

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE HOME OF WASH-ING-TON.

In the year 1758, while Wash-ing-ton was with his troops at Win-ches-ter, he met and fell in love with Mrs. Mar-tha Cus-tis. Her home was known as the White House, and here she dwelt in fine style, for she had great wealth. She had a boy six years of age, and a girl of four.

Such were her charms that men of wealth and rank sought for her hand, but Wash-ing-ton, so calm and grave, and with his way yet to make in the world, won her heart, and they were to be wed at the close of the war.

She had heard of the brave deeds he had done, and was proud to be the wife of such a man, so on Jan-u-a-ry 6, 1759, the two were made one.

In the course of a few months Wash-ing-ton went to live at Mount Ver-non, where he spent much of his time in the care of his own lands, and those of his wife.

He had a seat with those who made laws for the State, and no man was thought more of than George Wash-ing-ton.

Wash-ing-ton loved to be at Mount Ver-non, where he had spent a

great part of his boy-hood, with his brother, Lawrence, of whom he was so fond. The house stood on a knoll, and near it were wild woods and deep dells, haunts of the fox and the deer, and bright streams where fish could be found at all times.

His chief sport was the chase, and, at the right time of the year, he would go out two or three times a week, with dogs and horns and trained steeds, in search of the sly fox who would lead him and his friends a fine run.

Some times he would go out with his gun and shoot wild-ducks, great flocks of which might be found on the streams close at hand. Or he would scour the woods for the game with which they were filled, and which none but those who owned the place had a right to kill.

A man who had a bad name and paid no heed to the laws that were made, was wont to make his way to the grounds near Mount Vernon and shoot just what game he chose. More than once he had been told to leave and not come back, but he paid no more heed than if he had been deaf, and was sure to take his pick from the best kind of ducks.

One day when Washington was out on horse-back he heard the sound of a gun down near the edge of the stream. He put spurs to his horse, dashed through bush and brake, and soon came up to the rogue who had just time to jump in his boat and push from shore. Then the bad man raised his gun, cocked it, and took aim at Washington, whom he would no doubt have shot down in cold-blood.

But Wash-ing-ton rode at once in-to the stream, and seized the prow of the boat, and drew it to shore. Then he sprang from his horse, wrenched the gun from the thief's hand, and laid on the lash in such a way that the rogue took to his heels when let loose, and came no more near Mount Ver-non.

As I have told you, men of great wealth dwelt on the shores of the Po-to-mac, and kept house in fine style. They had a large force of slaves, and made great feasts for their friends. One of them used to come out in a rich barge to meet Wash-ing-ton. This barge was rowed by six black men in check shirts and black vel-vet caps.

Wash-ing-ton had a coach and four, with black foot-men, for Mrs. Wash-ing-ton to use when she drove out; but he chose to go on horse-back. Some-times he and his wife went to An-na-po-lis, to a ball or feast of some sort, where Wash-ing-ton took part in the dance, and all the belles of the day were proud to dance with him, for he had a grand style that made him seem like no one else in the room.

When storms kept him in the house, he would read, or spend the time at his desk with pen in hand.

He was kind to his slaves, and took the best of care of them when they were sick, but was quick to see that they did not shirk their work. He knew, too, just the kind of work each one was fit for, and which he could do the best.

Four of his slaves set out to hew and shape a large log. Wash-ing-ton kept his eye on them and thought they loafed too much. So he sat down, took out his watch, and timed them: how long it took them to get their cross-cut saw and the rest of their tools; how long to cut off the limbs from the tree they had laid low; how long to hew and saw it; what time they spent in talk; and how much work they did while he sat there and took notes. In this way he found out just how much work four men could do in the course of a day--and take their ease.

Wash-ing-ton was quick to lend a hand in time of need, and once when word was brought him that the dam had broke loose, and the mill would soon be swept off, he ran at the head of all his slaves and work-men, and toiled as hard as they in a fierce rain-storm, to check the force of the flood.

The cares of home and state made such calls on his time and thoughts, that he could not be said to live quite at his ease, and he left his mark--a high one--on all that he did.

His crops were of the best, and he sought to cheat no one. The flour he sold from year to year was put up with so much care, and was of such a good kind and so true in weight that all that bore the brand of George Wash-ing-ton, Mount Ver-non, was held at a high rate in the West In-di-a ports.

Quite a trade was kept up with Eu-rope, where all the goods had to be

bought that were used in the house or on the farm.

Twice a year Wash-ing-ton sent on a long list of such things as he had need of: ploughs, hoes, scythes, horse-goods, and clothes for all the house-hold. For these last he had to give size and height, name, and age, of those who were to wear them.

In one of these lists Wash-ing-ton, who had need of a new suit of clothes, said he was six feet in height, quite thin, and had long limbs. He was then 31 years old.

You will see by what I have told you just how Wash-ing-ton spent much of his time for at least five years. They were five sweet years to him; full of peace, and rest, and joy. He was fond of his home, and felt as much pride in Nel-lie and John Parke Cus-tis as if they had been his own boy and girl. Nel-lie was a frail child, and did not gain in strength, though she had the best of care. Her death took place June 19, 1773, when she was but 17 years of age.

This was a sad blow to Wash-ing-ton, as well as to his wife, and then all their hopes were placed on the son, who bade fair to be a fine strong man. But he died in the year 1781, at the age of 28.

While Wash-ing-ton dwelt in peace at Mount Ver-non, war was rife in the land, but as he had with-drawn from those who bore arms he took no part in it. It was called Pon-ti-ac's war, as it was led by a chief of that name, but the O-hi-o tribes were with him, and the plot was

deep laid.

Large tracts of wood-land were laid waste; homes were burnt, and those who dwelt in them robbed and slain; and so sly and shrewd were the red-skins that it was some time ere the white men could put a stop to their deeds of blood.

It was in 1760 that King George the Third made up his mind to tax the folks in A-mer-i-ca for all the goods they bought in Eng-land. The trade was large, and in this way the king could add much to his wealth. But the scheme did not work well. It was first tried in Bos-ton, and set all the folks there by the ears. They claimed that they had rights as well as the king. They had come to this land to be free, and free they would be. They would do with-out tea and such things, and dress as well as they could in clothes made out of home-made goods.

The king next said that goods bought from Eng-land must bear the king's stamp, for which a sum was to be paid more than the cost of the goods. This was known as the Stamp Act. The folks in A-mer-i-ca were poor. They had not the means to pay this tax. The thought of it filled them with rage; and for five years there was much talk of the wrong the king had done to those who dwelt in A-mer-i-ca.

On the first day of No-vem-ber, 1765, the Stamp Act was to go in-to force, and all New Eng-land was in arms. At Bos-ton bells were tolled; flags were hung at half-mast; shops were shut, and bon-fires built.

In New York, the Act--in clear print--was borne through the streets on a pole, on top of which was a death's head.

A man named Col-den whose place it was to serve out the stamps had to flee to the fort, round which was placed a strong guard from a ship-of-war. The mob broke in-to his coach-house, drew out his coach, put in it a form--stuffed and dressed to look some-what like Col-den--and marched up to the Park where they hung it on a tree.

At night they took the form down, put it in a coach, and bore it back to Bow-ling Green, where the whole thing--coach and all--was burnt right in range of the guns of the fort where the King's troops were.

In March 1766, the king drew back the Stamp Act, which gave great joy to those who had the good of A-mer-i-ca at heart, and to none more than to George Wash-ing-ton. But he made it known that he felt it to be his right as their king to tax them as he chose, and this hurt the pride of those who wished to make their own laws, and be in bonds to no one.

Wash-ing-ton--as did most of those who had Eng-lish blood in their veins--looked up-on that land as his home, and was loath to break the chain that bound him to it. But he did not think well of the Stamp Act, and saw what was sure to come to pass if the king pressed too hard on the A-mer-i-cans.

On Sep-tem-ber 5, 1774, a band of true men from all the States met for the first time in Phil-a-del-phi-a, and Wash-ing-ton set out from Mount Ver-non on horse-back to take his seat with them. With him were Pat-rick Hen-ry and Ed-mund Pen-dle-ton; and as they rode side by side they talked of the land they loved, and of the hopes they had that all would be well.

The band met with closed doors. Each man wore a grave face. Pat-rick Hen-ry made a strong speech at the close of which he said, "All A-mer-i-ca is thrown in-to one mass. Where are your land-marks? \* \* \* They are all thrown down."

He said he did not call him-self by the name of the State in which he was born, but by the name of the land which gave him birth--then known as "the land of the free."

Wash-ing-ton was not a man of words, but of deeds. But what he said was of great weight as it came from a wise brain and a true heart.

Pat-rick Hen-ry said there was no man in the whole band so great as George Wash-ing-ton. The band broke up in No-vem-ber, and Wash-ing-ton went back to Mount Ver-non. But not to the gay times and good cheer he once had known. George Fair-fax--who had been his friend from boy-hood--had gone to Eng-land to live, and Bel-voir took fire one night and was burnt to the ground.

The stir in Bos-ton, and in the West where the red-skins were on the



war-path, made the whole land ill at ease. Troops were kept on drill, and the roll of the drum was heard in all the small towns. Men came to talk with Wash-ing-ton and to find out what he thought was the best thing to do, and the best way to drill or to arm troops.

It was of no use to plead with the king. He had made up his mind and would not yield an inch. A large force of the best men in Vir-gin-i-a met at Rich-mond, March 20, 1775, and Wash-ing-ton was called on for some plan as to what their course should be.

He told them that he thought there was but one thing to do. Pat-rick Hen-ry put it in-to words that rang through the land: "We must fight! I repeat it, Sir, we must fight! An ap-peal to arms, and the God of hosts, is all that is left us!"

All hearts were full of zeal; and Wash-ing-ton wrote to his bro-ther, Au-gus-tine, that if there was need of it he would lead troops to war, and risk his life and all his wealth in the cause, which seemed to him a most just one.