

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### GEORGE WASHINGTON.

Ancestral History—Birth—Boyhood—Home—Death of his Father—Paternal Sentiment of his Brother Lawrence—Preparing for the Navy—Objections of his Mother—George's Bashfulness—Surveying Expedition—Lodging in the Wilderness—Public Surveyor—The Indian's Land: "where?"—Preparing for Hostilities—Washington on a Mission to the French—Halt at Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers—At Venango—Indian Guide—Treachery—Washington Recruiting Troops—Death of Colonel Fry—Comments on the Jumonville Affair—In Quiet Life—Arrival of Braddock—Washington made Aide-de-Camp—Marching on Fort Duquesne—Death of Braddock—Washington in Command—In New York—Marriage—Member of the House of Burgesses—War Cloud—Washington Chosen Commander-in-Chief—Mrs. Washington in Camp—Defences on Dorchester Heights—Carrying Discipline into the Enemy's Camp—Long Island—Retreating through Jersey—Battle of Monmouth—Surrounding Cornwallis—End of the Struggle—President—Re-elected—Domestic Life—Peaceful Retirement.

THE name, life, character and exploits of Washington become so familiar, even in childhood, as to render an account of them a twice-told and uninteresting tale to most readers. There is little to be said of him that has not been already better told than it will be in this sketch, the writer of which can only hope to assist in keeping alive memories of one who so richly deserves to be held in remembrance by his countrymen.

In the year 1656, two brothers, Lawrence and John

hardship which was to be his lot in life. A year of peril and responsibility consolidated his energies, and transformed him in his seventeenth year into a capable, efficient, self-reliant man. At this time he was commissioned by the Governor of Virginia, as a public surveyor. Finding abundant employment and ample remuneration, he continued in this healthful and agreeable occupation for three years. The State of Virginia was divided into military districts, each under charge of a major, and at nineteen he was commissioned as major, in command of his district; an office with powers and responsibilities very great to be intrusted to one so young. About this time his loved and honored brother Lawrence died, at the early age of thirty-four, leaving to George his estate of Mount Vernon.

England had established colonies on the Atlantic coast, claiming, as her own, the broad country to the Pacific. France, having made settlements on the St. Lawrence, and also at the mouth of the Mississippi, asserted her right to the valleys of both rivers. The demands of each nation were absurd.

In the midst of the dispute, the Indians sent up a deputation, to inquire "where can the Indian lands be found" since the English appear to own all on one side of the great river, and the French all the other! The keen wit of the red man met only a smile! Neither party would yield, and war, horrible war, was the only alternative.

In 1753 the people of Virginia were alarmed by a report that the French, aided by Indians, were erecting a long line of military posts on the Ohio. Governor Dinwiddie, of Virginia, resented this manœuvre, and wished to forbid it in the name of his king. But he

saw no way by which he could convey a letter to the French commandant on the Ohio. To the surprise of all, Major Washington tendered his services to convey the despatch. "Now Christ save my soul," said the good old Scotch governor, "but ye'er a braw laddie, and gin ye play yere cards well, me bye, ye'll hae nae cause to rue yere bargain." In the depth of winter, attended by a guide and two servants, he started on his journey of five hundred and sixty miles through the pathless forest, supported by the generous ambition to serve his country. Following his Indian guides he reached the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers; examining the country with the eye of a military engineer, he selected that point as the site of a future fort. Here he found the old diplomatist Chevalier Legardeur de St. Pierre, who treated him with great politeness. The four days spent by them in a kind of fencing match to secure the favor of some powerful Indian allies resulted in a victory for young Washington.

Arrived at Venango, the point where the French were stationed, Washington and his party were hospitably met and entertained by Captain Joucaire, the noted intriguer of the frontier. For two days they were detained by divers stratagems to ensnare the sachems who accompanied Washington, but in vain. The wine bottle contained no temptation for the young commander; unscathed, he passed the snares and specious attractions prepared by his wily foes, and started December 25th on his return to Virginia guided by a friendly Indian. One dark night there arose some difference of opinion regarding the camping place, when the guide, a few paces ahead, turned and

fired! The treacherous Indian would have been put to death on the spot, but for the clemency of Washington.

Having by great sagacity guided his small party in safety to Virginia, Washington presented to Governor Dinwiddie the fruits of his journey and diplomacy, viz., belts of wampum, letters from the French governor, and the journal of his expedition. His excellency was greatly pleased with the narrative, and wished to publish it at once, but the modest young officer objected with vehemence to issuing matter written by a traveler, often cold and hungry, saying that it required amendments. "Hoot awa, mon, I'm sure that the pamphlet need na blush to be seen by his majesty himsel', and in geut troth I mean he sall hae a copy o't." Thus the journal was printed off hand, and every tongue was loud in its praise. The house of burgesses, then in session, passed a vote of thanks for the gallant manner in which Major Washington had executed his trust.

We next find Washington with the rank of colonel, engaged in recruiting troops for the coming emergency. The death of Colonel Fry left him in sole command of the forces. In the meantime, the French and Indians were on the alert. One stormy night friendly Indians gave information that "the French were near, thick as pigeons in a wood." Leaving a few men to guard the supplies, Washington, proceeding in the early dawn of a dark morning to seek an encampment of friendly Indians, received intelligence that the French and Indians in overpowering numbers were bearing down upon them. He resolved to throw up intrenchments for defence. The lines being marked off, the men were about to fall to work, when Colonel Washington cried out, "Halt! my brave fellows, my hand must heave

the first earth thrown up in defence of this country!" The intrenchments here constructed bore the name of Fort Necessity. A sharp and bloody conflict ensued, the French having one thousand men, eighteen pieces of cannon, and three hundred canoes. Jumonville, the French commander, was killed, and twenty-two of his party taken prisoners. It was impossible for Washington to resist this overwhelming force, and having obtained honorable terms, he retired, with arms and baggage. This was the first battle of the French and Indian war. Washington was severely censured, particularly in France, for the management of this affair, but the lapse of time, cooling the passions of that day, has caused justice to be done. Even the French admit that the occurrence can be regarded as "an untoward accident."

As soon as it was known in England that the French and Indians had combined for the defence of their rights, orders were issued to the colonies to unite in one confederacy and arm for the common defence. The unimagined horrors of barbarian warfare desolated our then frontier, and blood, woe, torture held carnival. During the succeeding winter, notice was sent from the mother country that "American officers, acting with the British, should bear no command." Indignant at such an outrage, Colonel Washington threw up his commission, retiring to Mount Vernon, and devoted himself to the peaceful pursuits of agriculture.

Under the date of 1754, he thus writes to a friend: "At length I am become a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac, free from the bustle of a camp and the busy scenes of public life. I am solacing myself with those tranquil enjoyments of which the soldier, who is ever in pursuit of fame, the statesman, whose

watchful days and sleepless nights are spent in devising schemes to promote the welfare of his own, perhaps the ruin of other countries, as if the globe were insufficient for us all, and the courtier who is always watching the countenance of his prince in the hopes of catching a gracious smile, can have very little conception. Envious of none, I am determined to be pleased with all. And this, my dear friend, being the order for my march, I will move peacefully down the stream of life until I sleep with my fathers."

But he had risen too high to be overlooked now. The report of his gallant though unsuccessful struggle had reached England, and the ministry, thinking the colonies alone too weak to repel the enemy, hurried General Braddock with two full regiments, who arrived early in the spring of 1755. He could hardly believe Governor Dinwiddie, who informed him that Washington was retired from the service, and on hearing the cause he burst into a towering passion. At once writing to Washington, he offered him the post of aide-de-camp and a home in his own family. With fool-hardy confidence Braddock marched through the dark forests on Fort Du Quesne in straggling line. But England's troops could not be taught by an "American boy." Braddock was without an anxiety; not a doubt entered his mind; he fancied that not an Indian or Frenchman would dare to meet him. Washington urged caution, and was deeply wounded by the treatment he received, not so much on his own account, as on that of the brave soldiers of his command, suffering in silence, exasperated, as they knew they were under a leader who knew not his duty. Unsuspicious of danger from a lurking foe, Braddock led his command up a

narrow defile; not a foe was visible, but suddenly a tempest of lead surged about them! Crash followed crash, in quick succession; every bullet accomplished its work; the ground was covered with the dead, and still the fearful firing from invisible foes poured over the panic-stricken "British regulars." Unseen arms attacked them. This was ghostly! Braddock stood his ground with a senseless courage, until he fell, when his men broke in the wildest disorder, and ran. Two horses were killed under Washington, but he escaped unhurt. General Braddock's last sigh was drawn as he lay in the supporting arms of Washington, whose pardon he begged for the rudeness of the morning. The situation in Virginia was now horrible in the extreme. The savages had tasted blood: the whole frontier, 360 miles in extent, was now exposed to their ravages. Terrible beyond description were the scenes that ensued. Conflagration, torture, murder, became daily events. None were spared, age or childhood, matrons or maidens alike. Washington, having now command of the forces in Virginia, rapidly acquired fame and influence. Various measures to ensure public safety were adopted, but the militia laws in Virginia were insufficient. Through the persistent efforts of Washington more stringent laws were passed. Grave differences arose between the Governors of Maryland and Virginia, and it was determined to refer the matter to Major-General Shirley, who had succeeded Braddock in command. Washington was selected to go to Boston to obtain the decision. He undertook the trip on horseback, attended by servants in livery. He stopped for several days in New York, whither his fame had preceded him. Express from Winchester had brought

to Washington news that the French and Indians had made a sortie on the town, and the inhabitants were in the greatest terror. He organized a force of troops from Fort Cumberland, and militia from Winchester, which, after varying fortunes, accomplished the ends for which they were enlisted. For three years after Braddock's death he was forced to witness lawless scenes, quite aware that with a sufficient force he could easily have conquered Fort Du Quesne, but the timid Governor Dinwiddie dared not allow him to follow out his convictions. In 1758 a new governor having power, Washington's advice was heeded. By a bold push the fort was conquered, and the French power upon the Ohio ceased forever. Again Washington retired to Mount Vernon, being now twenty-six years of age. After a brief courtship he married Martha, the beautiful widow of John Custis. She brought him, besides great wealth, two children, a son of six, and a daughter of four. At Mount Vernon he remained for fifteen years, in peaceful retirement, respected and universally beloved. He was returned, by a very large majority, from his district to the house of burgesses, of which he was an efficient and active member.

With the duty upon paper, exacted by Great Britain, had also been laid taxes upon glass, tea, and many other articles. These had all been repealed except the tax on tea. This was artfully retained, doubtless in order to keep up in the colonial mind the idea of taxation. As soon, therefore, as, in 1773, the order came to "collect the tax on tea," it was evident that the old flame of 1753 was ready to rekindle throughout the colonies. Washington, in his peaceful

retreat, was in sympathy with his Boston friends in the firmness with which they had asserted their chartered rights. He believed the stamp act to be illegal, against the prerogatives of the Americans. He hesitated not to say that the advantages accruing to the mother country would fall greatly short of expectations. He believed that it would be impossible for the British to enforce the act and collect the revenue. The war clouds were rapidly gathering in the American sky. In Congress, arrangements were made for raising an army, of which Washington was unanimously chosen commander-in-chief. An office more fraught with peril was never accepted by man. He was at once stigmatized as "the leader of banditti." But Washington calmly accepted his post and proceeded to the performance of his duty. The American general, on the night of the 16th of June, despatched fifteen hundred men to throw up an intrenchment on the brow of a hill half hidden in sedge, just north of Boston. They did not begin work till after twelve o'clock, but such was their enthusiasm that by daybreak they had surrounded it with a ditch. As the rosy tints of morning were reflected from the sparkling waters in the bay, the astonishment of the British sentinels was unbounded! Whence had arisen those earthworks? Surely as the sunset-gun boomed over the waters there was nothing on that green hill! Instantly a salute of great guns was offered the intruders, who plied their shovels, paying little heed to the British.

The result of that day is well known. The American army was so poorly supplied with ammunition that they could not afford to waste one shot. "Do not fire till you can see the whites of their eyes" was the

Washington, embarked from the shores of their native England and, landing on the picturesque banks of the Potomac river, some fifty miles above its mouth, purchased a large tract of land, and began the work of founding a home in a new country.

They were young men of liberal education, wealth and lofty moral principles. John soon married; children were born to him, and he died in the midst of his days, leaving to them his broad acres. Augustine was the second son of John, and on March 6th, 1730, he married Mary Ball, a beautiful and accomplished young lady, who, on February 22d, 1732, at Pope's Creek, Westmoreland County, Virginia, became entitled to the name by which she is now generally known in this country, viz.: "The mother of Washington," though earlier and more generally known in her own neighborhood as "Lady Washington." He was a child of lofty birth, from a lineage of commanding intelligence, firm principles and warm affections. His home was a spacious, comfortable cottage, surrounded by all the appliances of wealth, although frugality and simplicity were marked characteristics of the family regime.

As a child, George was vigorous and fearless, distinguished for probity, filial affection and obedience in common probably with thousands of other children of his age. He enjoyed all desirable educational advantages, which he was not slow to improve.

At the age of eleven years his father died. Faithfully did his mother fulfill her weighty responsibilities in the care of five children. The eldest son, Lawrence, took up the work which his dying father laid down, and felt an almost paternal interest in the younger children, which, in the case of George, was returned

with a fraternal affection and reverence. At the age of fifteen, in response to his most earnest solicitation, a midshipman's berth in the British navy was procured for George. After his trunk was in the carriage at the door, as he was about to bid adieu to his mother, his purpose was changed, on witnessing her deep emotion, and he ordered his baggage returned to the house. He remained at home, attending school for another year, being especially interested in the higher mathematics. On leaving school at sixteen, he for the first time visited Mount Vernon, the home of his brother Lawrence, where he formed the acquaintance of Lord Fairfax, residing in the neighborhood. He had a family of lovely daughters, and for the encouragement of many a bashful youth, we will record the fact, that our hero suffered agonies of bashfulness in the presence of those young ladies, feeling, no doubt, that all his limbs were supernumerary, given for the express purpose of causing him awkwardness in the society of these brilliant girls. But he had not long the privilege of their presence. Lord Fairfax owned a vast territory, beyond the Alleghany Mountains, and to young Washington was intrusted the exploration and surveying of these pathless wilds.

In the tempestuous month of March, while the mountains were yet white, and the streams swollen with the melting snows of winter, the boy of sixteen entered upon his arduous labors. Sleeping now under shelter from an evergreen thicket, anon finding repose in the cabin of some settler, again resting on a couch of hemlock boughs in the wigwam of some friendly Indian, surrounded by his squaw and papposes, his vigorous frame became inured to exposure, and strengthened for