EL PASO HERALD

# Widow Curtis, Rich and Comely, Proved Ideal Mistress For Mount Vernon Mansion

—By—
Rene Bach

Gen. Washington, Already Rich, Sought Women of Wealth for Life Partner—Mount Vernon Hospitality Unlimited.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 20.—Mrs. George Washington's first husband was a very rich man. When he died, he left her a mansion, known as the "six chimney house," and $100,000 in money. But he owned much other property, including the great Arlington estate, across the Potomac from Washington, a portion of which is now occupied by a famous national cemetery.

There is so much confusion in most people's minds about the children of the widow Custis that it really seems worth while to set the matter straight. It is commonly supposed, for instance, that Nellie Custis was her daughter—the fact being, of course, that Nellie was her granddaughter.

Mrs. Custis was 27 years old when she married Washington, being nine months his senior. She had two children, both under seven—John Parke Custis and Martha (nicknamed Patsy) Custis. Patsy died before reaching womanhood; but "Jack" married, had two children of his own, a boy and a girl, and served as Washington's aide-de-camp during the revolution. Camp fever (typhus) killed him, in 1781.

"Jack's" children were George Washington Parke Custis and Eleanor (Nellie) Custis. Mr. Washington adopted them, and they came to live at Mount Vernon, where Nellie was wooed and won by colonel Lewis, Washington's private secretary. Their aunt Patsy had inherited from her father $50,000, which on her death reverted to her mother, Mrs. Washington. The Arlington estate had been left to "Jack," and on his demise became the property of his son, George Washington Parke Custis.

**Family Loses Arlington.**

The latter had one child, a daughter, who married Robert E. Lee, afterwards commander-in-chief of the Confederate armies. She in turn became by inheritance the owner of Arlington, which was the home of herself and husband when the civil war broke out. The United States government, later on, seized the property for unpaid taxes, but eventually acquired full title to it by a payment of $150,000 to the heirs.

**Washington Wanted Money.**

Now, the "Father of his Country" always had a keen appreciation of the usefulness of money. Three young women whom he sought vainly in marriage were all of them the daughters of very wealthy men; and it is not unlikely that, subsequently, in soliciting the hand of the fair and plump young widow Custis, his ardor was augmented by his knowledge of the fact that she would bring what was in those days a large fortune.

Already he was himself quite rich, having been uplifted from poverty to affluence by inheriting, from his half-brother Lawrence, the estate called Mount Vernon and a good deal of other property. But he was a shrewd business man, and the widow's money enabled him to extend the lands of Mount Vernon by the purchase of several farms. She had inherited from her first husband thirty-odd slaves, who were useful as agricultural laborers.

**Enlarges Mount Vernon.**

The mansion of Mount Vernon was built by Lawrence Washington in 1743, when George was only 11 years old, the bulk of the labor being furnished by transported convicts from England. It was originally a "four-room cottage," with four rooms on the first floor, and with chimneys built outside the gable ends. But, after his marriage, Washington added a library at the south end and a "banquet hall" at the north end, the ceilings of both adorned with elaborate decorations by a French artist.

The equipments of the mansion in all respects represented what was in those days the acme of luxury. Mrs. Washington had brought with her, as part of her dowry, a very handsome service of pure silver and cut glass. There were even real silver forks—a rarity at that period, when rich folks were commonly content with three-tined forks of steel. It was then considered entirely well-bred to eat with one's knife; and, however shocking it may seem, there is no question of the fact that the master and mistress of Mount Vernon were accustomed to drink tea out of their saucers.

At meals of ceremony each guest was waited upon by two slaves assigned to his exclusive service. This was the custom of the day, in the mansions of the Virginia aristocracy. In such great houses the slaves performing these duties usually were the ordinary plantation garb, but at Mount Vernon there was a more impressive state, and at dinners they were attired in the gorgeous Washington livery of scarlet, white and gold.

**Many Comforts Lacking.**

Many comforts, such as nowadays are taken for granted even by the moderately well-to-do, were lacking. The mansion knew not the luxury of decent plumbing, or hot water on tap. There was no means of heating it, save by open fires in the rooms, so that in winter the problem of keeping warm must have been difficult. Wall-paper had not yet been invented. Candles furnished in the evenings the only illumination.

It was altogether a patriachal establishment, comprising a large number of persons, all of whom looked to Mrs. Washington and her husband as responsible for their welfare and subsistence. The master of the house called the negroes "my people," and was always most humane and considerate in dealing with them. There were 49 of them in 1756 (before Washington's marriage), 89 in 1770, and 135 in 1784.

**Washington Opposed Slavery.**

Washington never approved of the institution of slavery. He said on a number of occasions that he would give to his own negroes their freedom, were it not that they had become very much mixed in a matrimonial way with the dower negroes—that is to say, with those originally belonging to his wife. Such being the case, suffering would inevitably result from the manumission of wives whose husbands remained slaves, or vice versa, not to mention confusion as regards the children.

**It Kept Up As In Old Days.**

The mansion and its surroundings are kept today as nearly as possible in the state in which they were when Washington was alive. There is still the old-fashioned kitchen garden, and the flower garden, wherein a toolhouse was fitted up as a school for Nellie Custis and her brother. The old kitchen, too, is as it used to be—detached from the house, and with a huge fireplace in which great roasts could be turned on a spit.

Mr. Washington, in a letter he once wrote to his mother, spoke of his house as being "like a tavern," he and his wife kept open house in a very literal sense all the year round. Politicians and even strangers from afar, armed with letters of introduction—not a few of them from foreign parts—would turn up in a casual way and stay for days or weeks. There was no limit to the hospitality offered, and everybody was welcome. Often 20 or even 30 people sat down at dinner.

**Hospitality Unlimited.**

There were only two meals each day, breakfast and dinner. The latter was a huge repast, everything being put on the table at once, including meats, and vegetables, game and fish, pies and puddings. Mrs. Washington would roll up her sleeves, exposing to view a pair of plump white arms, and carve the turkey herself. Wild turkeys were so plentiful in those days that in the market at Alexandria they could be bought for 25 cents apiece.

For desert there were fruit, nuts and wine. It was an epoch when heavy drinking was not only common but customary, after the women had left the table. If a guest took too much, nothing was thought of it, in case he was disabled by over-indulgence, the major domo would see that he was taken care of and put to bed.

Martha was a notable housewife. She always made a point of superintending the preparation of the dinners. During the revolution all of the clothing worn by herself and her dependents was spun and woven on the estate. In fact, this was practically the case at all times, no fewer than 16 negro women being kept constantly employed in the spinning room, on the second floor of a detached brick house that still stands.

**Was "Farmer" Washington.**

As for "farmer Washington," as the immortal George sometimes called himself, he was accustomed, in his superintendence of affairs on the estate, to go about in a bred-brimmed white hat and carrying an umbrella to keep off the sun. His elaborate books of accounts, which are still preserved, show how carefully his agricultural work was systematized. Every penny spent and received was duly entered. His acres probably yielded a better return than those of any other planter in Virginia, and so excellent was his tobacco that it fetched a special price in the Washington market.

**Martha Becomes Stout.**

Martha's plumpness merged into some degrees of stoutness by the time she reached middle age, but she still retained much of her good looks. Her manners were always charming and unaffected. Of books she knew little, reading being unfashionable for women at that period. She adored her husband, and, it is said, grew to be like him in many of her little mannerisms and even in her voice. During the revolution she acquired the habit of knitting, for the soldiers, and this she kept up in later years, having nearly always a ball of worsted and an unfinished stocking in her lap, when not otherwise employed.

She had a chariot and four, in which she was accustomed to drive, with coachman and footman and a black postilion astride a forward horse—all three in the Washington livery. When she was living in New York, as the president's wife, she drove with a coach and six horses. But she cared little for display, being essentially a home body, and late in life she used to refer to the years of her queenship in New York and Philadelphia as "lost years." It was at Mount Vernon that she found happiness.

**Washington's Iron Chest.**

Mr. Washington kept in his own bedroom an iron chest which did duty as savings bank and safe. It contained an ever-increasing hoard of silver and gold coin, and in this receptacle, after his death, was found no less a sum than $29,466—a very satisfactory cash reserve for his widow to fall back upon.

She survived him only about a year. Retiring to a small room on the third floor of the mansion, the single window of which looked out upon her husband's tomb, she practically secluded herself from society, seeing only a few near relatives and intimate friends. A hole which she had made in the bottom of the door served for the entrance and exit of her pet cat.

# Are Spinsters After Eighteen

Egyptian Girls Marry As Early as 12 and Seldom After They Are 18 Years Old.

By Madison C. Peters.

AMONG the modern Egyptians many girls marry as early as 12 or 13 years of age and seldom later than 16 years of age. The mothers or near female relatives of the young man usually arrange matters and direct his choice. Sometimes he employes a kaat'beh—a woman who makes a regular business of helping men to find suitable wives.

Until a girl is about 13 or 14 years old her parents may marry her to whom they please, without her consent, but after that age she may choose her husband and appoint some one to arrange her marriage.

**Selecting a Bride.**

When the young man has decided whom he wishes to marry he goes with two or three friends to her "wekeel," or deputy, and, having gained his consent, he asks what dowry he must give. Among the well-to-do the usual amount is about $125, but the wealthy count the dowry in purses of about $20 each and give ten or more purses.

On the appointed day the bridegroom with a few friends goes to the bride's home, taking with him part of the dowry which he had promised to pay at this time. They are received by the bride's "wekeel" and a few of her friends, as there must be two witnesses, generally Moslems, to the contract. All recite the "Fat'hah"—the opening chapter of the Koran, and the bridegroom pays the money. The contract ceremony is now performed. The bridegroom and the bride's "wekeel" sit face to face, with one knee on the ground, clasping right hands, with thumbs raised and pressed against each other.

**Schoolmaster Is Hired.**

A schoolmaster is generally hired to tell them what to say. After placing a handkerchief over their clasped hands he generally begins with a few remarks on the advantages of marriage and with questions from the Koran. The bride's "wekeel" must then say that he marries the young man, So and So, to—(naming the bride) for a dowry of certain amount to which the bridegroom replies: "I accept from thee her marriage to myself, take her under my care and bind myself to protect her; and ye who are present bear witness of this." This is repeated three times, after which all present again recite the Fat'hah.

The young man generally waits for his bride eight or ten days after the contract ceremony, during which time he sends her presents and she and her family are busy preparing her trousseau and furniture, which is usually bought with the dowry.

**Goes in State to Bath.**

At noon the Wednesday before (or Saturday, if the wedding is to conclude on Monday evening) the bride goes in state to the bath. The procession is headed by musicians.

The next day the bride, with the same procession, goes to the bridegroom's house, where they have a feast, after which her friends depart, leaving only her mother and sister or other near female relative and one or two other women.

**The "Flight."**

The next morning dancers, men and women, perform before the bridegroom's house and the same day, if he is a young man, the one who carried him upstairs takes him and a few friends into the country to spend the day. This is called "the flight." If he belongs to the lower classes he is brought back in a procession headed by musicians, his friends each carrying a bunch of flowers.

# "The Art of Courtship"

By NELL BRINKLEY

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HIS methods change! The wooer of short "pants" and mittens and pockets that were veritable conjuror's nests for the marvels they held went about his courtship in a fashion that nobody but Eros up above could see through! Even he didn't know what ailed him. But the little girl whose fat little coat and snub-rimmed hat and fashion of switching her skirts enchanted the very soul of him—the girl of his heart—he treated as a wild indian would have a fleeing white! He twitched her ribbons off; he made hideous faces into her horrified eyes; he tipped her snubby little hat over her nose and eyes—and laughed like a fiend; he snow-balled her without pity till the tears glittered in the rosy dimples of her cheeks; these were his tactics then! He threw stones at the girl he loved the best—to let her know he loved her. But ah! later—he carries her chiffon wrap as if it were a baby; he tramps through the snow to spend five minutes beside her fire; he fetches and carries and hands her about as if she were a bit of spun moonshine that a finger would dispel; he brings her pretty offerings to suit her taste, her heart and her mind—candy and roses and books—and he wouldn't snowball her now—unless he kissed her afterward. His methods in his art do change!

NELL BRINKLEY.

# New Costumes Show Slavic Peasant Influence

The High Collar Vies With the Comfort of the Dutch Square—Cuffs and Frills Finish Sleeves.

NEW YORK, Feb. 20.—It is during this season that the New York shops put out many novelties for spring and summer to gage the feeling of the American women and see what they want and don't want. Queer little hats appear; for instance, I recently saw one in sailor shape with a large crown not more than an inch in height with a trim about two inches wide. Around the crown was a piece of old fashioned picotedged ribbon, which tied in a long bow and the ends flowed in streamers to the shoulders. No doubt this may inspire some ingenious modiste to make something really worth wearing, but for the hat itself—well, I suppose some woman who is aching for the latest fads in hats may wear it a few times. Another sailor hat had a very small high crown with a wide brim. This also was trimmed with a single length of picot-edged ribbon, which tied with two long loops and ends which fell to the waistline. Of such are fads made!

Last year, as a "feeler," crinoline gowns were shown at the early spring openings, together with the close-fitting Directoire gowns, which really had the greatest influence on the early spring and summer styles. These fluffy gowns showed dainty little pantalets below, and, of course, in its adjustment these were dropped off, and merely the full skirts, daintily ruffled, and bodices sometimes pointed in the front and with round drooped shoulder effects were taken. These are the prominent features of the dresses which are shown for the spring and summer.

This season, the decided Dutch and peasant styles are what the dressmakers are showing to the multitude of women, and it still remains to be seen what will be their decision.

The ample costumes of the Slavic peasant women, who, in some cases, wear twelve or fifteen stiffened petticoats at a time are proving inspiration for many of the up-to-date costumes, also the coats and smocks of the men, which are equally ample. They are worn high boots. Paul Poiret tried very hard to introduce high boots, but failed, now the peasant styles have launched them, and already Parisians are wearing boots with their walking costumes—not as high as the knees, but more than half way to the knee. In the United States this idea will probably be modified to unusually high lace or button shoes.

The full skirts are shown with the greater fulness at the sides, which is much more graceful than the barrel shape, which is given by the hoop. A few dressmakers, however, to the contrary, are showing their dresses over a petticoat which is reeded at the knees.

The uneven hem is often the result of this distribution of fulness, and is endorsed by Dame Fashion. Yoke effects have been introduced this season with the yoke often in a contrasting color. This yoke is an easy evolution from the low waistline.

Another idea borrowed from peasant costumes is the apron effect, with openings at either side showing a fluffy petticoat beneath.

Costumes and suits show the normal and high waistline, but are distinctly different from the old-time Empire lines. The real Empire line is decidedly ugly with the full skirt, but the slightly raised waistline accompanying the full short skirt is much more artistic than the long waisted blouses and these same full skirts.

The length of the suit jacket or coat must also be considered in relation to the length of the skirt. Note my second illustration, and the placing of the belt at a short waistline, beneath which the lower part of the jacket shows moderate fulness. The skirt below is full and slightly flaring.

A decidedly new note in the spring styles is the change in the collars of waists and dresses. The military or high buttoned-up effects will doubtless be the most in evidence. The square or Dutch neck is excellent for summer frocks, and also the newer Callot neck, which is similar. The drooped shoulder lines of ante-bellum days is the latest novelty and for day wear will be filled in with fichus of net and yokes of lace or embroidery.

The square or Dutch neck is shown in my first illustration, which is developed in soft tan crepe. This is an unusually good model for dresses of different fabrics, such as rep, pique, linen, or cotton gabardine.

The long, close fitting sleeve with a small armhole is the favorite at present. The half sleeve of one color and the undersleeve of another is an extremely effective idea adopted from the Slavic peasant costume. In black and white chiffon it is both striking and attractive.

Very short sleeves, directly traceable to the long shoulder line and the 1830 period, are quaint and charming when added to a frock with the drooping shoulder effect.

There are the bell and other shapes for cutting the sleeve and frills of varying widths and design at the wrist, as well as many odd little cuffs, round or pointed.

The trimmings for spring dresses are varied. For black and white there are jet spangles and white beads in patterns often heavy in appearance, but light in weight. Military braids in black, dreadnaught gray and in colors matching the dress goods shades are used. Japanese and Chinese embroideries will lend their enlivening colors to the neutral colorings which are so smart.

Buttons—in brass, silver, gun-metal and steel are in large demand for military costumes, and the vegetable ivory buttons are made in the average colors of dress goods.

**Tan Crepe Makes a Dress for Approaching Spring.**

**A Suit on New Empire Lines.**

*A Narrative of Everyday Life*

# Their Married Life

## Warren and Helen See Mrs. Dalton Sail for Europe.

"I DON'T think I'd want any one to come to see me off if I were going away," remarked Helen, as Warren guided her over the wharf toward the big boat. They were seeing some friends off for the south of Europe and Helen was eagerly taking in everything that passed by. Big motor trucks piled high with trunks of all kinds thundered by, people going out on the liner saying goodby to friends blocked up the entrance to the pier and Helen, with a little grasp of Warren's arm, whispered excitedly:

"Doesn't it make you feel as though you had to go along, dear? I never in my life wanted to go anywhere so badly."

"What made you change your mind about having people see you off?" remarked Warren. "I remember the time when you were only too glad to have us one around."

"I know I used to be, but some how the sadness in a goodbye like this is quite awful. Look at that woman over there; she doesn't look as though she were going for pleasure."

"It's very possible she isn't, you know," said Warren. "Every one doesn't."

**Helen Would Like to Go.**

"Don't you wish you were going, dear?"

"I don't know. Yes, I guess I do."

"Well, I certainly do. I was never so envious in my life."

"You mean you think you weren't. Don't forget that hat you saw the other day, and several other things."

Helen smiled as she recollected the hat she had longed to own. It was such a little thing compared with a trip abroad. And this time of the year would be perfect for a southern trip.

People were going up the gangplank already, and Warren looked at his watch and grinned.

"I wonder what some people find in this early business?" he remarked. "Always looks like the first time over to me."

"I don't blame them much, though; there is a lot in it."

"Not so much; there's Mrs. Dalton, shall we go over?"

"Yes; I want to see her as long as possible. Mrs. Dalton, we have just been saying how we envy you."

"Helen has. I'm glad you are going to have the trip; you see, I'm not so selfish."

"But, dear, I'd envy any one their first trip over." Helen felt very grand as she said this. It seemed fine to have a trip to Europe with its first novelty over, so as to speak nonchalantly about it to another woman. And yet she thought, as she weighed pros and cons in her mind, it would be wonderful to have it all to look forward to. It meant a great deal to any one.

**Mrs. Dalton's Stateroom.**

"Come on down to my stateroom," said Mrs. Dalton. "I feel so fortunate in having procured one. Mr. Dalton had to pay just twice the usual amount, so as to get one on this steamer. I feel so important."

"Want to come down, Warren?" said Mr. Dalton, "or would you rather stay up and smoke?"

"I want to see everything that's going," said Warren; "we can come up afterward."

Mrs. Dalton led the way into the long corridor and unlocking the door of one of the rooms stepped in and looked for the rest to follw her.

"Isn't it dear?" said Helen, enthusiastically. "And a little bath—you were fortunate, and I do hope you won't be sick."

Mrs. Dalton looked up in dismay.

"So many people have told us that you make me afraid I will be. Were you?" turning to Helen.

"No, I wasn't," said Helen, smiling as she looked at Warren. "But Warren was horribly sick for the first three days."

"Was it as bad as they paint it, Warren?" said Mr. Dalton, curiously.

"Pretty rotten," said Warren, laconically.

"You make me feel shivery already," said Mrs. Dalton, with a little grimace.

"Never mind," said Helen, consolingly. "Perhaps you won't be sick at all, and your husband may be frightfully ill. You never can tell."

"Have you had any packages?" said Warren.

"Not that I know of—where would we find them?"

"In the dining room; they always leave them there."

"Well, come on, we'll raid the place." All four hurried down to the dining room and Mrs. Dalton began to look over the packages hurriedly.

"Dalton, Dalton," she said, picking up two packages. "Here's another and another."

"I guess that's all," said Warren, looking over the remainder. "Shall we go down to the stateroom and explore the contents?"

They hurried down and Mrs. Dalton tore off the wrappings of the first.

"A steamer basket," she announced excitedly. "I've always wanted one of the things. Isn't it a beauty?"

It was, all agreed, and then with a little shriek Mrs. Dalton pounced on a card.

"Well, you sweet thing; so you sent it, did you." It's stunning, really; we'll enjoy every minute of it."

"If you don't get sick," reminded Warren.

"Of course, remind us of that, but anyway I do thank you." The other packages proved to be candy and flowers, the usual thing, and after a cursory examination the four went back upstairs.

**Farewells Are Said.**

"We don't want to wait until the boat sails," said Helen, so I guess we'll say goodbye to you now. Here come some of your friends, anyway."

"Helen can't put herself anywhere but in your place today," said Warren, "and I don't blame her. I hope you have just the kind of weather everybody predicts."

"I hope so," said Mrs. Dalton, happily. "Write to me, Helen."

"Indeed I will," promised Helen. "And don't stay over too long; we shall miss you terribly."

The other friends who had come up claimed the Dalton's attention at that moment, and as Helen and Warren left the boat they looked back almost simultaneously.

"I bet you wish you were going," said Helen, her eyes wet for the moment.

"Suppose I do," said Warren, quickly. "That isn't going to help matters, is it?"—Copyright, 1915, International News Service.

# *Wounded 189 Times, French Reservist Has War Record for Injury*

Paris, France, Feb. 20.—The record of 75 wounds received by an army surgeon has been broken by Rene Vidal, reservist of Bulney.

While in the trenches a shell exploded immediately behind him and the lower part of his body and limbs were riddled with shrapnel.

From 8 in the morning until evening he lay in the trench without even first aid. When he arrived at the auxiliary hospital a thorough examination showed traces of 152 separate and distinct wounds.

His case was considered desperate, as he had lost an extraordinary quantity of blood, but he is now able to get about on crutches.

# *The Daily Novelette*

PLUCKED FROM THE DEEP.

(Synopsis of preceding chapters: At various times during the voyage they had been observed by the rest of the passengers, their steamer chairs drawn close, by the jaffrail, and once or twice his arm had strayed until it rested on the back of her chair. Then—came the most violent storm that ever churned the turbulent China sea. Amid waves, house high, that pounded the poor brave vessel mercilessly, the Sarah Skittles had gone down. She was in the water, reaching desperately for a floating loaf of rye bread, when he managed to swim to her and fling a strong arm about her. For nine hours and twenty minutes (his Twickledorf watch never stopped or lost a second through it all—sir.) he battled the elements to save her life. At length, all but exhausted and soaking wet, he felt land under foot in the darkness, and, with a prayer of thanks, laid her unconscious form on the sands of a desert island, latitude 4 by 8, longitude perfect. For three more hours he tried to revive her (he had been a boy scout and knew how to go about things like that). Finally she opened her glorious blue eyes.)

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HE was the first to speak.

"If I get pneumonia from this," he said bitterly, "I'll retire from the moving picture business and learn brick laying. The fools on the film ship didn't even bring along a dry suit of clothes for me!"

(The End.)