

Interesting Sketch.

IRVING'S LIFE OF WASHINGTON.

GEORGE WASHINGTON AT SCHOOL, IN LOVE, AT HOME.

Messrs. PUTNAM & Co., of New York, are about issuing a new life of GEORGE WASHINGTON, written by the great American Author, WASHINGTON IRVING, which promises to be the most meritorious and popular life of the "Father of his country" ever written.

All former biographers and historians have presented us with Washington as the great military commander or civil ruler. In this volume Mr. Irving presents him as a living personality, as well as a great hero.

WASHINGTON AT SCHOOL.

Having no longer the benefit of a father's instructions at home, and the scope of tuition of Hobby, the sexton, being too limited for the growing wants of his pupil, George was now sent to reside with Augustine Washington, at Bridges Creek, and enjoy the benefit of a superior school in that neighborhood, kept by a Mr. Williams.

and strength. As a proof of his muscular power a place is still pointed out at Fredericksburg, near the lower ferry, where when a boy he flung a stone across the Rappahannock.

Above all, his inherent probity and the principles of justice on which he regulated all his conduct, even at this early period of his life, were soon appreciated by his schoolmates; he was referred to as an umpire in their disputes, and his decisions were never reversed.

THE LOVES OF WASHINGTON.

In one of these manuscripts memorials of his practical studies and exercises, we have come upon some documents singularly in contrast with all that we have just cited and with his apparently unromantic character.

Whatever may have been the reason, this early attachment seems to have been a source of poignant discomfort to him. It clung to him after he took a final leave of school in the autumn of 1747 and went to reside with his brother Lawrence at Mount Vernon.

The tenor of some of his verses induces us to believe that he never told his love; but, as we have already surmised, was prevented by his bashfulness.

It is difficult to reconcile one's self to the idea of the cool and sedate Washington, the great champion of American liberty, a woeful lover in his youthful days 'sighing like furnace' and inditing plaintive verses about the groves of Mount Vernon.

The merits of Washington were known and appreciated by the Fairfax family. Though not quite sixteen years of age he no longer seemed a boy, nor was he treated as such.

To one whom he addresses as his dear friend Robin, he writes; 'My residence is at present at his lordship's, where I might say my heart disengaged, pass my time very pleasantly, as there's a very agreeable young lady lives in the same house' (Col. George Fairfax's wife's sister); but as that's only adding fuel to fire, it makes me the more uneasy, for by often and unavoidably being in company with her, revives my former passion for your Lowland Beauty; whereas was I to live more retired from young women, I might in some measure alleviate my sorrows by burying that chaste and trouble some passion in the grave of oblivion, &c.

Similar avowals he makes to another of his young correspondents, whom he styles 'Dear friend John,' as also to a female confidant, styled 'Dear Sally,' to whom he acknowledges

the company of the 'very agreeable young lady, sister-in-law of Colonel George Fairfax,' in a great measure cheers his sorrow and dejectedness. The object of this early passion is not positively known.

Whatever may have been the soothing effect of the female society by which he was surrounded at Belvoir, the youth found a more effectual remedy for his love-melancholy in the company of Lord Fairfax. His lordship was a staunch fox hunter, and kept horses and hounds in English style.

Tradition gives very different motives from those of business for his two sojourns in the latter city. He found there an early friend and schoolmate, Beverly Robinson, son of John Robinson, speaker of the Virginia House of Burgesses.

We have already given an instance of Washington's early sensibility to female charms. A life however of constant activity and care—past for the most part in the wilderness and on the frontier, far from female society—had left the mood or leisure for the indulgence of the tender sentiment; but made him more sensible, in the present brief interval of gay and social life, to the attractions of an elegant woman, brought up in the polite circle of New York.

That he was an open admirer of Miss Phillips is a historical fact; that he sought her hand, but was refused, is traditional and not very probable. His military rank, his early laurels and distinguished presence were all calculated to find favor in female eyes; but this sojourn in New York was brief; he may have been diffident in urging his suit with a lady accustomed to the homage of society and surrounded by admirers.

Washington was now ordered by Sir John St. Clair, the quartermaster general of the forces under General Forbes, to repair to Williamsburg and lay the state of the case before the Council. He set off promptly on horseback, attended by Bishop, the well trained military servant who had served the late General Braddock.

Among the guests at Mr. Chamberlayne's was a young and blooming widow, Mrs. Martha Custis, daughter of Mr. John Danbridge, both patriotic names in the province. Her husband, John Parke Custis, had been dead about three years, leaving her with two young children and a large fortune.

The dinner, which in those days was an earlier meal than at present, seemed all too short. The afternoon passed away like a dream. Bishop was punctual to the orders he

had received on halting; the horses pawed at the door, but for once Washington loitered in the path of duty. The horses were countermanded, and it was not until the next morning that he was again in the saddle, spurring for Williamsburg. Happily the White House, the residence of Mrs. Custis, was in New Kent County at no great distance from that city, so that he had opportunities of visiting her in the intervals of business.

WASHINGTON AT HOME.

Mount Vernon was his harbor of repose, where he repeatedly furled his sail, and fancied himself for life. No impulse of ambition tempted him thence; nothing but the call of his country, and his devotion to the public good. The place was endeared to him by the remembrance of his brother Lawrence, and of the happy days he had passed here with that brother in the days of boyhood; but it was a delightful place in itself, and well calculated to inspire the rural feeling.

The mansion was beautifully situated on a swelling height, crowned with wood, and commanding a magnificent view up and down the Potomac. The grounds immediately about it were laid out somewhat in the English taste. The estate was apportioned into separate farms, devoted to different kinds of culture, each having its allotted laborers. Much, however, was still covered with wild woods, seamed with deep dells and runs of water, and indented with inlets; haunts of deer and lurking places of foxes.

'No estate in United States,' observes he, in one of his letters, 'is more pleasantly situated. In a high and healthy country; in a latitude between the extremes of heat and cold; on one of the finest rivers in the world; a river well stocked with various kinds of fish at all seasons of the year, and in the spring with shad, herring, bass, carp, sturgeon, &c., in great abundance. The borders of the estate are washed by more than ten miles of tide water; several valuable fisheries appertain to it; the whole shore, in fact, is one entire fishery.'

These were as yet the aristocratical days of Virginia.

The estates were large, and continued in the same families by entails. Many of the wealthy planters were connected with old families in England. The young men, especially the elder sons, were often sent to finish their education there, and on their return brought out the tastes and habits of the mother country. The Governors of Virginia were from the higher ranks of society and maintained a corresponding state. The 'established' or Episcopal Church predominated through the 'ancient dominion,' as it was termed; each county was divided into parishes, as in England, each with its parochial church, its parsonage and glebe.

Among his occasional visitors and associates were Captain Hugh Mercer and Doctor Craik; the former, after his narrow escape from the tomahawk and scalping-knife, was quietly settled at Fredericksburg; the latter, after the campaigns on the frontiers were over, had taken up his residence at Alexandria, and was now Washington's family physician. Both were drawn to him by campaigning ties and recollection, and were ever welcome at Mount Vernon.

A style of living prevailed among the opulent Virginian families in those days that has long since faded away. The houses were spacious, commodious, liberal in all their appointments, and fitted to cope with the free-handed, open-hearted hospitality of the owners. Nothing was more common than to see handsome services of plate, elegant equipages and superb carriage—horses—all imported from England. The Virginians have always been noted for

their love of horses; a manly passion which in those days of opulence, they indulged with out regard to expense. The rich planters vie with each other in their studs, importing the best English stocks. Mention is made of one of the Randolphs of Tuckahoe, who built stable for his favorite dapplegray horse Slack spear, with a recess for the bed of the negro groom, who always slept beside him at night.

Washington, by his marriage, had added above one hundred thousand dollars to his already considerable fortune, and was enabled to live in ample and dignified style. His intimacy with the Fairfaxes, and his intercourse with British officers of rank, had perhaps had their influence on his mode of living. He had his chariot and four, with black postillions in livery, for the use of Mrs. Washington at her lady visitors. As for himself, he appeared on horseback. His stable was well filled, admirably regulated. His stud was thoroughly bred and in excellent order. His household books contain registers of the names, age and marks of his favorite horses; such as Aja Blueskin, Valiant, Magnolia (an Arab), &c. Also his dogs, chiefly fox-hounds, Vulca Ringwood, Forrester, Sweetlips, Music, Roc wood, Truelove, &c.

A large Virginia estate, in those days, was a little empire. The mansion-house was the seat of government, with its numerous dependencies, such as kitchens, smokehouse, work shops and stables. In this mansion the plant ruled supreme; his steward or overseer was his prime minister and executive officer; he had his legion of house negroes for domestic service, and his host of field negroes for the culture of tobacco, Indian corn, and other crops, and for other out-of-door labor. The quarter formed a kind of hamlet apart, composed of various huts, with little gardens and poultry yards, all well stocked, and swarms of little negroes gambling in the sunshine. Then there were large wooden edifices for curing tobacco, the staple and most profitable production, and mills for grinding wheat and Indian corn, of which large fields were cultivated for the supply of the family and the maintenance of the negroes.

He was an early riser, often before dawn, break in the winter when the nights were long. On such occasions, he lit his own fire and wrote or read by candle light. He breakfasted at seven in summer, at eight in winter. Two small cups of tea and three or four cakes of Indian meal (called hoe-cakes) formed a frugal repast. Immediately after breakfast mounted his horse and visited those parts of the estate where any work was going on, seeing to everything with his own eyes, and often aiding with his own hands.

Dinner was served a 2 o'clock. He ate heartily, but was no epicure nor critical about his food. His beverage was small-beer, cider and two glasses of old Madeira. He took tea, of which he was very fond, early in the evening and retired for the night about 9 o'clock.

If confined to the house by bad weather, he took that occasion to arrange his papers, put up his accounts or write letters—passing part of the time in reading and occasionally ranging aloud to the family.

He treated his negroes with kindness; attended to their comforts; was particularly careful of them in sickness, but never tolerated idleness, and exacted a faithful performance of all their allotted tasks. He had quick eye at calculating each man's capabilities. An entry in his diary gives a curious instance of this. Four of his negroes employed as carpenters were hewing and shaping timber. It appeared to him in noticing the amount of work accomplished between two succeeding mornings, that they loitered at the labor. Sitting down quietly he timed the operations, how long it took them to get the cross-cut saw and other implements ready how long to clear away the branches from the trunk of a fallen tree; how long to hew a saw it; what time was expended in consulting and consulting, and, after all, how much was effected during the time he looked on. From this he made his computation of how much they could execute in the course of a day, working entirely at their ease.

At another time we find him working for part of two days with Peter, his smith, make a plow on a new invention of his own. This, after two or three failures, he accomplished. Then, with less than his usual judgment, he put his two chariot horses to a plow and ran a great risk of spoiling them, giving his new invention a trial over ground thickly swarded.

Once, during a thunder-storm a frightened negro alarms the house with word that a mill is giving way, upon which there is a general turn-out of all the forces, with Washington at their head, wheeling and shoveling gravel, during a pelting rain, to check the rushing water.

Washington delighted in the chase. In the hunting season, when he rode out early in the morning to visit distant parts of the estate where work was going on, he often took some of the dogs with him for the chance of striking a fox, which he occasionally did, though