



When Martha Washington Was Young

BY MINERVA SPENCER HANDY

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When this little daughter, Martha, was born to Mr. and Mrs. Dandridge, way down in Virginia, in the year 1730, her eyes looked upon a very different world from that of the twentieth century baby gazes at. She no doubt had beautifully hand embroidered gowns and underclothing, for the mothers of that time were very much better needlewomen than we are, but they were all fashioned of linen or dimity, cold and clammy. Even the little undergarments were of the same material, for woolen or flannel held no place in the dressing of infants or children. All the warmth required seemed to be in a tiny embroidered shawl pinned around the shoulders, and when we remember how imperfectly the houses were heated we wonder if Martha was not often dozed with medicine when she cried when all she wanted was to have a few more comfortable clothes. Her mother and father no doubt had plenty of furs and velvets, for they were of the aristocratic class and had all their best clothing direct from England. They, however, thought the little ones either



MARTHA SAT FOR HOURS IN STOCKS ON STRAPPED TO JACKKNIFE.

did not feel the cold or else should early learn the lesson of self control and cheerful endurance of what could not be helped. Be that as it may, I am sure Martha and all the other colonial babies must have suffered with the cold, icy blasts blew down the great chimneys, and the rooms could not be warmed three feet from where the great logs were blazing. The bedrooms were not heated at all, and the only hope that the babies slept warmly at all lies in the long handed warming pan, which a black boy or girl nightly thrust between the clammy linen sheets. Those, filled with live coals from the kitchen fire, must have proved very grateful to the baby of long ago.

When the babies had laid aside their first clothes, they were dressed exactly like their parents. A costume worn by a little tot two and a half years old is described as follows: "Of yellow broadcloth with a petticoat of crimson velvet." It touched the floor in front and trailed behind just as did her mother's, and I do not believe that little girl had half as much pleasure in this state costume as girls of today do in their simple suits, free to run and jump or to do anything a healthy body prompts them to. The chief aim in every girl's life was to be erect. To attain this young girls were simply tortured. Martha Washington, or more correctly, Martha Dandridge, no doubt sat for hours in stocks or strapped to backboards. Stays and stiffened corsets were made even more unbending by metal or wood busks. These latter were handsomely carved and elaborately decorated and were considered an elegant and appropriate gift to a little girl. These instruments did give the erect carriage the girls desired, but I do not believe they could skate or bicycle with much comfort.

Boys were dressed exactly like their fathers, in doublets, leather knee breeches, fancy waistcoats, leather belts and knitted caps. They had an outer cloak called a mandilion, which was lined usually with a bright colored cloth and was very picturesque. The most blameworthy custom in the dress of the boys was the universal wearing of wigs. These were expensive, costing \$7 or \$8 apiece (\$35 or \$40), and all boys over 7 years of age wore them. After wigs went out of fashion hair was worn powdered, and although it was becoming we should be glad we do not wear our hair so, as the powder dusted off, ruining the clothes, even when the hair was oiled and pomaded to overcome the difficulty.

With the exception of the state garments, imported by the very rich, all the wool and cotton used in the households were woven and spun by the mothers and daughters. Martha Washington not only wore homemade and homespun clothes, but helped to weave and make them. Nothing was wasted. Old scraps and pieces of worn garments were raveled, dyed and woven into cushions or chair covers. New gowns were few and far between, and, being fashioned with such great labor, I am sure Martha and all little girls who



CHILDREN STOOD RESPECTFULLY BEHIND THEIR ELDER'S CHAIRS.

lived in her time took the greatest care of them. Even when she became the wife of the rich Colonel Custis and afterward of the great and good George Washington she was industrious, economical and simple in her tastes. We

are told by one historian that, "although court etiquette prevailed in their public life, their home life was very unostentatious. All the clothes worn by the general and himself were made in the house. Two of Martha Washington's best gowns were of cotton striped with silk, woven from the ravelings of brown silk stockings and old crimson chair covers."

No high chairs, or in fact any chairs at all, were provided for the little folks when Martha Washington was young. Even at the table children stood respectfully behind their elders' chairs, taking what food was offered them. In the better families they stood at a side table with trencher in hand, bringing their food from the great table. They were never allowed to speak except to answer a question, and then with the greatest respect and courtesy you do, for there were no rails, as we bring them dainties from all parts of the world. They ate in silence and as fast as possible, regardless of digestion, being expected to be "moderately satisfied" and to leave the room as soon as possible.

There were no kindergartens for the children of that time. Learning was a hard, uninteresting process, but the children were soon out of it and could read and write very creditably by the time they were 5 years old and were able to answer correctly every question in the Westminster Catechism. Boys read Latin and Greek by the time our children are just beginning to master the alphabet. Girls had little need of such accomplishments, but their simpler school lessons were increased by a thorough knowledge of hatching and carding, spinning and reeling, weaving and bleaching, cooking, candle and cheese making, knitting, embroidery and needlework of every description. Satan got few recruits from the ranks of the idle. Almost all waking time was filled with some useful occupation.

Children had few if any toys. The cradle of the comfortable Martha, when things had come along with her. She may have had some dolls' furniture cut out by a jackknife, but I am sure she would have thought she was in fairyland could she have peeped into a modern nursery, filled with its almost living playthings.

Despite all these drawbacks (from our point of view) Martha Washington grew into a beautiful, loving girl, and brought to George Washington domestic arts and her own learned accomplishments which did more to make him happy than those we deem essential in our time. Mount Vernon, that ideal home of the southern gentleman of the eighteenth century, bears witness to her skill as a housewife. "The mother and daughter power" of the colonists gave a race of home bred, home loving, home honoring women. Although much in their lives seems old and hard to us born amid the ease and luxury of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we may learn many precious lessons from Martha Washington and those other noble women who lived when she did. Instead of condemning that which is different from our way of doing, let us reflect upon the industry, simplicity, system, orderliness and duty of those at whose primitive ways young people are inclined to sneer. It is also well to remember what clever Oliver Wendell Holmes meant when he wrote:

Little of all we value here
Wakes on the morn of its hundredth
Without both looking and feeling queer.

NUTS AND CIDER.

A Story of General Washington

By Aaron Mason.

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It was a little farmhouse on the hill, an ordinary farmhouse. There was just an ordinary well some ten yards from the door. An ordinary cow was grazing in the field near by. An ordinary walnut tree grew a little way from the well, and an ordinary small bird was perched on a branch of the tree. A line stretched from a nail in the lintel of the door to a spike driven into the trunk of the walnut tree. There was nothing extraordinary in the whole scene, not even in the three men, one seated on a block near the gate to the barn and the other two leaning with folded arms against the lintels. Even the muskets beside the door were ordinary, for at that time it was not uncommon for three men met together to be well armed.

Inside the house the scenes were just as common. The furniture in the front room was common, heavy and colonial. These were colonial days. The windows were small. The panes in them very small. There was a dish of walnuts in the middle of the table. A pitcher of hard cider and two tumblers stood beside it. The tumblers were of English cut glass, a little more extraordinary in a farmhouse in New Jersey now than then, perhaps. But certainly the distinguished air that this little glittering luxury gave to the room was not borne out by the dress and general appearance of the men there. Like those outside, one of these was seated at a little table before the western window. The other two stood, leaning against the walls of the low room. If the man seated at the table, he might have appeared a little extraordinary in stature.

"If you do not care to send Woods," said the broader and thicker set of the two men standing, "there is no reason why my old, Van Houser, should not go. He is a match for any two men in Jersey, a hard rider and very smart at eluding pursuit."

"I can spare Woods very well, Schuyler," replied the other and smaller man, "but I suppose the general, as usual, will take his own choice."

"We must use the best we have," said the man at the table, looking up. "But how to choose?" queried the man addressed as Schuyler.

"Call them here," Gates, replied the man at the table.

The little man went to the door, and a moment later the three ordinary men from without joined the three ordinary men within.

"Men," said the man at the table, "there are cider and nuts. Help yourselves." With that he turned to the window again and continued associating and apparently correcting the papers before him.

The three men from without seated themselves. They said no word, but attacked the nuts and older more as men obeying orders than as if to satisfy any desire for meat and drink. The room became quite silent but for the occasional well taking of nut and the rustling of papers at the window. In silent, indeed, that the soft flow of the cider into the cut glass tumblers could at intervals be heard. If there was anything extraordinary, it was heard as a peculiar tick the men at the window had of now and again turning his face toward the interior of the



Hail to the day that gave him birth who for us freedom won!
The greatest uncrowned king of men—immortal Washington!
Salute the day; for 'twas his deeds that gave its stripes and stars;
Our Cincinnati of the west, our knightly son of Mars.

His spirit breathes its impulse yet across our ardent souls.
The current of our destiny its influence controls;
For when we feel the nameless thrill of patriotism's fire
'Tis but the quick'ning spirit of our country's deathless sire.

Speak not of him as of the host of nameless dead and gone;
The fruit of deeds forever lives, and thus lives Washington!

Where'er the breath of liberty, across our boundless plains,
Toys with the locks of tolling man that inspiration reigns.

It gives the humblest kind of toll a sort of sovereign grace,
And makes us feel ourselves to be of new and kindly race;
It bids us show to all mankind who speed across the sea
The open hand, the kindly heart, the touch of chivalry.

And, well remember, 'tis our right to guard the rights he gave,
For 'tis not kings in name alone who honest men enslave,
So must we battle freedom's foes, be they from far or near,
To hold the sacred gift he gave intact from year to year.

—HERBERT E. CLAMP.

room, as if he would be cognizant of everything there going on, even to the cracking of a nut. At last he rose. He seemed very tall in the low room. At the same time the three men rose from their seats and ciders.

"Van Houser," said the tall man, "General Schuyler will have orders for you in the course of the morning, and you, Woods, report to your chief at 3 o'clock. You can go."

The two men went out, leaving the most ordinary looking of the three behind.

"Miles," said the tall man, "here is a dispatch to Jean Paul Jones, on board



THEY SAID NO WORD.

Le Bonhomme Richard somewhere off the coast of Maine. It must be delivered posthaste. In case of probable capture destroy it."

"It shall be delivered," said Miles, and with his hat in his hand he left the room.

"You chose your own man, general," said Gates when the three soldiers were gone.

"Because he was English," said Schuyler, with a smile which belied the implication of his own words.

"My man speaks French," said Gates.

"And mine both Dutch and high German, a very useful accomplishment for a traveler through New Jersey."

The tall man looked at his two colleagues as if not at all interested in their comments, and then, like one speaking his thought aloud, he said:

"I chose because of the nuts and cider."

A faint smile hovered at the corners of Gates' mouth, and over the face of Schuyler came the heavy look of a man who tries to solve an enigma. The tall man continued:

"Van Houser had reached the admiral and delivered the dispatch where the way fair and friendly and horses and money plenty. See the scattered shells, the half wasted kernels. Woods had delivered the message by word of mouth were main strength and courage only necessary. He broke the nuts with his thumb and forefingers. But Miles will reach the admiral. He will husband his resources. His horse, his protector and his money will not fail him. He took few nuts, but he extracted all their kernel, not by strength, but by finesse, and he took but one glass of cider after the others had well drunk."

There was silence for a moment. It was broken by Schuyler.

"General Washington," said he, "I take back my mock."

George Washington did not smile or reply. He bent his head and returned to his dispatches.



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DIED DEC. 14, 1799.

The Tribute of Lecky To Washington

In his "History of England in the Eighteenth Century" William Edward Hartpole Lecky, M. P., pays the following tribute to George Washington:

To the appointment of Washington (as commander in chief) far more than to any other single circumstance is due the ultimate success of the American Revolution, though in purely intellectual powers Washington was certainly inferior to Franklin and perhaps to two or three others of his colleagues. There is a theory which once received the countenance of some considerable physiologists, though it is now, I believe, completely discarded, that one of the great lines of division among men may be traced to the comparative development of the cerebrum and the cerebellum. To the first organ it was supposed belong those special gifts or powers which make men poets, orators, thinkers, artists, conquerors or statesmen. To the second belong the superintending, restraining, discerning and directing faculties which enable men to employ their several talents with sanity and wisdom, which maintain the balance and the proportion of intellect and character and make sound judgments and well regulated lives. The theory, however untrue in its physiological aspect, corresponds to a real distinction in human minds and characters, and it was especially in the second order of faculties that Washington excelled. His mind was not quick or remarkably original. His conversation had no brilliancy or wit. He was entirely without the gift of eloquence, and he had very few accomplishments. He knew no language but his own, and except for a rather strong turn for mathematics he had no taste

which can be called purely intellectual. There was nothing in him of the man of letters, the scholar, the dilettante or the dilettante, nothing that either dazzled or overpowered.

As a soldier the circumstances of his career brought him into the blaze, not only of domestic, but of foreign, criticism, and it was only very gradually that his superiority was fully recognized. Lee, who of all American soldiers had seen most service in the English army, and Conway, who had risen to great repute in the French army, were both accustomed to speak of his military talents with extreme disparagement, but personal jealousy and animosity undoubtedly colored their judgments. De Kalb, who had been trained in the best military schools of the continent, at first pronounced him to be very deficient in the strength of decision and promptitude of a general, and although he soon learned to form the highest estimate of his military capacity, he continued to lament that an excessive modesty led him too frequently to act upon the opinion of inferior men rather than upon his own most excellent judgment. In the army and the Congress more than the rival was opposed to him. He had his full share of disaster; the operations which he conducted, if compared with great European wars, were on a very small scale, and he had the immense advantage of encountering, in most cases, generals of singular incapacity. It may, however, be truly said of him that his military reputation steadily rose through many

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successive campaigns, and before the end of the struggle he had outlived all rivalry and almost all envy. He had a part of his profession, a good eye for military combinations, an extraordinary gift of military administration.

WASHINGTON ON MARRIAGE.

In several letters Washington expressed his views upon the institution of marriage. To the French ally, Count Chastellux, who served in America as a major general, he wrote: "I consider your very friendly and acceptable letter I was, as you may well suppose, not less delighted than surprised to meet the plain American words 'wife.' A wife! Well, my dear monsieur, I can hardly refrain from smiling to find you are caught at last. I saw by the eulogium you often made of America that you had swallowed the bait and that you would swallow the taken one day or other as surely as your day has at last come. I am glad of it with all my heart and soul. It is quite good enough for you. Now you are well served for coming to fight in favor of the American republic all the way across the Atlantic, ocean all the catching that terrible contagion of domestic felicity, which seems like the smallpox or the plague, a man can have only once in his life, because it commonly lasts him (at least with us in America) I don't know how you manage these matters in France) for his whole lifetime you so richly merit on the subject, the worst wish I can find in my heart against you is that you may never of you ever get the fever of this domestic felicity during the entire course of your mortal existence."

Once when asked to give advice to a widow in the Cuesta circle as to a new matrimonial venture, he replied: "I never did nor do I believe I ever shall give advice to a woman who is setting out on a matrimonial voyage—first, because I never could advise one to marry without her own consent, and secondly, because I know it is to no purpose to advise her to refrain when she has obtained it. A woman very rarely asks an opinion or requires advice on such an occasion till her resolution is formed, and then it is with the light and expectation of obtaining a sanction that she applies."

WASHINGTON IN 1797.

Isaac Weld, a contemporary of Washington, wrote as follows of the president at the close of his second term: "His chest is full, and his limbs, though rather slender, well shaped and muscular. His head is small, in which he resembles the make of a number of his countrymen. His eyes are of a light gray color, and in proportion to the length of his face his nose is long. Mr. Stuart, the eminent portrait painter, told me that there were features in his face totally different from what he ever observed in any other human being. The sockets of the eyes, for instance, are larger than he ever met with before and the upper part of the nose broader. All his features, he observed, were indicative of the strongest and most ungovernable passions, and had he been born in the forests of the North American Indians he would have been the fiercest man among the savage tribes."

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