

THE
Life
OF
WASHINGTON



CROSSING THE DELAWARE

In order to preserve the historical nature of this work, British spellings and the formatting of the text have been kept as they were in the original book as found.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The historical portion of this volume is extracted from the best authorities; but it has been deemed unnecessary to introduce references.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Anna C. Reed, niece of a signer of the Declaration of Independence, authored this amazing work for the ASSU prior to 1850. Originally translated into over 20 languages within a few years, the book was among the most widely-read biographies of Washington at the time.

The ASSU, now called American Missionary Fellowship (AMF), has been associated with some of America's most prominent citizens and religious leaders. Bushrod Washington, George Washington's nephew and heir of Mount Vernon, who served as Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court, was vice-president of the ASSU until his death in 1829. Included among other ASSU officers or influenced by its mission were Bishop William White of Philadelphia's Christ Church; Francis Scott Key, who wrote "The Star Spangled Banner"; D.L. Moody; Laura Ingalls Wilder; and John Adams (related to both early American presidents), who personally organized over 320 Sunday schools.

ASSU missionaries carried books published by the mission in saddlebags to leave with the fledgling Sunday schools they had started, promoting literacy, education, and the very best in Christian moral values. Though it stopped publishing books in 1968, American Missionary Fellowship continues its missionary work in the United States, extending beyond Sunday school work to include church planting, church camps, and numerous other programs.

<http://www.americanmissionary.org/>

THE
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CHAPTER I.

1732—1762.

To give us the delightful assurance, that we are always under the watchful care of our almighty and kind Creator, He has told us that He notices the movements of every little sparrow ; and as we are “ of more value than many sparrows,” He will surely ever care for us. It was His powerful and kind care that protected and guided Columbus, the once poor sailor boy, to obtain the favour of a great king and queen ; and then to pass over the waves of a dangerous ocean, in a little vessel, and reach in safety an unknown land. The same powerful and kind care which protected and guided houseless strangers to a land of freedom and peace, gave Washington to their children, to lead them on to take a place amongst the nations of the earth. His history is as a shining light upon the path of virtue ; for he “ acknowledged God in all his ways.”

GEORGE WASHINGTON was the third son of Augustine Washington, whose grandfather

left England, his native country, in 1657, and settled at Bridges Creek, in Virginia, where, on the 22d of February, in the year 1732, his great-grandson, George, was born.*

One of the first lessons which young Washington received from his faithful parents, was, the importance of always speaking the truth; and they enjoyed a satisfactory reward for their attention to this duty; for through his childhood, "the law of truth was in his mouth," so that he was not known in one instance to tell a falsehood, either to obtain a desired indulgence, or to escape a deserved punishment or reproof. His character, as a lover of truth, was so well known at the school which he attended, that the children were certain of being believed, when they related any thing, if they could say, "George Washington says it was so."

An anecdote is related of him to illustrate this trait in his character, which we introduce without being able to ascertain on what authority it is related. We hope it will not be supposed, however, that we regard such an incident as an extraordinary proof of ingenuousness on the part of young Washington. We trust there are very few boys who would think of adopting any other course under like

* The birth-day of Washington was the eleventh February, 1732, according to the dates used at that time, but, as in the year 1752, the English dates were altered to conform with those of the rest of Europe, the day is that which is here given, twenty-second February, 1732.

circumstances, and those who do generally find that "honesty is the best policy," to say nothing of a quiet conscience and the law of God.

The story is, that he was playing with a hatchet, and heedlessly struck a favourite fruit-tree in his father's garden. Upon seeing the tree thus mutilated, an inquiry was naturally made for the author of the mischief, when George frankly confessed the deed, and received his father's forgiveness.

In all the little disputes of the school-fellows, he was called on to say which party was right, and his decisions were always satisfactory.

It is, perhaps, not out of place to remark in this connexion, that much of the injustice and oppression which are seen in the intercourse of men with each other, shows only the maturity of habits which were formed in childhood. At home, or in school, or on the play-ground, instances of unfairness and fraud are often seen, which, among men, would be regarded as gross violations of law and right. Washington in his boyhood was **JUST**.

When he was ten years old, his worthy father died, and he became the care of an anxious mother, whose fortune was not sufficient to enable her to give him more than a plain English education. He was very fond of studying mathematics, and applied his mind

diligently, in improving all the instruction which he could get in that science. As he grew up to manhood, he was remarkable for the strength and activity of his frame. In running, leaping, and managing a horse, he was unequalled by his companions; and he could with ease climb the heights of his native mountains, to look down alone from some wild crag upon his followers, who were panting from the toils of the rugged way. By these healthful exercises the vigour of his constitution was increased, and he gained that hardiness so important to him in the employments designed for him by his Creator.

Mrs. Washington was an affectionate parent; but she did not encourage in herself that imprudent tenderness, which so often causes a mother to foster the passions of her children by foolish indulgences, and which seldom fails to destroy the respect which every child should feel for a parent. George was early made to understand that he must obey his mother, and therefore he respected as well as loved her. She was kind to his young companions, but they thought her stern, because they always felt that they must behave correctly in her presence. The character of the mother, as well as that of the son, are shown in the following incident. Mrs. Washington owned a remarkably fine colt, which she valued very much; but which, though old enough for use, had never been mounted;

no one would venture to ride it, or attempt to break its wild and vicious spirit. George proposed to some of his young companions, that they should assist him to secure the colt until he could mount it, as he had determined that he would try to tame it. Soon after sunrise, one morning, they drove the wild animal into an enclosure, and with great difficulty succeeded in placing a bridle on it. George then sprang upon its back, and the vexed colt bounded over the open fields, prancing and plunging to get rid of his burden. The bold rider kept his seat firmly, and the struggle between them became alarming to his companions, who were watching him. The speed of the colt increased, until at length, in making a furious effort to throw his conqueror, he burst a large blood-vessel, and instantly died. George was unhurt, but was much troubled by the unexpected result of his exploit. His companions soon joined him, and when they saw the beautiful colt lifeless, the first words they spoke were, "What will your mother say—who can tell her?" They were called to breakfast, and soon after they were seated at the table, Mrs. Washington said, "Well, young gentlemen, have you seen my fine sorrel colt in your rambles?" No answer was given, and the question was repeated; her son George then replied—"Your sorrel colt is dead, mother." He gave her an exact account of the event. The flush of displeasure which

first rose on her cheek, soon passed away; and she said calmly, "While I regret the loss of my favourite, *I rejoice in my son, who always speaks the truth.*"

In his fifteenth year, he had so strong a desire to be actively employed, that he applied for a place as a midshipman in the English navy, (for our country was then under the government of Great Britain,) and succeeded in obtaining it. Full of youthful expectations of enjoyment in a new scene, he prepared ardently to engage in it, when he became convinced that by doing so, he would severely wound the heart of an anxious parent; and with a true spirit of heroism he denied himself, and in obedience to the command, "Honour thy mother," he gave up his fondly cherished plan, and yielded his own inclinations, to promote her comfort. Thus, while his manly superiority to companions of his own age caused admiration, his filial tenderness was an example to them of compliance with the direction which is given to children in the word of God. "Let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents," and they are assured that "this is good and acceptable to the Lord." Washington proved the truth of this assurance; for, to the act of filial regard which "requited" the anxious cares of his mother, may be traced his usefulness to his country, and the glory of his character. If he had crossed his mother's

wish, and entered the British navy as a midshipman, it is not probable, that he would ever have deserved, or obtained, the title of "Father of his country."

Being unwilling to remain inactive, young Washington employed himself industriously and usefully in surveying unsettled lands; and when he was nineteen years of age, he was appointed one of the adjutant generals of Virginia, with the rank of a major. At that time, the French nation had large settlements in Canada, and in Louisiana, and they determined on connecting those settlements by a line of forts; in doing this they took possession of a tract of land, which was considered to be within the province of Virginia. The governor of Virginia, (Mr. Dinwiddie) thought it was his duty to notice this, in the name of his king; and it was very important, that the person whom he employed in the business, should have resolution and prudence. Young Washington was worthy of his confidence, and willingly undertook the perilous duty; as it gave him an opportunity of being actively employed for the advantage of his native province. The dangers which he knew he must meet, did not, for a moment, deter him from consenting to set out immediately on the toilsome journey, although winter was near. He was to take a letter from the governor, to the commanding officer of the French troops, who were stationed on the Ohio river; and the

way he had to go, was through a part of the country that had never been furrowed by the plough, or, indeed, marked by any footsteps, but those of wild animals, or ferocious Indians. Many of those Indians were enemies, and those who had shown any disposition to be friendly, could not be safely trusted.

The same day, (October 31, 1753,) on which Washington received the letter which he was to be the bearer of, he left Williamsburgh, and travelled with speed until he arrived at the frontier settlement of the province; and there engaged a guide to show him the way over the wild and rugged Alleghany mountain, which, at that season of the year, it was difficult to pass. The waters to be crossed were high, and the snow to be waded through, was deep; but persevering resolutely, he arrived at Turtle Creek, where he was told by an Indian trader, that the French commander had died a short time before, and that the French troops had gone into winter quarters.

He went on with increased ardour, because the difficulty of his duty was increased; but he did not neglect the opportunity of examining the country through which he passed; wishing to discover the best situations on which forts could be erected for the defence of the province.

As the waters were impassable without swimming the horses, he got a canoe to take the baggage about ten miles, to the forks of



Washington Crossing the Alleghanies.