

## THE MOTHER AND BIRTHPLACE OF WASHINGTON.



DESIGNED BY CHARLES C. PERKINS.

PROPOSED MEMORIAL TO BE ERECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO MARK THE BIRTHPLACE OF WASHINGTON.



**I**N Lancaster County, Virginia, on the left bank of the Rappahannock River, where its tide broadens before blending with beautiful Chesapeake Bay, stood Epping Forest, which, nearly two centuries ago, was the plantation home of Colonel Joseph Ball. There, in the latter months of the year of grace 1706, was born his youngest child, Mary. The baby came of brave and sturdy British stock. Her English grandfather, Colonel William Ball, a Royalist, emigrated to America in 1657, and settled upon a plantation called Millenbeck, in the parish of St. Mary's, Lancaster County, Virginia. The name Ball is mentioned first in the "Doomsday Book of Exon" some time in the thirteenth century. The scutcheon of the family is described in Burke's Armory, its crest thus: "Out of a ducal coronet a hand and arm, embowered in mail, grasping a fire ball — all proper."

That the Balls were alike faithful to Church and state is set forth in Bishop Meade's book, "Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia," which also mentions that Major James Ball and Colonel Joseph Ball were allowed to finish a private gallery for the use of their families, themselves meeting the expense, while White Chapel<sup>1</sup> was rebuilding.

A number of these historic colonial churches

<sup>1</sup> Chapel of Ease to Old Christ Church, Lancaster County, Virginia.

still remain, some in an excellent state of preservation, others in ruins, with their silent congregations gathered around them under the solemn shade of noble pine- and cedar-trees, notably at White Chapel, where many time-worn tombstones remain almost hidden in wild grass, but bearing unefaced upon the lichened marble the names and brave records of the Balls.

Under the old régime in Virginia estates were entailed as in the mother-country, and the life of the planters was dignified and aristocratic, and also rather isolated, while of the lives of the women we find few records beyond those of birth, marriage, and death.

Scant data are left of Mary Ball's childhood and youth at Epping Forest. Her name occurs in a legal document of the 25th of June, 1711, when her father, smitten with sore sickness, and, as he states, "lying upon the bed in his lodging-chamber, maketh his last will and testament, commending his soul to God with sound and disposing mind," carefully arranges the settlement of a large estate, real and personal, for the benefit of his family.

Only a single extract can be given from this lengthy document with its profuse legal phraseology. Having made liberal provision for his wife, the testator makes a special bequest to their youngest child thus: "Item,— I give and bequeath unto my daughter Mary 400 acres of land in Richmond County in y<sup>e</sup> freshes of Rappa-h'n River, being a part of a pattern of 1600 acres, to her, y<sup>e</sup> said Mary, and her heirs forever."

From the time of her husband's death Colonel Ball's widow lived many years, which were undoubtedly devoted to careful training of her child, fitting her, as it proved, to pass with rare firmness and fortitude through the trials and vicissitudes that later life laid upon her.

Few of Mary Ball's letters remain; it is probable that few were written. The handwriting is stiff and cramped, the spelling is bad, but they are most sensibly and earnestly expressed. Only one letter of her girlhood is known; it was written at seventeen to her half-brother Joseph, in England, and says, among other things, "We have not had a schoolmaster in our neighborhood until now in nearly four years." In the Virginia of that day of course no public schools existed, and few tutors were available, except when the rector of the parish consented to perform that function.

Augustine Washington and Mary Ball was Married the  
Sixth of March, 17<sup>30</sup>/<sub>31</sub>

George Washington son to Augustine & Mary his Wife was born  
the 11<sup>th</sup> Day of February 173<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> about 10 in the Morning & was Baptized the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April  
following by Mr. Beverley Whiting & Cap<sup>t</sup>. Christopher Brothas godfathers and  
Mr. Milard Gregory godmothers

Betty Washington was Born the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1733 about 6 in of Morning  
Departed this life the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1797 at 4 o'clock

Samuel Washington was Born the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nov<sup>r</sup>. 1734 about 3 in of Morning

Jane Washington Daughter of Augustine and Jane Washington  
Departed this life Jan<sup>y</sup>. 17<sup>th</sup>. 1737

John Augustine Washington was Born the 13<sup>th</sup> of Jan<sup>y</sup>. about 2 in of Morning  
1735/6

Charles Washington was Born the 2<sup>d</sup> Day of May about 5 in of Morning  
1730

Mildred Washington was Born the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 1739 about 9 at Night.

Mildred Washington Departed this life Oct<sup>r</sup>. of 23<sup>d</sup>. 1740 being Thursday  
about 12 a clock at Noon Aged 1 Year & 4 Months

Augustine Washington Departed this life the 12<sup>th</sup> Day of April 1741  
aged 49 Years

FACSIMILE OF THE RECORD IN THE FAMILY BIBLE OF AUGUSTINE AND MARY WASHINGTON.

She is described with charming quaintness in a fragmentary letter that was found during the war in one of the desolated houses near Yorktown, Virginia. Under date of "W<sup>m</sup>sburg, y<sup>e</sup> 7th day of Oct., 1722;" the letter-writer says:

Madame Ball of Lancaster and her sweet Molly have gone Hom. Mamma thinks Molly the Comliest Maiden She Knows. She is about 16 y<sup>r</sup>s old, is taller than Me, is very Sensable, Modest, and Loving. Her Hair is like unto Flax. Her eyes are the color of Yours, and her cheeks are like May Blossoms.

From the time of this visit to Williamsburg, years follow of which no record is left until some time in 1728, when it befell that her mother died. But before Mistress Ball's eyes closed she had seen her daughter bloom from the "sweet Molly" of sixteen into a lovely young woman of twenty-two, who was termed, in the flowery language of that day's local romance, "The Rose of Epping Forest," and is mentioned by Sparks and Irving as "the belle and beauty of the Northern Neck," as that section of the Virginia low country to which

Lancaster County belonged was commonly called.

A fragment of another old letter, written about this time, says, "I understand Molly Ball is going Home with her Brother, a Lawyer who lives in England"; but of this proposed visit there is left neither record nor tradition of any kind among her personal descendants, though Dr. Lossing considers it possible that the visit was made and that in England she met and married Augustine Washington. The record of her marriage upon the page of the old and much-worn family Bible gives the date 1730. The volume is a most quaintly illustrated quarto; time and age have turned the paper to a pale yellow-brown, but the handwriting of the very brief and simple entry is quite distinct and clear.

Augustine Washington and Mary Ball was married the sixth of March 1730-31.

This Bible has been a hereditary relic in the writer's family for five generations, having been given by Mary Ball Washington to her only daughter Betty, Mrs. Fielding Lewis, and transmitted directly to her descendants. The scribe in the old Bible has given no other detail of the event, not even whether it took place in church or at home.

That the bride was blonde and beautiful both history and tradition tell, and of the bridegroom in his fortieth year a description has been transmitted from one generation to another. Mary Washington's description of her husband is confirmed by the testimony of contemporaries—a noble-looking man, of distinguished bearing, tall and athletic, with fair, florid complexion, brown hair, and fine gray eyes.

Something more is due to the father of Washington than mere mention of his personal appearance; but space allows us only to refer the investigating reader to careful reviews of Washington's ancestry given in Sparks's and Irving's histories, tracing the family for six centuries in England, and further, to a grant of land recorded in 963 from Edgar the Saxon King to "Athelunold Was-sengatone."<sup>1</sup>

Returning to Mary Ball's marriage and the query who was her husband, nothing could be more emphatic than his own solemn assertion, made in the first sentence of his last will, "I, Augustine Washington of the county of King George, Gentleman."

The bridegroom's home at this time was in

Westmoreland County, on the Potomac. The house, built in pioneer days, was small but substantial, the main building hip-roofed, with dormer-windows, and a one-story wing running back, which was used as a chamber; in this room, family tradition tells us, George Washington was born. The long side of the house fronted the river, which was, and is, about three hundred and fifty feet distant. The bank is about fifteen feet high, with, at this date, a depth of water at its base averaging five feet; and here it was that vessels from Europe came laden with supplies for the Washingtons, and, returning, bore away with them the products of the Wakefield and Haywood plantations.<sup>2</sup>

Around the mansion were the fine fields of its owner's broad domain, extending for a mile, and skirted on one side by the Potomac. There was full measure of content in this abode where the first years of Mary Washington's wedded life were spent, made perfect when, as the old Bible tells us, George Washington, son of Augustine and Mary his wife, was born "y<sup>e</sup> 11th day of February, 1731-2, about 10 in the morning, and," the record goes on to say, "was baptized the 3d day of April following, Mr. Beverley Whiting and Captain Christopher Brooks, Godfathers, and Mrs. Mildred Gregory, Godmother."<sup>3</sup>

Other children came in rapid succession. They were Betty, Samuel, John Augustine, Charles, and Mildred, who died in infancy. The second son, Samuel, was born in November, 1734, and in the following spring, while the servants, preparing for the planting of early crops, were burning the accumulated "trash," the mansion took fire and was burned to the ground. For many years a massive chimney remained standing; it was generally supposed to have belonged to the original house, but is stated by the oldest living members of the family to have been part of an outhouse that stood hard by the mansion and has been wrongly pictured in histories as the birthplace of Washington.

When the Wakefield estate was sold many years ago by one of the Washingtons to another of the name, a reservation was made of the spot where the house had stood, and in 1858 this reservation was presented to the State by its hereditary owner, the late Colonel Lewis W. Washington of Virginia, conditional upon the place being inclosed, and a fitting monument erected upon it properly inscribed as the birthplace of Washington.

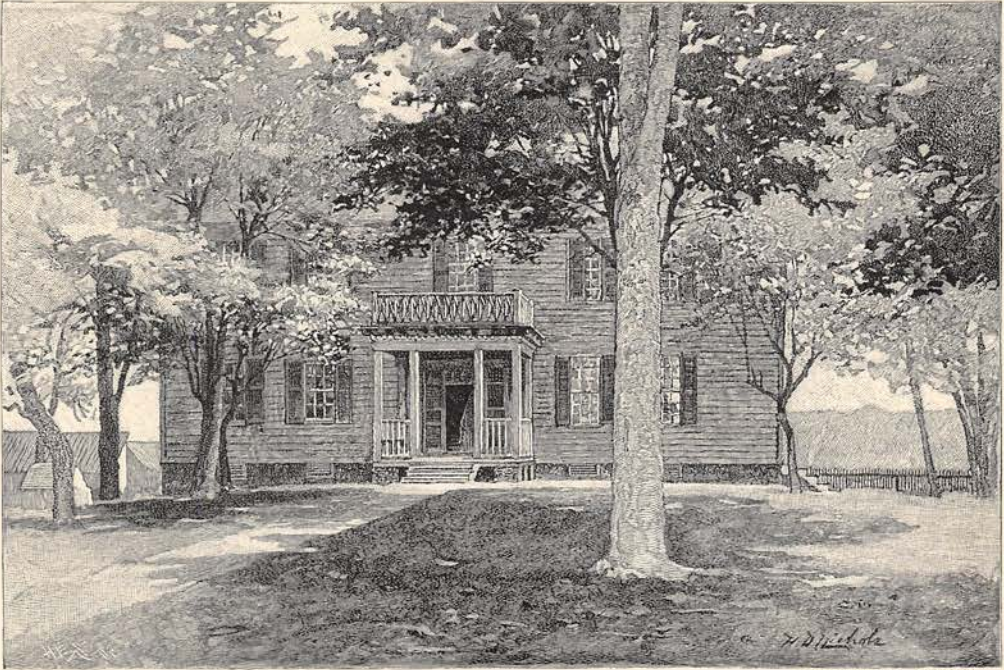
Recently Congress passed a bill appropriat-

<sup>1</sup> Volume I, *Chronicon Monasterie de Abingdon*, published by the British government.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics from the State Department's exploration of Wakefield, made by Dr. F. O. St. Clair.

<sup>3</sup> The godmother, Mrs. Mildred Gregory, was an

aunt of the infant. She was the daughter of Lawrence Washington, brother of Augustine. Mildred Washington married Roger Gregory of King and Queen County, Virginia, and after his death was married to Colonel Thornton of Fredericksburg.



DRAWN BY H. D. NICHOLS.

EPPING FOREST, BIRTHPLACE OF MARY BALL.

ENGRAVED BY H. E. SYLVESTER.

ing thirty thousand dollars to erect a monument upon Washington's birthplace, and while the Hon. William M. Evarts was Secretary of State much interest was excited. He visited the spot, and Colonel Casey, chief engineer, made a careful survey of the site. Subsequently, under instructions of the State Department, the foundation of the house was traced and uncovered. There is an old water-color picture now hanging in the west room at Mount Vernon, for several generations an heirloom in one branch of the Washington family, which, tradition tells, represents the old Wakefield house where George Washington was born.

The place to which Augustine Washington removed in 1735 was known to his Lewis grandchildren, who subsequently inherited it, as Pine Grove; it was also called Ferry Farm, from the adjacent ferry over the Rappahannock. The house was small, and stood upon a bank above the river, surrounded by fine orchards, garden, and shrubberies. The Washingtons with their children were regular attendants at the Episcopal church in Overwharton Parish, where their home was situated; and here one Master Hobby, a pompous person of enormous self-esteem, who combined the vocation of sexton with that of schoolmaster, earned a post-mortem fame as the first instructor of George Washington.

Eight years passed serenely, when suddenly

Mary Washington's great sorrow came. Early in April her husband, riding one day over his plantation, was caught in a rain-storm; he took cold, and after a brief illness died of rheumatic gout. The record in the old Bible tells us tersely, "Augustine Washington Departed this life y<sup>e</sup> 12th day of April, 1740, aged 49 years." His remains were taken back to his birthplace on the Potomac, and entombed in the family vault. One clause of his will is a little curious: "It is my Will and desire that my said four sons' (George, Samuel, John, and Charles) estates may be kept in my wife's hands until they respectively attain the age of Twenty One years, *in case my said wife continues so long unmarried.*"

The provision in case of a second marriage proved unnecessary, for, though left a widow at thirty-seven, Mary Washington was loyal to her husband's memory and to his trust. And now, having to assume her husband's duties in addition to her own, no time for sorrowful brooding was permitted to the widowed mother, upon whom the management of her own and her children's properties devolved; for Augustine Washington bequeathed landed estates to each of his young sons, and made an especial provision in sterling money for his only daughter Betty. The personal care and training of their children until majority were left solely to the mother, and of the result able historians have written that in these manifold duties she "ac-

quitted herself with great fidelity to her trust, and with entire success."

Three years passed, and her son George being now fourteen years old, Mrs. Washington's thoughts were seriously moved to the consideration of his future career. She consulted his eldest half-brother, Lawrence Washington, who had married and settled at Mount Vernon, and become a prominent county gentleman, after having served with distinction in the British navy. Recognizing the boy's decided military taste, Lawrence strongly advised that George should adopt the same profession and enter the navy, though his mother's anxious heart opposed the plan.

To this episode in Washington's career attention has been repeatedly called by many writers, who quote from a letter written by Joseph Ball, in England, to his sister Mary, in Virginia, who had taken counsel with him on the subject of her son's entering the navy. The reply is, that no preferment can be expected for him, as he has "no influence" to obtain it. This was a mistake, and against the probably hasty assertion put the historic fact that Lawrence Washington secured by his influence a commission for George in the British navy, and after his luggage had been put aboard a man-of-war lying in the Potomac, at the last moment, his mother, yielding to her fears, recalled her consent, and the obedient but sorely disappointed boy returned home. After this episode the mother gave over her beloved son much to his eldest brother's guidance, permitting him to live at Mount Vernon until two years later, when he was appointed to and accepted, at the age of sixteen, the office of public surveyor.

The well-known incident of the boy's killing his mother's favorite thoroughbred colt has probably given rise to the mythical hatchet story. In a daring effort to break and ride the fiery, untamed creature, it reared, and fell back dead. Afterward, in response to her remarks about the colt, George confessed his fault without extenuation; to which the mother replied, "I am sorry that my favorite colt is killed, but I am glad that my son always tells the truth."

The time soon came when the country was shaken by the French and Indian War, and again the mother's heart ached with anxiety, while he, eager to win his spurs, was preparing to join General Braddock. His strong sense of duty overcame the illogical protest of anxious maternal love. Answering her objections, he said: "The God to whom you commended me, madam, when I set out on a more perilous errand defended me from all harm, and I trust he will do so now. Do you not?" After this she could only commend him to God, and—wait. Rumors reaching her, after Braddock's

defeat, that he was killed, he wrote promptly assuring her of his safety, and in one of her few letters she writes at this time to her brother in London, "I have known a great deal of trouble since I saw you; there was no end to my trouble while George was in the army, but he has now given it up."

The first month of the year 1759 brought brighter days, for in January Colonel Washington was married to beautiful Martha Dandridge Custis, widow of Daniel Parke Custis, and brought his lovely bride to Mount Vernon the following spring, while the mother rejoiced in her son's happiness.

For nearly a decade from this time there is no special note of Mary Washington's life. In 1760 her only daughter Betty was married to Colonel Fielding Lewis of Gloucester County, who built for her an elegant house on the border of the village of Fredericksburg, that she might be near her mother.

In 1765 the passage of the Stamp Act startled the colonists from their dream of peace. Deeply moved as she was by the public agitation, keenly alive to its possibilities of peril to her sons, the prevailing excitement made no change in the routine of her duties. Directions to the overseer, supervision of the spinners' and weavers' work,—an important item, as the servants were clothed in the main from fabrics of home manufacture,—and the daily direction of the household, kept her constantly occupied. Typical of her force of character and her rigid discipline was the rebuke she administered to an overseer who, presumptuously departing from her directions, followed his own judgment upon some matter of work. When arraigned for the offense, he made the insolent reply, "Madam, in my judgment the work has been done to better advantage than if I had followed your directions." A withering flash of her eyes fell upon the offender, with the imperious question: "And, pray, who gave you the right to exercise any judgment in the matter? I command you, sir; there is nothing left for you but to obey." The overseer was dismissed at once, and tradition tells that afterward, relating his misfortune to his friends, he declared that when he "met the blue lightning of Madam Washington's glance he felt exactly as if he had been knocked down."

Before leaving home for the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, with a recognition of the deadly strife the nation was entering upon, and with tender forethought for his own aging mother, Washington induced her to leave the lonely country home and to remove to Fredericksburg. Mistress Lewis and her husband urged that she should come to live with them in their beautiful home overlooking the town, but her answer to their loving insistence was



FROM THE PAINTING IN THE LEWIS FAMILY PLACE AT MARMION, VIRGINIA, ATTRIBUTED TO JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY.

BETTY, WASHINGTON'S ONLY SISTER.

tender yet firm: "I thank you for your dutiful and affectionate offer, but my wants are few in this life, and I feel perfectly competent to take care of myself." She selected a house of good size on Charles street. There were stables and an orchard in the rear, and a garden, redolent in their season with lilacs, calycanthus, flowering almond, hyacinths, cowslips, and other flowers. This garden was her favorite resort. Washington's solicitude for his mother's comfort was not satisfied until he had assisted in her removal and seen her comfortably settled in the new home.

Some of its furnishings may be gathered from the items of her will, which states that she is disposing of what "remains of her worldly estate." Numerous beds, bedsteads, counterpanes, curtains, and quilts; dressing-glasses, looking-glasses, — probably parlor mirrors, — silver tablespoons and teaspoons, "square dining-table," sets of china, "blue and white" and "red and white," are itemized. "Six red leather chairs," an "oval table," and her "walnut writing-desk with drawers," are also mentioned.

There was also a mahogany sideboard, given shortly before her death to her daughter for her young grandson Robert. The writer's mother well remembered it; but in the settlement of Major Robert Lewis's estate it was sold in the sale of personal property. The value of such relics was not realized then as now. The equipages mentioned in her will are a "phaëton and bay horse," also her "riding-chair, and two black horses"; so the stable was amply supplied. The number of attendants upon the mistress of this comfortable establishment formed quite an array for one person's needs; but in that day a retinue of domestics was required by every Southern lady.

The housekeeper, Mrs. Skelton, an active young woman, had general charge under the mistress's directions, and three colored servants, Patty, who held high dignity as "maid" to her lady, Bet, or Betsey, the cook, and her husband Stephen, coachman, sometimes gardener, with their two children, who had occasional duties between house and kitchen, completed the household.



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY W. G. TURNER, RETOUCHEE BY A. BRENNAN.  
PRESENT APPEARANCE OF THE HOUSE OF WASHINGTON'S MOTHER AT FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA.

This house, where Washington's mother passed her declining years, still stands in Fredericksburg, Virginia, but not in its original form, one end having been altered and the roof raised to give a full second story, which destroyed its former quaintness of aspect.

During the trying years when her son was leading the Continental forces the mother was watching and praying, following him with anxious eyes; but to the messengers who brought tidings, whether of victory or defeat, she turned a calm face, whatever tremor of feeling it might mask, and to her daughter she said, chiding her for undue excitement, "The sister of the commanding general should be an example of fortitude and faith." At last Fredericksburg was thrilled with the glad tidings of the victory at Trenton. Friends flocked to her with congratulations, and when the principal citizens waited upon her to express their gratitude and pride in the nation's hero, she gently answered, "George seems to have deserved well of his country"; and when they read letters eulogizing his skill and courage, she said, smiling, "Gentlemen, here is too much flattery; still, George will not forget the lessons I have taught him—he will not forget himself, though he is an object of so much praise."

The following years were anxious and trou-

bled ones, with few lights amid their shadows; but she never swerved from the systematic daily routine, and in good weather took frequent drives to her country-place in Stafford, making an impressive appearance in progress, said the grandson from whose personal recollections these facts are given. Her favorite conveyance, imported from London, was a "park phaëton," so called. It was low, without a top, and resembled a Windsor chair, with the difference that it had a seat in front for the driver and two seats within; it was an easy step from the ground, and had a somewhat straight back of perpendicular rounds. Her coachman, Stephen, was a tall, elderly colored man, full of pompous pride and dignity. On these excursions into the country, in summer she wore a dark straw hat with broad brim and low crown, tied down under the chin with black ribbon strings; but in winter a warm hood was substituted, and she was wrapped in the "purple cloth cloak lined with shag" that is described in the bequests of her will. In her hand she carried her gold-headed cane, which feeble health now rendered necessary as a support, and, as my grandfather and Mr. Custis stated, "When passing through the streets of Fredericksburg in this unostentatious manner, her progress became an ovation, for every one, from the gray-

haired old man to the thoughtless boy, lifted his hat to the mother of Washington."

Her systematic exactness in business was a distinguishing trait, and even when her health and strength failed under the weight of age and infirmity, the spirit was still strong and steadfast. When her son-in-law, Colonel Lewis, desiring to relieve her of business cares, offered to take the supervision of them, he received the resolute reply, "Do you, Fielding, keep my books in order, for your eyesight is better than mine; but leave the management of the farm to me."

The experiences of these years must have been deeply felt by Washington's mother: but whatever the tension of thought, there was no change of demeanor, while she dispensed a large though simple hospitality to the friends who gathered around her from far and near; and though her means were limited, her charities were wide and generous. There was something of nervous energy in her constant occupation, knitting-needles ever flying in the nimble fingers; for with her daughter and their domestics to aid, dozens of socks were knitted and sent to the General at camp for distribution, to-

walked over in the morning to spend the day, followed by her handmaid Patty, whose turban handkerchief towered in a topofical structure, carrying with her an extra wrap and the little basket of needlework or knitting for her mistress, who usually ordered Stephen to come in the evening with the chaise to fetch her home.

Accustomed to exercise, admiring nature's beauties, she loved to go into the open and enjoy them, and retained to a remarkable degree her strength and activity. In their grandmother's walks the young Lewises were often her companions, forming in their early years a sort of infantry escort. In later years Major Lewis often reverted to them as among his most interesting and pleasant recollections of his grandmother.

Upon the Lewis estate, overlooking the valley of the Rappahannock, was a favorite spot which she afterward selected for her burial. Where several picturesque gray rocks were piled she would sometimes stop to rest, and, seated upon a low, flat boulder, would meditate while the young ones amused themselves.

But they better liked to nestle near her side while she chatted cheerfully, teaching them les-



DRAWN BY W. C. FITLER.

ENGRAVED BY C. SCHWARZBURGER.

TOMBSTONES OF THE ANCESTORS OF WASHINGTON ON HIS MOTHER'S SIDE IN THE CHURCHYARD OF WHITE CHAPEL, VIRGINIA.

gether with garments and provisions, the fruit of her thrift and economy.

Young grandchildren were growing up around her through all this bitter war, bright boys and one girl. The children often came with their mother in her almost daily visits to her honored parent, and were always made welcome, though at the same time required to behave properly. The distance was not great between the suburban mansion of Mistress Lewis and her mother's house in the town, and these visits were frequently returned.

Sometimes the venerable but still active lady

sons of natural history illustrated by their surroundings and linked with the Bible story of the creation of the world, the deluge, and the changes that came over the earth. The manner of her speaking was so deeply impressive that neither the lessons taught nor the scenes connected with them were ever quite forgotten by the young listeners. As one of them related when himself growing old, "There was a spell over them as they looked into grandmother's uplifted face, with its sweet expression of perfect peace," and they "were very quiet" during the homeward walk. A small picture of this



spot was preserved many years in the family, but lost during the war—in the foreground the group of rocks, with two splendid pine-trees towering above them.

Firm as were the forces of her nature, Mary Washington was almost overcome with terror during a thunder-storm. This fear was the effect of a shock received in youth, when a girl friend sitting at her side had been instantly killed by lightning. As long as she lived she would sit silent and still during a thunder-storm, with closed eyes and clasped hands. On one occasion the daughter, missing her mother, and knowing how she suffered, found her kneeling by the bed with her face buried in its pillows, praying. Upon rising, she said, "I have been striving for years against this weakness, for you know, Betty, my trust is in God; but sometimes my fears are stronger than my faith."

The Bible was her constant study, its precepts the guide of her life, and the influence of its teachings ever shone in her character and conversation. When teaching her children from its pages, any irreverence or mutinous merriment was sternly rebuked. The old Bible

brief visits of cheer and comfort from her younger sons, who were serving in the army at different points. John Augustine commanded a regiment of Virginia troops, was afterward a member of the House of Burgesses, and married Hannah, daughter of Colonel John Bushrod. Samuel won the rank of colonel, and was married five times. Charles, the youngest son, also became a colonel, and married Mildred, daughter of Colonel Francis Thornton of Virginia.

After the treason of Arnold, he, with a horde of British and Tory freebooters, landed upon James River in Virginia, plundering and desolating the country; and when, in the spring of 1781, an armament of British vessels ascended the Potomac River, threatening to devastate that portion of Virginia not remote from Fredericksburg, and near Mount Vernon, Washington became very anxious on his mother's account. Speaking of this to her daughter, the serene matron remarked: "My good son should not be so anxious about me, for he is the one in danger, facing constant peril for our country's cause. I am safe enough; it is my part



DRAWN BY C. A. VANDERHOOF,

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

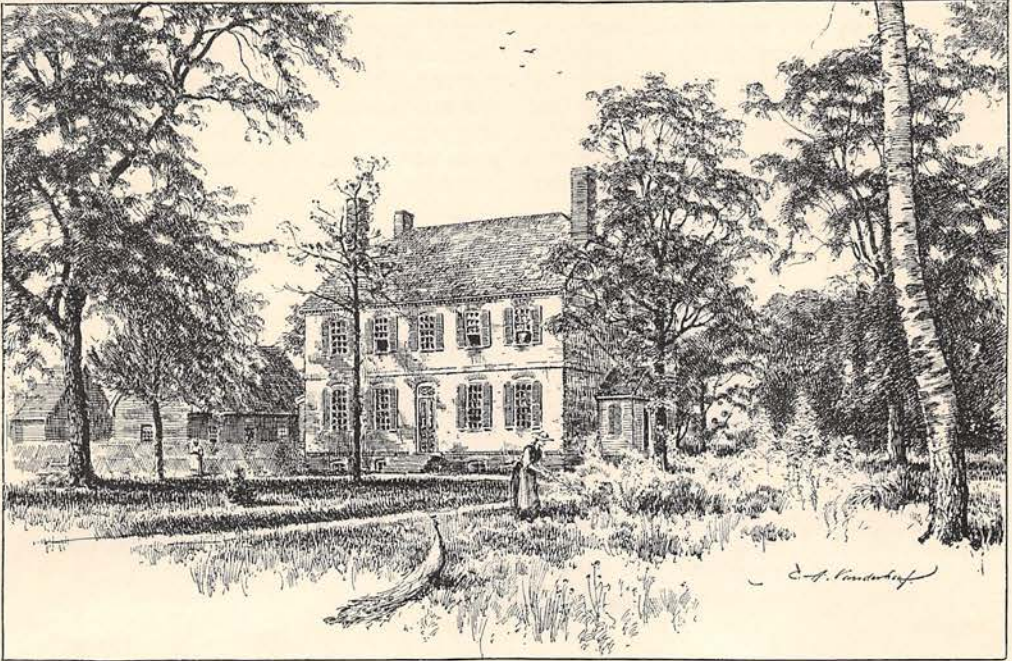
OLD WHITE CHAPEL, LANCASTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA, WHERE WASHINGTON AND HIS MOTHER ATTENDED, AND WHERE HER ANCESTORS ARE BURIED.

which she used has descended through Robert Lewis to his daughter, the writer's mother. It is a curious specimen of the illustrations of the day, full of horrors and absurdities. The venerable volume is covered with homespun cloth in a check plaid of now faded blue and buff, the Continental colors; this cover, fashioned by her hands, remains upon the sacred book, much worn and patched to preserve the original fabric.

In the intervals of war she had occasional

to suffer, and to feel, as I do, most anxious and apprehensive over him."

When the tidings of the splendid success at Yorktown were brought direct from the General to his mother, she was moved to an exclamation of fervent thanksgiving: "Thank God! the war is ended, and we shall be blessed with peace, happiness, and independence, for at last our country is free." Shortly after the surrender of Cornwallis, Washington left Yorktown with a brilliant suite of French and Ameri-



DRAWN BY C. A. VANDERHOOF,

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY W. G. TURNER.

HOME OF MRS. FIELDING LEWIS, WHERE WASHINGTON'S MOTHER DIED. NOW CALLED "KENMORE."

can officers, and started upon his journey to Philadelphia, stopping on the way at Fredericksburg to visit his mother. It was nearly seven years since he had last seen her face: he left Mount Vernon in May, 1775, and did not return till the autumn of 1781. Now that the time of meeting drew near, his mother was serene but very quiet, only smiling to herself oftener than usual. Yet it was not the hero crowned that filled her thoughts, but the son who, after years of absence and danger, was coming back to her. On the 11th of November, 1781, the town of Fredericksburg was all aglow with joy and revelry. Washington, "in the midst of his numerous and brilliant suite," wrote Mr. Custis, "sent to apprise her [his mother] of his arrival, and to know when it would be her pleasure to receive him. . . . Alone and on foot, the general-in-chief of the combined armies of France and America," he goes on to say in the grandiloquent style of the day, "the deliverer of his country, the hero of the hour, repaired to pay his humble tribute of duty to her whom he venerated as the author of his being," etc. When the warm embrace of greeting was over, looking into his face with earnest, close observance, her eyes enkindled with maternal love, she said tenderly, "You are growing old, George; care and toil have been making marks in your face since I saw it last." Her voice is said to have been singularly sweet, and he loved its cadence as she called him by name.

She inquired as to his health, and she spoke much "of old times and old friends, but of his glory not one word."<sup>1</sup>

The citizens of Fredericksburg had resolved to give a grand ball in honor of the victors, and the lady above all others who should grace the *fête* was the mother of Washington. The messenger who called to invite her attendance was graciously received, and her consent given to gratify her son and friends, although, she added, her "dancing days were pretty well over."

The town-hall at Fredericksburg, where this ball took place, was decorated with evergreens and flowers, and had fresh muslin curtains at the windows, and seats along the side of the room for those not dancing, and a low platform at the end where chairs were placed for the most distinguished guests. When Washington entered at the early hour then considered correct, his mother leaning upon his arm, every head was bowed in reverence. She wore a simple black-silk gown, with snow-white kerchief and cap, her figure still erect, though it had grown thinner and frailer than it once had been.

The foreigners stood in admiring astonishment as they watched the crowd pressing forward to gain a salutation. When she was holding her little court, one of the French

<sup>1</sup> "Rec. and Private Mem. of Washington," by George Washington Parke Custis, as per Lossing, p. 141.

officers observing, "If such are the matrons of America, well may she boast of illustrious sons." Neither elated nor excited by the largess of compliments and attentions bestowed upon her, when ten o'clock approached she rose, and, bidding good-night, remarked that it was "time for old folks to be in bed," and left the ball-room, supported as before upon her son's strong and tender arm.

The Marquis de Lafayette, before leaving

friend, his hero, the preserver of the country and its liberty. For had not America adopted the sons of France who fought for her, and was not Washington's mother dear to him for her noble son's sake? After listening to this outpouring of enthusiastic praise, her simple answer was, "I am not surprised at what George has done, for he was always a good boy."

Lafayette remained some time talking with her, and when he arose to take leave referred



DRAWN BY MALCOLM FRASER,

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY W. G. TURNER.

UNFINISHED MONUMENT TO MARY WASHINGTON, FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA.

the States for his home in France, and after a farewell visit to Mount Vernon, came to Fredericksburg to bid adieu to his friend's honored mother,—there is a discrepancy in statements as to the exact date of this visit,—and upon the occasion was conducted to her presence by the young grandson Robert Lewis, who often narrated the incident to his family and friends.

She was walking in the garden, taking careful note of its condition, when they approached. Her black stuff gown and apron were as neat as a nun's, while above the white cap that nearly covered her gray hair a broad straw hat was worn, tied down under her chin.

"There, sir, is my grandmother," said young Lewis, pointing toward her. The Marquis made the military salute as they approached, while she, recognizing the distinguished visitor, came to the garden paling, and, looking over, with a kind smile remarked: "Ah, Marquis, you see an old woman; but come in, I can make you welcome without parade of changing my dress."

The impulsive Frenchman's reply was full of warmth, he calling her the mother of his

to his speedy departure for his native land and home, and asked that she would bestow upon him a blessing. With clasped hands, and the light of faith in her uplooking eyes, the blessing was fervently invoked, beseeching that "God might grant him every blessing of safety, happiness, prosperity, and peace," so moving the heart of her noble guest that tears filled his eyes, and, taking the frail, faded hands into his warm clasp, he bent his head to touch them reverently with his lips as the final adieu was spoken. The grandson who witnessed this scene said that it was "so affecting that he almost choked to keep from crying aloud." Speaking of Washington's mother subsequently, the Marquis made the remark that he had seen the only Roman matron who was living in his day.

The years of life now left to her were weary ones, a painful and wasting disease—cancer—caused by an accidental blow slowly undermining her naturally fine constitution. The weakness and suffering were met with uncomplaining calmness and cheerfulness; nothing that could be done by her loving children for her health and comfort was omitted.

Writing to the President from Fredericksburg, July 24, 1789, his sister says:

I am sorry to inform you mother still suffers from her breast. She is sensible of it, and is perfectly resigned — wishes for nothing more than to keep it easy. She wishes to hear from you, and will not believe you are well till she receives it from under your hand.

When the summer heats of the low country were prostrating, she was sometimes persuaded to take a trip to Berkeley Springs and the fine mountain country of Frederick, where her sons Samuel and Charles resided. Her life was happily spared to see her eldest son elevated to the highest dignity a grateful people could offer. It was in April, 1789, that a final farewell took place between mother and son. He found her bright of mind, serene of spirit, but weak and worn in body. The fear that this would be their last meeting on earth intensified the tenderness of the interview. When the son spoke regretfully of her illness, inquiring anxiously if something more might not be done to relieve it, and expressed his profound sorrow that public duty compelled him to leave her, but however painful, he could not go to his responsible position without having her bid him God-speed, then adding, "So soon as public business which must necessarily be encountered in arranging a new government has been disposed of I shall hasten to Virginia and—" she gently interrupted him. "You will see me no more," she said. "My great age and the disease that is rapidly approaching my vitals warn me that I shall not be long in this world. I trust in God. I am prepared for a better. But go, George, and fulfil the high destiny which Heaven appears to assign you. Go, my son, and may that Heaven and your mother's blessing be always with you."<sup>1</sup>

Her hand was laid upon his bended head, and the great man's strong frame trembled in the parting embrace, while a sob, almost a groan, burst from his breast, for already he saw that the shadow of death was upon her.

When Washington rose to go she went with him to the door, leaning fondly upon his arm. Stopping on the threshold to repeat the last adieu, her son silently pressed into her hand a purse filled with gold pieces. This she refused to receive, and insisted upon returning the gift. "I don't need it, my son," she remonstrated. "My wants are few, and I think I have enough."

"Let me be the judge of that, mother," he replied; "but whether you think you need it or not, keep it for my sake."

This appeal was irresistible, and the purse was retained; but after he had gone she dropped it indifferently upon the table, and sank into a

chair, lost in sad reverie. Her grandson, coming with a message, witnessed this parting scene, and, too respectful to disturb her sorrow, hastened home to tell his mother all that had passed. Feeling anxious touching her mother's state, and fearing that this painful excitement might cause serious illness, she hastened at once to her side. Very calm and still they found her, seated with drooping head and sad, unseeing eyes.

In Washington's cash-accounts and memorandum-books many entries appear of money given to his mother, in sums ranging from three to thirty pounds, during a period of years. Also "a chaise" and a "cloth cloak lined with silk shag."

Mary Washington's forebodings were fulfilled, for her death took place a few months afterward (in August), in her eighty-third year, upheld by unflinching faith in the promises of her Bible and by full belief in the communion of the saints. It has been supposed that this event took place at the house in Fredericksburg where she had lived so many years; but there is a tradition that not long before her death the daughter induced her to consent to a removal to the Lewis home. All of her relatives, children, and grandchildren who could come were there; but the best-beloved son was far away.

Extracts from a diary of Robert Lewis, then in New York acting as assistant private secretary to the President, his uncle, inform us that on August 22 he was "surprised by a visit from Parson Ryan, who has brought letters from my sister Carter and Mr. Carter making mention that my grandmother was exceedingly ill and not likely to recover"; and though her death took place on the 25th, and she was laid to rest on the 28th, the news, sent by a messenger who had to ride the distance from Fredericksburg to New York, did not reach her son until September 1. The diary further states that "Baron Steuben and Governor St. Clair dined with us to-day [September 1]; the Baron was remarkably cheerful and facetious, likewise greatly devoted to the President. In the midst of our mirth my uncle received a letter . . . informing him of the death of my grandmother, an event long expected." Only so far does the brief record go, but its writer said afterward, in a letter to his mother, "My uncle immediately retired to his room, and remained there for some time alone."

Those who remembered Mary Washington's appearance in the later years of her life describe her person as being of medium size and well proportioned, the dignity of bearing, the erect carriage, giving something of stateliness to her presence, while her features were regular and strongly marked, her brow fine, and her eyes a clear blue.

No authentic portrait of Mary Washington

<sup>1</sup> Lossing, p. 67.

is known; it is a family tradition that in the destruction of Wakefield by fire the family portraits were lost. Colonel G. W. P. Custis was questioned as to his knowledge of the subject, and replied by letter to Colonel Lewis W. Washington that "there was *no picture* preserved of the mother of the chief," and this has been always the belief of her descendants.

At Fredericksburg on the day of the funeral all business was suspended, and though the August sun shone hot, crowds of citizens from town and the country around "thronged St. George's Church, . . . where the impressive funeral service of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America . . . was conducted by the Rev. Thomas Thornton, her pastor." And then, borne reverently in her coffin by strong men, the mortal remains of Mary Washington were conveyed to the spot she had chosen for her burial, followed by a long procession.

Colonel Custis, Dr. Lossing, and other writers have emphasized the transmitted accounts of her death, telling how "clergymen throughout the land spoke eloquently from their pulpits of the honored dead, while members of Congress and many private citizens wore the usual badge of mourning in respect to her memory." In a long letter to his sister—recently given in Ford's publication—Washington speaks religiously and tenderly of their mother's death and her Christian character.

For many years her grave remained un-

marked. About the year 1830 there was a plan proposed to remove the remains, and to place them in a vault under the Presbyterian church; but to this the Washington family positively refused consent. Many other suggestions and proposals were made, but nothing was done till at last, in 1833, the Hon. Silas E. Burrows of New York offered to raise a monument at his private expense. The corner-stone was laid with imposing ceremonies by the President of the United States, General Andrew Jackson, in the presence of the relatives, many distinguished guests, and a large concourse of people.

Unfortunately, when the monument was almost completed, the generous donor, meeting with sudden and severe reverse of fortune, was unable to finish the work of placing the obelisk upon its handsome base. Hoping to rally from his financial prostration, Mr. Burrows requested the committee to wait awhile until he could have the work finished, but not long afterward he died, before recovering anything of his fortune. Then disagreements arose regarding the matter, and the shaft lay prone upon the ground, slowly disintegrating, for nearly sixty years, until the women of the country rallied to the rescue, as they did for Mount Vernon, and the Mary Washington Monument Association, organized a few years ago and now successfully working, will before long complete their patriotic plan, and perfectly restore the now mutilated monument.

*Ella Bassett Washington.*

## ITALIAN OLD MASTERS.

LORENZO LOTTO.—1480(?)—1554(?).

THERE is absolutely no record known of the birth of Lorenzo Lotto, one of the most important of the second-rate painters of the Venetian school, and remarkable for the range of his emulations rather than for genius or individuality. He may be compared to Andrea in the school of Florence, less individual, but more varied in his appreciation and imitation of the masters about him. He began as a follower of the Bellini, later inclined to the style of Palma, then to that of Giorgione, and finally became Titianesque, but with a tinge of Lombard execution underlying his manner. His family was of Bergamo, and his life was passed mostly under the influence of the Venetian school; but he was a great roamer, and though he painted in some of the cities of central Italy, and finally, when his powers as a painter had declined through age, died in the sanctuary of San Loretto, he was on the whole one of the most faithful followers of Titian whose works are left us. Cavalcaselle says of him: "It is easy to be enthusiastic about Lotto's talent;

he had a very fine feeling for color; he became a master of foreshortening and modeling; he studied action in its most varied forms, and rendered it with unaccustomed daring; expression in every mood—expression roguish, tender, earnest, solemn, he could depict them all. But there was one thing lacking in his pictorial organism—he lacked the pure originality of genius and independent power." To put it in fewer words, he lacked imagination, without which there is no great individuality. A man may contrive a new manner, but a genuine style cannot spring from imitations or determination to be original, but is the expression of the personality, which can be told in art only by the presence of creative power—that is, imagination. Lotto's styles were many, but none of them his own; he was a reflex of whichever painter of genius at the time had absorbed him. He was a painter of enormous fertility, and as a portrait-painter is considered in the aggregate of his production inferior only to Titian, among all the painters of the generation suc-