriched by the fees of visitors, until his death from the effects of too much to eat and to drink.

Daddy Jack, the fisherman, was a characteristic feature of a Virginian plantation. He was an aged negro, as gray of tint and as dry in texture as the lichen on a dead tree. His claim to be "mos' a hund'ed, chile," was accepted without question. Jack told many weird stories of his début in life as the son of an African king, with chapters of fire and bloodshed, in which his father's fall before the sword and his own capture and forced voyage to America were touched with lurid tints. Time out of mind the old fellow had done nothing but sit in his canoe moored in the bright water of the Potomac, off the Mount Vernon landing, with his nose upon his knees, fishing or dozing, according to his fancy. When the cooks were ready to prepare the fish course at a meal, they were wont to go down to the bank and call out until answered, "Daddy Ja-ack! Oh! Daddy Jack!" Sometimes the old fellow would turn upon his persecutors with the cry, "Wot you all mek such a debbil of a noise for, hey? I warn't 'sleep; only noddin'!"

A concomitant of African Jack was dusky Davis the hunter, whose business it was to supply the table of the chief with game. Birds, squirrels, wild turkeys, "molly cotton-tails," the wily 'possum, *bonne bouche* of negro banquets, fell abundantly before Tom's destroying musket, a relic of the war. As for canvas-back ducks, so many of them yielded up the ghost in their feeding-grounds along the river that the larders of Mount Vernon were overstocked. Of the household only the general remained constant to this dainty, which he cooked in a chafing-dish and ate with hominy and a glass of good Madeira. Old Tom Davis, weather-beaten and hearty, carrying his gun and pouch, his body wrapped with strings of game, his dogs at heel, was long a familiar spectacle of the woods on the estate.

"Black Cary," a negro, freed by the terms of Washington's will, lived to the reputed age of a hundred and fourteen years in the city of Washington. This old fellow's stock in trade was, naturally, his past connection with the family at Mount Vernon. He levied tribute on the strength of it, exacting from his own race the deference paid to a king in exile. So long as he was able to limp about, his habit was to put on ancient military finery, and wearing a huge cockaded *chapeau-bras*, ally himself with every procession led by a brass band. His funeral was famous in the chronicles of African aristocracy in those parts, where "colored" funerals are pageants. Others of the scattered freedmen of Washington's personal estate have been reported to be in activity, inside or out



of dime museums, ever since the century set in. The chief's admirable care for his servants is fully shown by his will and other writings. No master could have been more provident for their future, more considerate of their daily wants.<sup>1</sup>

To stop and parley with his faithful henchmen formed one of the pleasures of his daily ride. The sovereign of a system genuinely feudal was the master of one of those great eighteenth-century plantations in Virginia. Happy he who, like Washington, could induce the intolerable curse of slavery to wear the semblance of a blessing.

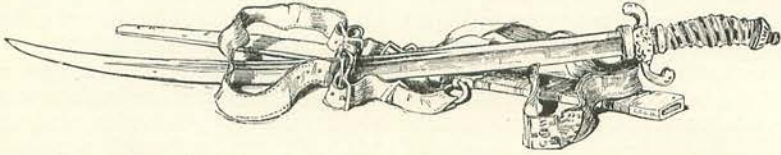
Thus, surrounded by friends who loved them and dependents whose lives they continually brightened, it made little difference to sober people in the afternoon of life, like the general and his wife, that society about their home had lost something of pre-revolutionary sparkle. Already the ebb-tide of Virginia's glory had set in, and the class inspired by Jefferson, whom

the ladies of Mount Vernon scrupled not to call "those filthy Democrats," had begun their work of image-breaking in the stronghold of colonial aristocracy. Such as it was, Washington's State was knit into the fibers of his heart.

So, when a century has lapsed, her sons and daughters look tenderly upon Virginia wrapping around her poverty and sorrow the tattered remnants of a glorious past; and in her behalf a noble voice has spoken to all Americans in these words:

Virginia gave us this imperial man,  
Cast in the massive mould  
Of those high-statured ages old  
Which into grander forms our mortal metal ran;  
She gave us this unblemished gentleman.  
What shall we give her back but love and praise,  
As in the dear old unestrangèd days  
Before the inevitable wrong began?  
Mother of States and undiminished men,  
Thou gavest us a country, giving him.

*Constance Cary Harrison.*



WASHINGTON'S SWORD, NOW IN THE LIBRARY OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT.



WINDOW OF THE KENNEDY HOUSE, NO. 1 BROADWAY,  
FORMERLY WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS.

## WASHINGTON IN NEW YORK IN 1789.

**I**N the metropolis—which, however, it behooves us to remember, was then but a plain and sober-sided little town, unable to conceal the ravages of repeated fires and lying in chief part below the present City Hall—every house was packed with visitors; the finest gentlemen and most "elegant females" of the land were content to squeeze themselves into mouse-holes for the privilege of the inauguration week in town. "We shall remain here, even if we have to sleep in tents, as so many will have to do," pattered a charming Miss Ingersoll in a letter to her gossip, Miss Sally McKean in Philadelphia, who was

<sup>1</sup> It was once reported in the army that certain captured dispatches from the general were found upon the person of a runaway slave belonging to him. Somebody mustered courage to ask Washington if this was true. "Sir," said the chief, coldly, "I never had a slave run away from me."