

## CHAPTER II.

### YOUTH.

George was a great pet with his brother, Lawrence Washington, who thought it would be a nice thing for him to serve on board one of the King's ships-of-war. While Lawrence was in the West Indies he was on good terms with General Wentworth and Admiral Vernon, and he had no doubt they would do their best to get his brother a good place. He spoke to George about it, and the boy was wild with joy. His mother's pride was roused, and at first she did not put a straw in his way, but gave him all the help she could. But as the time drew near, her heart, which had been so strong and brave and full of pride, gave way and she felt that she could not part with her dear boy.

One of her friends wrote to Lawrence that Mrs. Washington had made up her mind not to let George go to sea. She said that some of her friends had told her it was a bad plan, and "I find," said he "that one word against his going has more weight than ten for it."

So they gave up the scheme, and George was sent back to school.

He would, on fine days, go out in the fields and tracts of land around the school-house, and with line and rod take the size and shape, the length and width, and mark it all down in one of his books, and so much pains did he take that from the first to the last page not

a blot or blur is to be seen.

These neat ways, formed in his youth, were kept up through all his life, and what seems strange is that day-books, and such books as you will find in great use now-a-days were not known at that time. The plan had been thought out by George Wash-ing-ton when a boy of 16, and shows the cast of his mind.

Near this time George was sent to live with his bro-ther Law-rence, at his fine place on the Po-to-mac, which he had called Mount Ver-non, to show how much he thought of the ad-mi-ral of that name.

Here George had a chance to make friends with those of high rank, and he spent much of his time with George Fair-fax who made his home at Bel-voir, near Mount Ver-non. Lord Fair-fax, a man of wealth and worth was much at Bel-voir at that time. He had bought large tracts of land in Vir-gin-i-a, which had not been staked out, or set off in-to lots. In fact he did not know their size or shape, but he had heard that men had sought out some of the best spots, and had built homes there, and laid out farms for which they paid no rent, and he thought it quite time to put a stop to such things.

In March, 1748, George Wash-ing-ton, who had been picked out by Lord Fair-fax for this task, went on his first trip with George Fair-fax to stake off these wild lands. He wrote down what was done from day to day, and by these notes we learn that he had quite a rough time of it, and yet found much that was to his taste. He and the men with him rode

for miles and miles through lands rich in grain, hemp, and to-bac-co,  
and through fine groves of trees on the bank of a broad stream.

[Illustration: WASHINGTON'S FIRST SPEECH TO THE INDIANS.--P. 19.]

One night, writes George, when they had been hard at work all day, they came to the house where they were to be fed and lodged. The wood-men went to bed with their clothes on, but George took his off, and as he turned in he found his bed was of loose straw with not a thing on it but the thread-bare blank-et he was to wrap him-self in. The fleas and bugs soon forced George to get up and put on his clothes and lie as the rest of the men did, and "had we not been so tired," he says "I am sure we should not have slept much that night." He made a vow then that he would sleep out of doors near a fire when on such tramps, and run no more such risks.

On March 18, they reached a point on the Po-to-mac, which they were told they could not ford. There had been a great rain-fall and the stream had not been so high, by six feet, as it was at that time. They made up their minds to stay there for a day or two; went to see the Warm Springs, and at night camped out in the field. At the end of two days, as the stream was still high, they swam their steeds to the Mar-y-land side. The men crossed in birch-bark boats, and rode all the next day in a rain storm to a place two-score miles from where they had set out that morn. Wash-ing-ton writes that the road was "the worst that had ever been trod by man or beast."

On March 23, they fell in with a score or two of red-men who had been off to war and brought home but one scalp, and they had a chance to see a war-dance. The red-men cleared a large space, and built a fire in the midst of it, round which they all sat. One of the men then made a grand speech in which he told them how they were to dance.

When he had done, the one who could dance the best sprang up as if he had just been roused from sleep, and ran and jumped round the ring in a queer kind of way. The rest soon joined him, and did just as he did. By this time the band made it-self heard, and I shall have to tell you what a fine band it was.

There was a pot half full of water with a piece of deer-skin stretched tight on the top, and a gourd with some shot in it, and a piece of horse's tail tied to it to make it look fine. One man shook the gourd, and one drummed all the while the rest danced, and I doubt if you would care to hear the noise that was made.

Late in the day of March 26, they came to a place where dwelt a man named Hedge, who was in the pay of King George as justice of the peace. Here they camped, and at the meal that was spread there was not a knife nor a fork to eat with but such as the guests had brought with them.

On the night of the first of A-pril the wind blew and the rain fell. The straw on which they lay took fire, and George was saved by one of the men, who woke him when it was in a blaze.

"I have not slept for four nights in a bed," wrote Wash-ing-ton at this time to one of his young friends at home, "but when I have walked a good deal in the day, I lie down on a heap of straw, or a bear-skin by the fire, with man, wife, young ones, dogs, and cats; and he is in luck who gets the place next the fire."

For three years he kept up this mode of life, but as it was a hard life to lead he could be out but a few weeks at a time. His pay was a doub-loon a day, and some-times six pis-toles.

A doub-loon is a gold coin of Spain, worth not quite 16 dol-lars. A pis-tole is a small gold coin of Spain, worth not quite four dol-lars.

This rough kind of life, though he did not know it, was to fit him for the toils and ills of war, of which he may have dreamt in those days, as he still kept up his love for war-like things.

While at work on the land round the Blue Ridge, he now and then made his way to Green-way Court where Lord Fair-fax dwelt at this time. Here he had a chance to read choice books, for Lord Fair-fax had a fine mind though his tastes were queer. He lived on a knoll, in a small house not more than twelve feet square. All round him were the huts for his "help," black and white. Red-men, half breeds, and wood-men thronged the place, where they were sure they would get a good meal. He had steeds of fine breed, and hounds of keen scent, for he was fond of the chase, and the woods and hills were full of game.

Here was a grand chance for George, who had a great taste for field-sports, and his rides, and walks, and talks with Lord Fair-fax were a rich treat to the home-bred youth. This wise friend lent George good books which he took with him to the woods and read with great care, and in this way stored his mind with rich thoughts.

In Vir-gin-i-a there were some few men who had served in the late war 'twixt Eng-land and Spain, and they put George through such a drill with sword and with gun that he learned to use them both with great skill.

A Dutch-man, named Van-Bra-am, was one of these men, and he claimed to know a great deal of the art of war. He it was that took George in hand to teach him the use of the sword, and how to fence.

When he was 19 years of age the red-men and the French had made such in-roads on the front, that it was thought best to place men on guard to keep back these foes, and to up-hold the laws of the state of Vir-gin-i-a. There was need of some one to take charge of a school-of-arms at one of the chief out-posts where the French sought to get a foot-hold, and the choice fell on George Wash-ing-ton, who set to work at once to fit him-self for the place.

His broth-er's ill health caused this scheme to be dropped for a time, as Law-rence was forced to go to the West In-dies for change of air, and begged George to go with him. George gave up all thought of self,

and the two set sail for Bar-ba-does, Sep-tem-ber 28, 1751. At sea he kept a log-book, took notes of the course of the winds, and if the days were fair or foul, and learned all he could of the ways of a ship and how to sail one.

They reached Bar-ba-does on No-vem-ber 3, and were pleased with the place, and all the strange sights that met their gaze. On all sides were fields of corn and sweet cane, and groves of trees rich in leaves and fruit, and all things held out a hope of cure for the sick man, whose lungs were in a weak state.

They had been but two weeks in Bar-ba-does when George fell ill with small-pox, and this for a time put an end to all their sports. But he had the best of care, and at the end of three weeks was so well that he could go out of doors.

Law-rence soon tired of this place, and longed for a change of scene. They had to ride out by the first dawn of day, for by the time the sun was half an hour high it was as hot as at mid-day. There was no change in the sick man's health, and he made up his mind to go to Ber-mu-da in the spring. He was lone-some with-out his wife, so it was planned that George should go back home and bring her out to Ber-mu-da.

George set sail, De-cem-ber 22, and reached Vir-gin-i-a at the end of five weeks. He must have been glad to step on shore once more, for the cold winds and fierce storms to be met with at sea, at that time of the year, made life on ship-board some-thing of a hard-ship.

Law-rence did not gain in health, and ere his wife could join him he wrote her that he would start for home--"to his grave." He reached Mount Ver-non in time to die 'neath his own roof, and with kind friends at his bed-side. His death took place on the 26th of Ju-ly, 1752, when he was but 34 years of age.

He had been like a fa-ther to George, and their hearts were bound by ties so strong and sweet that it was a great grief for them to part.

But George had no time to sit down and mourn his loss. There was work for him to do. New cares were thrust on him by his bro-ther's death, that took up all his time and thoughts for some months; and he had to keep up his drills with the men at the school-of-arms, for which he was paid by the State.