

1778-July 4-1928



By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

JULY 4, 1778. The sun has gone down behind the Missouri hills across the Mississippi river from the little French town of Kaskaskia in what is now the state of Illinois, and the soft evening light is spreading over the low rambling houses and the orchards and gardens. From the belfry of the little stone church in the center of the village, a sweet-toned bell rings to vespers. Dark settles down and in a little while lights begin to twinkle in the windows. A scene of peace in strange contrast to the warlike sounds which are soon to shatter the stillness when that little army, which now lies in the timber that lines the bluffs above Kaskaskia, shall sweep down upon the village and raise the dreaded war-cry of the "Long Knives of Kentucky." For stirring events are about to take place in this sleepy little town, events which in the light of the century and a half that have intervened, we now realize were history making.

But let the leader of the invaders tell his own story, as he does in the book "The Capture of Old Vincennes—The Original Narratives of George Rogers Clark and of His Opponent, Gov. Henry Hamilton," edited by Milo M. Quaife and published recently by the Bobbs-Merrill company, in the following words:

On the evening of July fourth we arrived within a few miles of the town, where we threw out some scouts in advance and lay until nearly dark. We then resumed our march and took possession of a house on the bank of the Kaskaskia river, about three-quarters of a mile above the town, occupied by a large family. We learned from the inmates that the people had been under arms a few days before, but had concluded the alarm to be groundless and at present all was quiet, and that there was a large number of men in town, although the Indians were for the most part absent. We obtained from the man boats enough to convey us across the river, where I formed my force in three divisions. I felt confident the inhabitants could not now obtain knowledge of our approach in time to enable them to make any resistance. My object was now to get possession of the place with as little confusion as possible, but to have it if necessary at the loss of the town. I did not entirely credit the information given us at the house, as the man seemed to contradict himself, informing us among other things that a noise was heard in the town was caused by the negroes at a dance. I set out for the fort with one division, ordering the other two to proceed to different quarters of the town. If I met with no resistance, at a certain signal a general shout was to be given and a certain part of the town was to be seized immediately, while men from each detachment who were able to talk French were to run through the streets proclaiming what had happened and informing the townsmen to remain in their houses on pain of being shot down.

These arrangements produced the desired effect, and within a very short time we were in complete possession of the place, with every avenue guarded to prevent any one from escaping and giving the alarm to the other villages. Various orders not worth mentioning had been issued for the guidance of the men in the event of opposition. Greater silence, I suppose, never reigned among the inhabitants of a town than in Kaskaskia at this juncture; not a person was to be seen or a word to be heard from them for some time. Meanwhile our troops purposely kept up the greatest possible noise throughout every quarter of the town, while patrols moved around it continually throughout the night, as it was a capital object to intercept any messenger that might be sent out. In about two hours all the inhabitants were disarmed, and informed that any one who should be taken while attempting to



SURRENDER OF FORT SACKVILLE. All pictures from "The Capture of Old Vincennes," courtesy Bobbs-Merrill company.

escape from the place would immediately be put to death. Mr. Rocheblave was secured, but some time elapsed before he could get out of his room. I suppose he delayed to tell his wife what disposition to make of his public papers, but a few of which were secured by us.

In this matter-of-fact manner does George Clark tell the story of the events of that Independence day far out on the fringe of the western wilderness. If he recognized the appropriateness of the occasion, there is no indication of it in his writing. It is doubtful if he did, however, for the significance of that red-letter day in American history was not yet apparent to the men who had the most to do with putting it in our calendar. American independence from the mother country had been declared only two years and it was yet a question whether the Revolution would succeed or fail.

Neither could he foresee what lay before him—his easy capture of Cahokia and Vincennes, the loss of the latter place to "Hair-Buyer" Hamilton, the British governor of Detroit, the terrible march which he was to lead across the Drowned Lands the next year to recapture Vincennes, the diplomacy, the tact, the boldness, the daring, and the master skill which he must employ to win the French inhabitants of the Illinois country from their sworn allegiance to the British flag and to overawe the Indian tribes so that his slender force could hold the country which they had conquered. Least of all could he foresee the mighty consequences of his ambitious plans and the sufferings which he and his men were to be called upon to endure before he had accomplished his designs. We can look back now and see that had it not been for George Rogers Clark, the western boundary of the new republic at the close of the Revolution would most likely have been the Alleghenies and the great states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky, to say nothing of the whole vast territory west of the Mississippi, might not now be a part of the United States.

For it is not venturing too wild a guess to declare that had Clark's attempt to capture Kaskaskia that Independence day a hundred and fifty years ago by some chance resulted in failure instead of success, the whole course of American history might have been changed. It is often upon such slender threads as this that the destiny of nations hangs. In view of the importance of Clark's conquest of the British posts in the West, it would be natural to suppose that a grateful na-

tion would have enshrined his memory as one of her greatest heroes. Instead it has been a matter of shame to historians who have recognized the full indebtedness of the United States to this great Virginian that our nation allowed him to die in poverty and neglect, his last years embittered by the ingratitude of a "republic which forgets."

Recently, however, some recompense, tardy though it is, has been made for the many years of neglected honor to the name and fame of George Rogers Clark. Last year the first organized tribute of the Old Northwest to the man who made it a part of the United States was offered in a pilgrimage of the six states to his birthplace at Charlottesville, Va., on November 19, the one hundredth seventy-fifth anniversary of his birth.

Further honors to the memory of Clark were also projected during the sessions of congress this year in the introduction of various bills. One was to authorize the construction of a George Rogers Clark memorial light-house on the Ohio river near Louisville, Ky.; another provided for the construction of a memorial on the site of Fort Gage (Kaskaskia) in Randolph county, Illinois.

But most important of all was the recent passage of a bill providing an appropriation of \$1,000,000 for the construction of a historical museum on the site of Fort Sackville at Vincennes, Ind., and the participation of the federal government in the Clark sesquicentennial celebration to be held there next year. This celebration which will open next February on the one hundredth and fiftieth anniversary of the capture of Fort Sackville by Clark will be the most impressive gesture of honoring the conqueror of the Old Northwest that has yet been made. Initiated by the people of that section, the whole nation will be invited to participate because it is the whole nation which owes a debt of gratitude to Clark.

The celebration will have a special significance since it will mark the one hundredth and fiftieth anniversary of the first time the Stars and Stripes were raised over that section of the country. For when the British flag was hauled down from over Fort Sackville, after Hamilton's surrender of the fort, it was the new flag of the new nation, one of the several stands of colors which the French inhabitants had presented to Clark's men and the volunteers who accompanied them on their expedition against Vincennes, which was run up in its place. Some historians have stated that Clark first unfurled the Stars and Stripes on the soil of Illinois before setting out for Kaskaskia, but Clark's narrative, in the book quoted above, makes no mention of this fact, and it is probable that Vincennes and not Kaskaskia first had a sight of Old Glory.

It would have been a final touch of patriotic appropriateness if the Stars and Stripes had been displayed on July 4, 1778. But even though it was not, the events of that day were significant enough, and on Independence day this year, when Americans are remembering the men on the Atlantic seaboard who, on July 4, 1776, signed the Declaration of Independence, they should also remember the little group of backwoodsmen who helped make that Declaration good by their daring and the privations they endured under the leadership of George Rogers Clark.

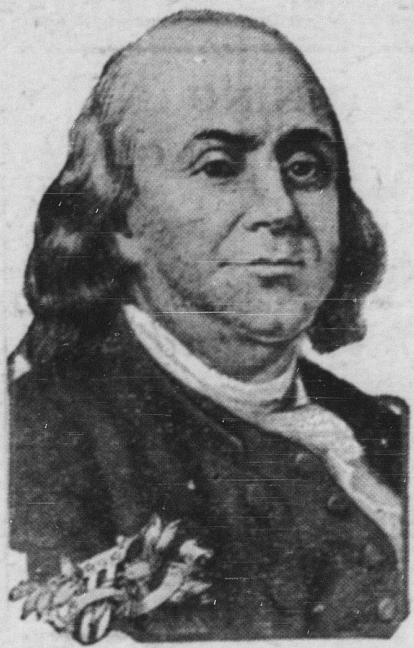
GRAVE OF "BEN" FRANKLIN ALL BUT FORGOTTEN

Last Resting Place of Statesman Said to Be Neglected.

Benjamin Franklin lies buried in Christ Church cemetery in Philadelphia. According to a story appearing in Printing, a magazine devoted to the interests of the typographical trades, both the cemetery and the grave of the "First Civilized American" are sadly neglected.

The large, flat stone which covers the last resting place of the great and versatile Ben is said to be cracked, while neighboring his grave are many crumbling and tumbling tombstones.

This is not creditable to Philadelphia nor to the craft which Benjamin Franklin honored as his vocation. It is to be hoped the condition of things will be remedied. The printing



Benjamin Franklin.

trades might well undertake to see that the grave of Franklin, if not the cemetery in which it is situated, is kept in such repair as would suggest that we are not forgetful of his memory nor ungrateful for his services.

It is a simple grave, marked by a recumbent marble slab—the same slab which was laid upon it almost 140 years ago. We would not alter the simplicity. That is wholly in keeping with the character of the man, a great democrat who stood before kings in the unadorned dignity of his manhood, and by the qualities of his sincere personality and splendid intellect commanded the world's respect. America has erected monuments to the memory of Benjamin Franklin, and a recent biography has refreshed our thought of him and deepened our affection. The attention which has been called to a neglect of his grave should be sufficient to lead to immediate steps for doing what is required



Franklin's Monument in Lincoln Park, Chicago.

by a proper sense of respect. Philadelphia is custodian of Franklin's dust for the nation. If that city will not discharge this duty then others should assume it.

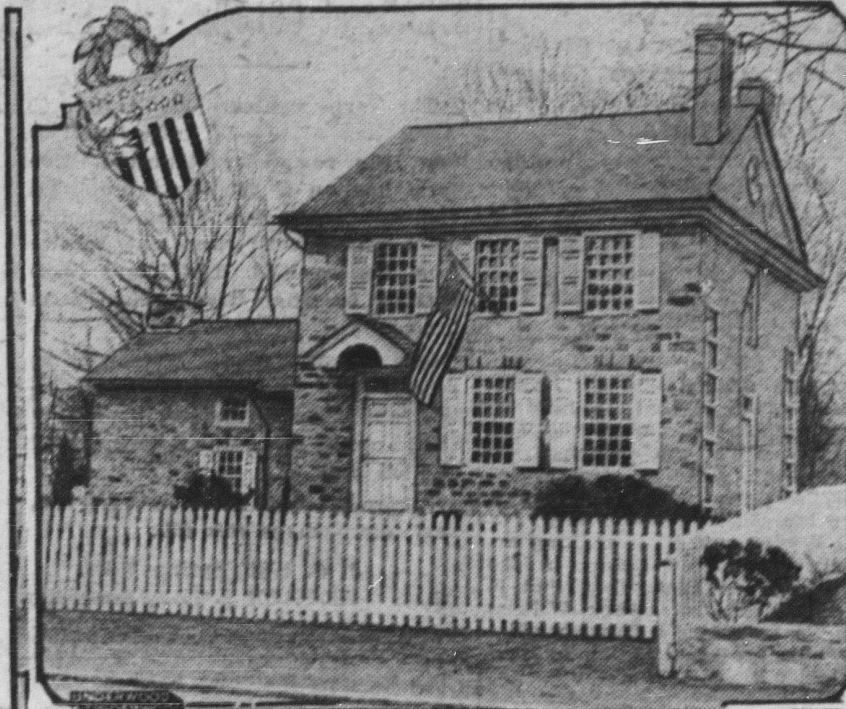
Benjamin Franklin's original epitaph, which had been kept hidden in the collection of a Chicago business man since its discovery twenty years ago, has been made public.

The inscription differs in only a few words and punctuation marks from the widely known epitaph of "Poor Richard." It follows:

The body of B. Franklin Printer Like the cover of an old book Its contents torn out And strips of its lettering and gilding Lies here food for worms But the work shall not be wholly lost For it will, as we believed, appear once more In a new and perfect edition Corrected and amended By the author.



WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS



Where the Great Commander Planned His Successful Campaign.

Chapel Marks Washington's Darkest Hour

"I commend the interests of our dear-est country to the protection of Almighty God, and those who have the superintendency of them to His holy keeping."

It was to commemorate this prayer of Washington that the chapel at Valley Forge was erected, writes Virginia Pope in the New York Times Magazine. In the large window of the nave, with its 36 openings devoted to episodes from the life of Washington, is one in which the familiar figure is shown kneeling, just as he must have been discovered by Isaac Potts when, unseen, he heard the earnest voice interceding with the Ruler of the Universe for the safety of his beloved country. The first months Washington passed on the slopes above the Schuylkill river were the darkest in the history of the embryonic union.

The odds that had confronted him prior to December 19, when his ill-clothed and hungry troops crossed the ice-filled river and made their weary way up the Guelph road to their winter quarters, had been terrific. Howe had advanced to the head of Chesapeake bay with eighteen thousand well-clothed and well-fed men, the two armies had met at Chad's ford to the misfortune of the Continentals; and at Brandywine, owing to misinformation, the English troops were soon occupying the Americans' camps. Then followed the Paoli debacle and the defeat at Germantown. Still the genius in command of the patriot army was not blind to the fact that "the enemy is not proof against a vigorous attack, and may be put to flight when vigorously opposed."

Saw Dawn of New Nation. His optimism was not vain, for on the silent hills that now listen to the hourly chiming of the chapel bells he saw his faithful hopes begin to be realized. At Valley Forge the dawn of the new nation rose. While Washington was pleading with congress for food and supplies for his almost destitute men, Franklin was concluding the agreement with France that brought recognition to the thirteen states and made possible their union. To the right of the chapel altar, sharing equal honors with the flags of the army and navy, are the ensigns of royal France, witnesses that in the Memorial chapel the aid given by our ally across the seas has not been forgotten.

And in the window that, like a troubadour, sings of the supreme moments in Washington's life, are pictures showing the result of that most important happening of the winter of 1778. In one the General stands with Lafayette and Von Steuben watching the troops as they pass in review. Over the head of Washington floats the new Stars and Stripes.

Beautiful Interior. The rough and unpretentious exterior scarcely prepares one for the exquisite loveliness of the interior of the little building. It stands within the site of the encampment where the brave army weathered the snows and winds of the winter of 1777-78. The arches of the cloister bays look out upon a tract now wooded where the deep depressions of the cellars, or but holes, may still be found. Here there

was a company street; along either side were erected the rude structures for which such minute orders had been given by the commander in chief—who, refusing the protection of his own winter quarters, waited in the cold in his marquee until the last of the log huts had been built for the troops.

Set in the wondrous scenic beauty of Valley Forge, with its open stretches of green and its densely wooded hills, the memorial chapel symbolizes the spirit of George Washington and his soldiers. Durable and stern are the rough-hewn stones of the facade; no ornaments soften them; in the entrance porch are gun benches. A soldiers' church this! But under the vaulted arch, that reveals the jeweled interior, the essential character of the chapel is felt. Instead of open slits for hostile gun muzzles there are little panes of glass, which, like illumined strips of parchment, bear the words of George Washington's valedictory prayer for the people of the United States, quoted above.

Unknown Soldier Honored. When the late afternoon sun caresses the little chapel, its last warm greetings fall upon those hardy ships, the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria, sending them on their voyage of discovery over a sea of molten gold. Around them crowd the

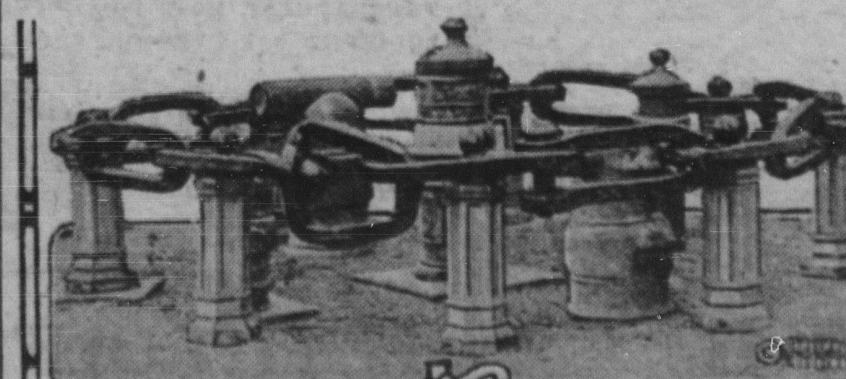
SHALL we regard with indifference the great inheritance which cost our sires their blood because we find in their gift admixture of imperfection and evil? Surely there is good enough, in the contemplation of which every patriotic heart may say "God bless my own, my native land."—James A. Garfield.

bold men and brave who opened the way to the new land, the last light of the day setting their faces agleam as if they foresaw the wondrous growth of the country to which they brought the light of civilization. While great generals and noted patriots are immortalized in the Valley Forge memorial, the Unknown Soldier is not forgotten; he holds a place of equal prominence. Beneath the lofty frame of the sanctuary arch, at the head of the aisle, is the litany desk, placed there in "remembrance of the supplications of George Washington for the American people." By the desk is a Continental soldier, perpetually standing at attention and presenting arms to the altar. He appears again in the niches of the finely carved oaken choir stalls, each one of which is a silent tribute to the brigades quartered at Valley Forge.

On either end of one of the choir benches kneels a small figure in the uniform of the Life Guards, the brave body that fought under the motto, "Conquer or Die." The little band of men, originally composed of Virginians, was augmented by one hundred from other states at Valley Forge and became the model corps for the execution of the maneuvers of Baron von Steuben.

The "shrine of the American people," as President Wilson called the Valley Forge memorial, was the vision of one man and owes its completion to his untiring efforts. Twenty-three years ago Rev. W. Herbert Burk, a student and admirer of the character of Washington, conceived the idea of perpetuating his memory in a poem of architecture and art. What more fitting spot than the site above the Schuylkill, where he had passed triumphantly through the valley of despair?

STOPPED PROUD BRITISH SHIPS



Some Links of the Chain That Was Stretched Across the Hudson River Below West Point.

Great Marsh Area

El Chaco, a vast area of land between Paraguay and Bolivia, is awaiting the ambitious adventurer. It covers about 200,000 square miles and is believed to be constituted mainly of swamps and jungles. A few merchants, who even today, as they were in the days of the Phenicians, are the pioneer explorers of distant and little known areas, are about the only people who have ever visited the in-

terior of the Chaco, lured there because it is the home of the quercubrao tree, an important source of tannin.

Deprived of Equipment

A man who had made a reputation as a political exhorter was asked to talk to a gathering of the gentler sex. He demurred. "I'm afraid I can't do much good at it. I have never talked to women, you know." "Nonsense!" his friends replied. "You arouse the men, why not the women?"

"I tell you I'm certain to make a failure of it."
"Why are you so sure of that?"
"Because," he answered, "I can't use more than half my vocabulary when I talk to women."

Hopeless Case

The cream of all absent-minded professors is the one who, about to start on a journey, filled his wife with gasoline, kissed his road map good by and tried to shove his motor car into his pocket.