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MARTHA WASHINGTON

THE first maiden to kindle the divine spark in the breast of George Washington was a young lady, whom he called his "Lowland Beauty," and to whom, at fifteen, he wrote some very execrable verses. In one doggerel he tells about his "Poor, Resistless Heart," surrendered to "Cupid's Feathered Dart" and lying "Bleeding Every Hour," for her that "piteous of my Grief and Woes will not on me Pity take."

The identity of this "Lowland Beauty," who was the object of Washington's first affections has been much disputed. Losing, the historian, pronounced her Mary Bland, and some are inclined to the belief that she was a Miss Ellbeck, a beauty of Charles county, Maryland, who married George Mason. Others maintain that she was Lucy Grymes, who married Henry Lee and became the mother of the famous "Light Horse Harry," who was a great favorite with Washington, and who referred to the commander in chief as "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." Those who favor the Lucy Grymes identification point to the affection of Washington for "Light Horse Harry" as a resultant of the early love he entertained for Harry's mother.

Others will have it that the "Lowland Beauty" was Betsy Fauntleroy, and base their assertion on a letter written in May, 1752, by Washington to the grandfather of Miss Fauntleroy, in which he says, among other things, he purposed as soon as he recovered his strength (he had been ill with pleurisy) "to wait on Miss Betsy in hopes of a revocation of the former cruel sentence, and see if I can meet with any alteration in my favor."

In 1748 Washington became surveyor of Lord Fairfax's lands. He was then but sixteen. In an undated letter, probably written about the end of 1750, or the beginning of 1751, to his "Dear Friend Robin," (possibly Robert Washington of Chotank, affectionately remembered in his will) he also finds allusion to the "Lowland Beauty."

"My place of residence is at present at my lordship's, where I might, were not my heart disengaged, pass my time very pleasantly, as a very agreeable young lady lives in the same house but often and unavoidably being in company with her revives my former passion for your Lowland Beauty; whereas, were I to live more retired from young women, I might, in some measure, alleviate my sorrows by burying that chaste and troublesome Passion in the grave of oblivion of eternal forgetfulness."

History might have been different had Washington been accepted by the "Lowland Beauty." If the "Lowland Beauty" was Betsy Fauntleroy—and good authorities think she was—she married Ebenezer Adams, progenitor of the Virginia family of that name, and became the mother of Thomas Adams, alumnus of William and Mary college, signer of the articles of confederation, and member of the Philadelphia convention (1778-1780).

The "agreeable young lady" mentioned by Washington in his letters from the Fairfax residence, was Miss Mary Cary, the sister of Colonel Fairfax's wife. He turned to her for consolation and it seems her charm mitigated his "troublesome passion." But Miss Cary had no genuine love for the ardent young man. In 1752 she married Edward Ambler.

After his wooing of the "Lowland Beauty," he had another charmer, presumably a member of the family of Alexanders, who had a plantation near Mount Vernon.

## The MANY LOVE AFFAIRS of WASHINGTON



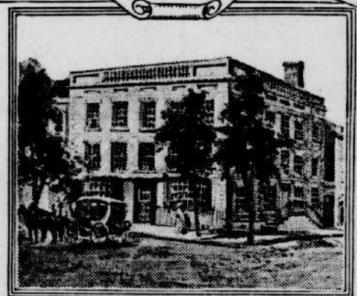
ONE OF THE HOMES OF THE WASHINGTONS



GEORGE WASHINGTON

The bride was attired in heavy brocaded white silk, interwoven with silver thread. Her shoes were of white satin and sparkled with buckles of brilliant. The bridegroom was costumed in a blue cloth coat, lined with red silk and ornamented with silver trimmings. His shoes and knee buckles were of solid gold, his hair was powdered, and a sword hung at his side. He appeared the beau ideal of a gallant and a gentleman.

Mrs. Washington had four children by her former marriage—Martha, Daniel, John Parke, and a girl, who died in infancy. Washington fathered her little progeny, but had none of his own. "Providence," it was said, "had denied the great man children that he might be the father of the whole country."



THE FIRST PRESIDENTIAL MANSION

Washington was a welcome guest with the Fairfaxes at Belvoir, with the Carys at Eagle's Nest, with the Fitzhughes at Stratford House, with the Carters at Sabine Hall, and with the Lees and Fauntleroy at Richmond.

Through the death of his half-brother, whom he accompanied to Barbadoes in the West Indies in search of health, Washington became master of Mount Vernon. On his return journey he called at Bermuda, where he had an attack of smallpox which, according to Parson Weems, "marked his face rather agreeably than otherwise." He was seized with a military ambition. He had already been a military inspector with the rank of major for the protection of the frontiers of Virginia. At twenty-three he was an aide-de-camp to General Braddock, commander in chief of the Virginia forces. At twenty-four we find him journeying to Boston on military business.

In going and returning he tarried in New York for about a week, on each occasion as the guest of Beverly Robinson, a Virginia friend who had married Susannah Phillips. Mrs. Robinson's sister, a very pretty girl, happened to be on a visit with her relatives. Washington came under the glamour of her glances. He did not spare expense in seeking popularity. He spent sundry pounds in "treating the ladies," with the object of getting one of them to treat him with favor, but all his efforts were in vain. He gallantly proposed to Miss Phillips and donned his best suit for the occasion, but that cultured and charming lady courteously declined—the honor he would thrust upon her. Two years afterwards she married Lieut. Col. Roger Morris.

There is no doubt that Washington was desperately in love with Mary Phillips, and her refusal of his suit was a keen disappointment to him. A curious sequel to his attachment for her occurred in the fact that her husband's house in Morristown became Washington's headquarters in 1776, both Morris and his wife being fugitive Tories. History in this case might also have been materially changed had Mary Phillips become the wife of George Washington.

In the spring of 1750 Washington met his fate. Ill health had taken him to Williamsburg to consult physicians. On this trip he met Mrs. Martha (Dandridge) Custis, widow of Daniel Parke Custis, one of the wealthiest planters of the colony. At that time she was twenty-six years old, three months younger than Washington, though she had been a widow seven years. In spite of his ill health he pressed his suit with as much ardor as he had done in the case of Mary Phillips, and with better success. Though her first husband had been faithful and affectionate, he had not much appealed to her imagination, but the big, dashing Virginia colonel took her heart by storm. She favored his suit, and they became engaged.

He ordered a ring from Philadelphia at a cost of £2 16s (two pounds and sixteen shillings), big price in those days, but they could not be immediately married, as military duty called him away. After several months in the field, during which time they saw each other only three or four times, Washington came back to Williamsburg, and there in St. Peter's church, on January 6, 1759, they were married. It was a grand wedding, attended by all the aristocracy of Virginia.

Washington was fortunate in his marriage. John Adams, in one of his jealous outbursts, exclaimed: "Would Washington have been commander of the Revolutionary army or president of the United States if he had not married the rich widow of Mr. Custis?" Mrs. Washington's third of the Custis property equalled "fifteen thousand acres of land, a good part of it adjoining the city of Williamsburg, several lots in the said city, between 2,000 and 3,000 negroes, and about £8,000 or £10,000 upon bond," estimated at the time as about £20,000 in all. Besides, this was increased by the death of the daughter, "Patsy" Custis, in 1773, by half her fortune, a sum of £10,000. But it must be remembered that Washington's colonial military fame had been entirely achieved before he had even met Mrs. Custis. "Washington was worth about \$600,000, the richest man in his day."

It has been said that his penchant for lovely women was acutely alive all through his active career. "Washington was human, and there is no question that fair women always had attracted him."

In his sixty-sixth year he wrote, "Love is said to be an involuntary passion, and it is." Therefore he contended that it "cannot be resisted."

Though a lover himself, Washington was not a matchmaker. In a letter to the widow of Jack Custis ("Jack" his wife's son, who had been his ward) he writes: "I never did, nor do I believe ever shall give advice to a woman who is setting out on a matrimonial voyage." And again, "It has ever been a maxim with me through life, neither to promote nor to prevent a matrimonial connection. . . . I have always considered marriage as the most interesting event of one's life, the foundation of happiness or misery."

Yet in a letter to Eliza Custis Bates (the eldest of Jack's four children), dated January 6, 1796, Washington gives some interesting advice: "Neither shun by too much coyness the addresses of a suitable character whom you may esteem; nor encourage them by advances on your part, however predisposed toward them your inclination may be."

"In choosing a partner for life, prefer one of your countrymen (by this I mean an American) of visible property and whose family is known and whose circumstances (not depending on fortuitous matters) may not, like a foreigner's, reduce you to the heartrending alternative of parting with him or bidding adieu to your country, family and friends forever."

"In forming a connection of this durability, let the understanding as well as the passion be consulted; without the approbation of the first the indulgence of the latter may be compared to the rose, which will bloom, glow for a while, then fade and die, leaving nothing but thorns behind it. There are other considerations, though secondary, nevertheless important. Among these congeniality of temper is essential, without which discord will ensue and that walk must be unpleasant and toilsome when two persons linked together cannot move in it without jostling each other."

Alas, Eliza Ann ("Betsy") didn't take Washington's advice. She married Thomas Law, an Englishman, the nephew of Lord Ellensborough, yet it is said she was comparatively happy in her choice.

Though Washington loved, and loved often, there is no doubt that a good deal of romance has been woven around his early career. According to some, Washington had "a rag on every bush," from the vine-clad hills of old Virginia to Boston Commons. But the truth is Washington was not an indiscriminate lover, nor did he trifle with the affections of women. Despite the efforts of forgery and calumny no deed of shame in regard to the sex ever could be laid at his door.

During the time he was president a Mrs. Hartley is mentioned to whom some say he was very devoted. Yeates says: "Mr. Washington once told me on a charge which I once made against the president at his own table, that the admiration he warmly professed for Mrs. Hartley was a proof of his homage to the worthy part of the sex, and highly respectful to his wife."

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