

# WASHINGTON AS A PRACTICAL JOKER

**P**OSTERITY sees a stiff, formal picture of Washington standing in the bow of a boat crossing the Delaware amid floating blocks of ice on that memorable Christmas night, to fight the battle which turned the tide of the revolution in the right direction. But no painter could delineate the heroism of the actual scene. His men were ragged—half naked. Besides the running ice in the river, there was a blinding blizzard, and it was so bitter cold that the chief loss on the American side was of the men who, though injured to pioneer hardships, froze to death that awful night.

Did General Washington stand in his boat in that dangerous current during a driving storm and stare pompously at the opposite shore? Not he. Instead of that he "sat tight" and enjoined the men, using every device that might make them forget their terrible situation; even telling them a facetious story, which, coming from him, started them, set their blood tingling and made them oblivious to the cold and dangers around them. That was the grand deed in the military strategem which made Frederick the Great of Prussia, and, indeed, the whole world, wonder at the genius of Washington.

Nearly every one knows the outside of the story of the siege of Boston by the new commander-in-chief, who had come to the continental congress as a wealthy Virginia colonel, and his nondescript crowd of raw recruits, wholly unused not only to military discipline, but even to military forms. But few know of the transcendent bluff General Washington had to put up when he discovered that there were but a few rounds of gunpowder in the possession of the whole American army, while the British were amply supplied with ammunition and might sally forth any hour against the American "irregulars."

"Some one had blundered." Many a commander would have shown up the improvident officers who had that matter in charge and peevishly thrown up the command as ridiculously impossible. But General Washington did not tell his most trusted officers of the excruciating dilemma he found himself in. He knew the awful secret would spread if known to a few, and the great cause of justice might be lost. He began quietly to scour the country for gunpowder. He soon found that the nearest place at which any quantity could be had was in a magazine on the island of Bermuda. To get that required a secret expedition, much hazard and many weeks; but Washington's nerve was equal to the fearful strain.

During that long, tense interval the American troops were working away upon the fortifications, preparing for a grand attack. Meanwhile the young commander-in-chief was entertaining hospitably at his headquarters, the Craige mansion, now best known as "Longfellow's Home," in Cambridge. As a pleasant diversion, "Lady" Washington, then one of the wealthiest women in America, came to visit the general, and all the countryside was agog over her coach-and-four with six black postillions in white and scarlet livery. Even the British, cooped up in Boston, were impressed by the resources and apparent confidence of the American generalissimo.

While one expedition was gone to Bermuda for powder, General Knox, with a small force, succeeded in bringing a number of cannon several hundred miles on ox sleds in midwinter from Fort Mifflin. In those "times that tried men's souls" it was Washington's iron nerve, supported by his broad sense of humor, sometimes scintillating with a radiance worthy of a Franklin or a Lincoln, which saved the day. This was only one of many occasions on which Washington had to fight out the revolution alone.

A friend of Lincoln's once said of him, "The president's laugh is his life-preserver." This was truer of Washington than any one seems to have realized in a day when strict gravity without levity, was expected of public characters. To laugh or to see the humorous side of an incident was considered the sign of a frivolous disposition.

Washington's early biographers were solemn men. To have told in their books how much their hero laughed would have been, in their opinion, wantonly exposing his weakness to public gaze. Men like "Parson" Weems, renegade preacher and tramp fiddler though he was, had been brought up to think that laughing was "worse than wicked—it was vulgar!" In straining to make their hero appear to have been a demigod, those pedantic biographers related not what George Washington really did, but what they imagined such a boy or man ought to have done under given conditions.

Washington would have laughed heartily at Weems' hatchet-and-cherry-tree story if he had ever heard it—which he never did, for it was not invented till a later edition of the erring rector's juvenile history, six years after Washington's death. Yet the real hero of the cherry-tree fiction would have found it the occasion of gravity as well as mirth. In the stilted story of "Little George and His Pa," Weems was only carrying out the idea of his time; to tell not what the small boy actually did, but what the consummate little prig he conceived little George Washington to have been would have done if he had cut down his father's favorite cherry tree.

If little George Washington had been the insufferable little prig described by Mr. Weems, his half-brothers would not have loved him better than their own brothers, or their own children, for that matter. His early life was fuller of exciting experiences than any fiction. Yet the life of young Washington is yet to be told as an adventure story. Even in his quaint little diaries he early discloses a lively sense of humor—savage humor sometimes, but broad and boyish. He showed this by telling only the jokes against himself. When he was a lad of sixteen he led a surveying party to lay out the lands of his old friend, Lord Fairfax, in the wilderness of the Shenandoah. Here is one of his own experiences as a "tenderfoot," recorded on Tuesday, March 15, 1747-8:

"We got our Suppers & was lighted into a Room, and I, not being so good a Woodsman as ye rest of my company, stripped myself very orderly, & went into ye Bed, as they called it, when to my surprise I found it to be nothing but a little straw—matted together without sheets or anything else but one threadbare blanket, with double its weight of Vermin, such as Lice, Fleas, &c.

"I was glad to get up (as soon as ye light was carried from us) I put on my Clothes and lay as

my Companions. Had we not been very tired, I am sure we should not have slept much that night."

The next night he related that they "had a good dinner & a good Feather Bed, which was a very agreeable regale."

In describing an Indian war dance, he went on, "Some liquor elevating their Spirits put them in ye Humor of Dauncing. Ye best Dauncer jumped about ye ring in a most comical Manner!"

Others of that wilderness gang told a story of the boy surveyor which he was too modest to relate about himself—how young George turned the tables on Big Bear, the wily chief, who was in the habit of holding out his sinewy hand with seeming friendly intent and saying, "Indian fashion, 'How?' Woe to the unsuspecting white man whose hand Big Bear seized in his terrible grasp, while he laughed in savage glee at the paleface's anguished contortions.

Young Washington had been warned in time. He had a huge, strong hand of his own and knew a trick or two that he thought he would like to try on that Indian's wily claw if he could just get the right hold. His chance came soon enough for Big Bear, who presented a seemingly amicable paw with an innocent "How?"

The young surveyor seized the Indian's hand with such friendly enthusiasm that Big Bear did an agonizing little dance "in a very comical manner," while the spectators, both white and red, stood by and shouted with glee to see the cruel savage caught in his own trap. Never again did Big Bear show such solicitude for the health of George Washington.

At the age of twenty George was the chosen envoy to carry a "notice to quit" from the governor of Virginia to the French commander encamped in the Ohio region. He wrote in his journal of that expedition concerning the supper given him by the French and Indians at the fort at Venango:

"The wine, as they dosed themselves pretty plentifully with it, soon banished the restraint which at first appeared in the conversation, and gave a license to their tongues to reveal their sentiments more freely. They told me that it was their absolute design to take possession of the Ohio—and by G— they would do it!"

At the French fort, while awaiting the commandant's reply, the young envoy from Virginia played a diplomatic game for the friendship of the Indians. When the French plied the Indians with liquor, young Washington promised them guns; and the game of diplomacy, seasoned with savage sauce, went on between the grizzled cavalier, old in the arts of war and duplicity, and the young Virginia major, who possessed common sense and humor without.

After the awful slaughter of Fort Duquesne, into which he had rushed from a bed of fever, in a vain attempt to save Braddock and his army, Major Washington was left in command of the scattered forces. At this time he wrote to his brother "Jack" a letter, which at least suggests Mark Twain's attitude toward the "grossly exaggerated" story of his own death:

"Dear Brother: As I have heard, since my arrival at this place, a circumstantial account of my death and dying speech, I take this early opportunity of contradicting the first, and of assuring you that I have not as yet composed the latter.

But by the all-powerful dispensations of Providence I have been protected beyond all human probability and expectation, for I had four bullets through my coat and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unharmed, altho' death was leveling my companions on every side of me!

"We have been most scandalously beaten by a trifling body of men, but fatigue and want of time will prevent me from giving you the details, until I have the happiness of seeing you at Mount Vernon.

GEORGE.

War is not supposed to develop the latent sense of humor in a commanding general, but Washington's wit never forsook him. His successful stratagems were little more than practical jokes raised to the highest power. They always "worked," and then he waited, laughing in his military sleeve, while his fat-witted enemies tried to play his own tricks back on him. Even in his retreats and escapes from the British—as at Long Island and before Princeton—he laughed and kicked up nimble heels in the face of the pursuing enemy.

It was while his headquarters were in Jersey that Washington perpetrated the great Jersey joke still perpetuated by so many millions. He told an English traveler named Weld that he "was never so much annoyed by mosquitoes, for they used to bite through the thickest boot."

When the war was over the victorious commander entertained the vanquished general, Lord Cornwallis, at dinner, with some of the leaders among the French allies. Washington presided. In calling for toasts, Cornwallis, with an obliviousness of the changed conditions that was truly English, proposed "The King of England" as a subject for high praise.

The other guests were in consternation. Would the presiding genius, on whose very head King George had set a price, resent this as an insult? "The King of England," announced the toastmaster general, raising his glass. The guests gazed at him, transfixed with astonishment.

"Long may he," continued Washington. "—Long may he stay there!"

He pronounced the last two words in a stage whisper, with a shrug and a rueful grimace which made all the company, including Lord Cornwallis, who now saw his mistake, applaud with hearty laughter; and Washington's ready humor had prevented a disagreeable complication.

After the Revolution, Washington was permitted the long-coveted happiness of living peacefully under his "own vine and figtree," as he called it hundreds of times in as many letters. It is a great mistake to think that his life at Mount Vernon was either stale or stilted. Nelly Custis, his adopted daughter, is authority for the statement that retired general was always full of gaiety and good spirits, surrounding himself with young people's company, enjoying their lively conversation, "particularly the jokes," as he once said. Nelly went so far as to claim that she found no one quite so willing to keep pace with her own extravagant spirits as her dear, delightful old foster father.

How Washington did enjoy his home when he was finally permitted to stay there! Mount Vernon was a Mecca for pilgrims from all over the world. He once wrote to Tobias Lear, "Unless some one pops in unexpectedly Mrs. Washington and myself will do what I believe has not within the last 20 years been done by us—that is, to sit down to dinner by ourselves!"



## HAIR ORNAMENTS OF RICH DESIGN IN FAVOR TODAY

**T**HERE is no abatement in the liking for ornaments for the hair. There is a good deal of talk about the return of the high coiffure, but the last few years have shown women the beauty of well-chosen, and well-designed hair ornaments, and no coiffure can put them in the background without a good deal of a struggle.

The famous French dressmakers, realizing the scope their genius might have in hair ornaments, have turned their attention to designing some of much beauty.

One ornament that makes use of the butterfly is made of tiny black jet disks mounted on black wire. The butterfly measures about four inches from tip to tip of his half-opened wings. He is perched on a bandeau made of the little jet disks strung together solidly—a bandeau about two inches wide. The butterfly is perched at the base of a full back aigrette made up of half a dozen tall, slender spikes.

Another butterfly is made of iridescent pink sequins. This butterfly is bigger than the black one described. Each wing measures a couple of inches. But it is so graceful in color and form that it is in no way too heavy for the hair it adorns. It is fastened to a twisted ribbon bandeau studded with the pink sequins.

Above the butterfly rise three tiny pink plumes, deeper at the tips than at the base—shading from pale bluish pink to deep rose. Whether plumes as hat trimming gain great favor or not this season—and Paris has been trying to reintroduce their use on hats—they doubtless will be much used for hair ornaments.

The American shops show their hair ornaments of good design and little cost their appeal to the average woman's sense of economy, as well as to her sense of beauty. The most effective of these ornaments are doubtless either black, white or black and white combined—rhinestones for the ornaments. Nowhere in women's dress does it look so graceful and suitable as on her hair. Its lightness and delicacy make it a fitting crown to a dainty coiffure.

Jet and rhinestones combined are brilliant in effect. One especially good ornament shows good-sized rhinestones arranged alternately with cut jet beads of the same size. They are set in a platinum band, in three tiers, and the band is made to extend all around the head. Where it fastens on the left side there is a soft, fluffy group of white feathers of almost downy appearance and texture.

A dainty ornament for a young girl is made of silk apple blossoms and pink aigrettes. The ornament is thrust into the hair at a smart angle

by means of a tortoise shell hairpin. The apple blossoms, in natural colors—some dozen of them—are grouped about the base of some soft pink, waving feathers. The contrast between the somewhat stiff blossoms and the soft, waving feathers is good.

## TAKE CARE OF THE GLOVES

Length of Service and General Prudence Depend on Way They Are Handled.

Too much cannot be said about the necessity for proper care in removing gloves from the hands, for upon this more than anything else depends the length of time a pair of gloves will wear. After unfastening the glove it should be turned back over the hand as far as the fingers, and then should be pushed off without pulling on the fingers of the glove at all, as when this is done the threads of the sewing are broken, and in a short time begin to rip.

After the glove is off the hands the fingers should be gently straightened out, the gloves smoothed into shape, and put into a box to keep them from the air as much as possible, as it is the air and the moisture in it that rot the fine thread with which a glove is sewn.

### Elaborate Fichus.

Fichus are worn either inside or outside the dress. They are made of shadow lace or plain white net. One, in black net, is trimmed with a black satin bow run through a pearl buckle at the bottom. Another has a plain white Medici collar and jabot trimmed with white ball buttons. A more elaborate fichu is made of silk shadow lace with standing collar.

The newest ruff is worn either standing or flat. There are three rows of plaited net on a ribbon band, the ends of which are tied in four-in-hand.

A chic looking ruff is made of black net and white maline; the black is edged with picot and the ribbon ends are plain. The more extreme styles are very full and stand high. One is of white maline with black picot edge, a moire bow in black and long moire ends in front.

### Fur Chin Straps.

The mode for wearing chin straps of silk or velvet with the small hats of the present day has been in vogue for some time, but among the latest arrivals in the millinery world are wide brimmed velvet hats trimmed with bands of fur, other narrow bands of fur being brought down from the sides to fasten beneath the chin. One model, for instance, was of brick red velvet trimmed with skunk, with a skunk chin strap attached to the brim beneath a knot of brick red velvet ribbon. Ermine is also being used for the purpose, but its peculiar yellow white color is not particularly becoming to even the most perfect of complexions.

## Modes for Demi-Season Wear



**I**f ever there was a season in which millinery modes were more becoming than those recently designed (for present wear), the memory of it lingers not in the mind of the oldest inhabitant. These lovely "between seasons" hats promise well for the later designs and are so captivating and so inexpensive that almost anyone may indulge in them for the sake of variety in headwear if for nothing else.

"Variety is the spice of life" more truly in the matter of headwear than in any other apparel. The hat is the keynote of the toilette. It is the most important finishing touch, and finishing touches are to be relied upon to give character and distinction in the matters of dress. The between-seasons hat lends an inspiration to its wearer, who has grown tired of her winter millinery and finds it too early to buy a strictly spring hat.

The demi-season hats (as milliners call them) are made of silk, satin, moire, maline and fancy braids mostly. There is never any telling what will be evolved next by the clever people who think out our headwear. Just now they are exploiting the fabrics just mentioned, with jet and small flowers and smart feathers for trimming. Beads and the metal laces, little bunches of small fruits, and many jet ornaments, such as are to

the shops in profusion, come in for much consideration also.

The three hats shown here are fine examples of the newest modes. They are rather small, but are not worn as low on the head as our winter hats. They fit snugly and may be kept in place without a pin.

Among the new models are shapes that are worn at quite a tilt to the right. Others set almost squarely on the head, but drooping, close-fitting brims at the right, which curve upward at the left, give them the appearance of being posed at a rakish angle. This pose carried to the extreme, almost covers the right eye. Those who are inclined to be facetious declare that the right eye is not being worn at present. The pose of the hat is a thing to be decided by individuals for themselves. There are hats for those who like the straight, pose and hats for those who like the tilted pose. In selecting one the idea of its designer should be considered. If it was made to be worn tilted it will not look well placed in any other way.

In choosing a hat for wear now—and during the early spring (that is during that period when we are waiting for spring)—one cannot go wrong if hats of the same materials as those shown here are selected.

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