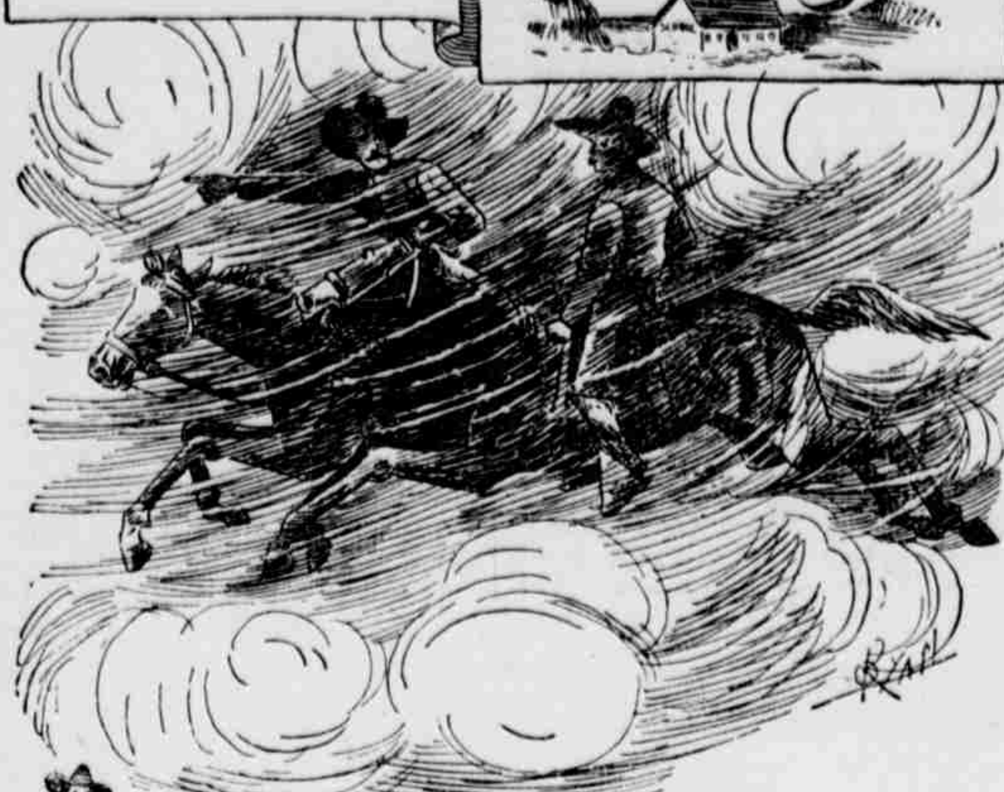
A Frontier Washington.



FOR ONCE the Father of His Country was to be properly honored in Wathena. The settlers had decided that it ought to be done, and the method of its carrying out was left to a committee consisting of the storekeeper, the teacher, and one of the leading cattlemen who, rumor said, had once owned a library.

"Of course it ain't proving nothing about our honesty that we do this sort of thing," remarked Borden, the ranche foreman, "but it's the right thing to do."

"Yes, Washington was a fine old gentleman," added the storekeeper, "an' we Virginians always will stand by him."

"Mighty nice thing to be honoring the leader of a revolution," broke in a gruff voice from the rear of the store. It was the Englishman who was overseeing the fencing of the Olympic Cattle company's new lands. He had been a farmer over in the Cimmarron country, and was always objecting to whatever was on foot.

"Hush up, you got too badly licked to talk," was the rejoinder from Borden; and Glade, the foreigner, subsided.

The celebration was to take place in the schoolhouse out on the edge of the tiny settlement. From its door could be seen the haze that covered the tops of the Spanish peaks off to the west and also the sunken lines of the Cimmarron. It was all the conception of the pretty school mistress, who thought to thus raise enough money to buy a flag for the building's roof. There were other inducements for the two men who helped in the preparations—Borden and Grade. The cattleman thought there was no one like Lizzie Dean—and the Englishman thought the same.

"You are to be Washington," said the director to Borden, and the part fitted him well.

"All right, I'll lick the Britishers out of their boots," he declared as he pranced around with a stick for a sword, and cast ugly looks at Glade.

"And you shall be Cornwallis," turning to Glade. This, too, seemed satisfactory.

Night after night they met at the schoolhouse preparing the rendition of the play. The half-dozen actors were determined that there should be no ground for criticism. Spring was early on the prairie, and the gray and brown grasses were dry as tinder. The close curling buffalo grass was, like that of the blue stem, crinkling in the breeze, and the cattle were nibbling it away to get at the tiny spears of green beneath.

One night the play was nearly over when Borden remarked, in tones that came to the ears of the entire company: "If I had my way, I'd order every one of these red coats off the soil of America."

"Maybe you can't do any better than did your first president at that," was the sneer that came from back in the flies (curtains strung on pieces of twine) somewhere.

Borden grew angry. "Well, I can try, the same as he did. He won in the end, I believe."

The Englishman came out in the middle of the room. "I would not advise thee to try it," he drawled. The words were not more than out of his mouth when there came a crash of scenery, and along with the flies and nearly everything portable came Borden from the stage which he left with a leap. He made straight for the throat of his adversary, but what met his grasp when he reached out was—Miss Dean's hand.

"There, there, let this stop right here. The man you represent would never have fought in the presence of a woman."

Borden, abashed, stood back, and then went to the stage. But it did not mean the end of the trouble—everybody knew that. The men had a fight after the evening's practice was over, but it settled nothing, except that they were both very much in love with Lizzie.

The school did not amount to much those days, for all the scholars were practicing for their parts in the coming drama. The work on the ranches suffered likewise, for there was the same interest among the older people. On the night before the festal day there was a final practicing at the schoolhouse, and again the two representatives of the opposing sides in the revolution had their warfare of words.

In his speech the American took pains to insert a few words reflecting on the Englishmen who came out to the west to run cattle ranches, and the Englishman said some cutting things that pointed at frontier manners.

"See here, gentlemen," said Lizzie, "this has gone far enough. I cannot have you quarreling all the time. You must settle your troubles somewhere else."

"All I want is to win you," whispered the Englishman behind the scenes a few minutes later. "Will you give me the answer?"

"No, this is a warfare that you must settle with Mr. Borden. I would like to see how this contest of the rival powers comes out."

"Well, it will be different to that of the days of 1776," was the sententious answer. But would it?

"I don't like to see that Englishman around you so much," whispered Borden a few minutes later.

"Why, he behaves himself," replied Miss Dean, with well-feigned astonishment.

"But it ain't patriotic, don't you see," was the retort. "You ought to stand up for your country, and — Washington!" This last proudly, for Borden was really elated at the character he was taking in the play.

"So I must make this a national affair?"

"No, just a personal affair, but be patriotic in it."

Thus the matter stood when Washington's birthday dawned—an armed truce between the opposing forces, each of which was intent on winning the prize and confident that it could be done.

Soft blew the southern breeze and the night was dark. From miles of plain came the breath of spring that was giving the first earnest of its glory. The settlers rode in from their claims in wagons; the ranchmen came on horseback, and the line of ponies that fringed the schoolhouse yard was formidable. The Englishman came in all the glory of his best clothes, while Borden made his appearance in the frontier dress that so well became him.

"No reserved seats; come right in," welcomed the storekeeper as he took the tickets at the door. The crowd obeyed and filled the front seats, the back seats, and overflowed the aisles.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," announced the storekeeper, when all was ready, "we will present the great drama of the time of Washington, as is most appropriate on this occasion."

The curtain rolled up (again a sheet on a pole), and the simple incidents that had been chosen to give a representation of the life of the first president were one after another called forth. There was nothing but peace until the act where the meeting of the hero and Cornwallis occurred. Then as the two rivals came on the little stage there was a howl of delight from the men present, for each knew how matters stood.

Borden looked daggers at Glade, and as his turn came to speak all realized that he was putting strange sentiments into the mouth of Washington when he said: "You may be as good a man as the rest of us, but you are not so brave."

Cornwallis colored, and the storekeeper remarked to his wife: "Blest if I don't think Borden struck home that time."

But Glade responded, with due courtesy: "It remains to be proved as to that—" and then went on with his set speech.

The play was long and the audience was evidently weary when the final act came. The rivals were on the stage and there was a chance for some more repartee, which was likely to be given, when suddenly there was a sound from the outside of the house that caused the heart of every auditor to sink with an ill-defined fear. It was a whinny of terror from a score of horses' throats.

Quickly the people rushed from their seats and to the windows and doors. What they saw was something that is never without its message of alarm for the ranchman and the settler—the prairie was on fire.

In an instant almost the house was emptied. The women were crying and the men were trying to calm the frightened horses. One by one the wagons were hurrying off, the owners anxious to get home or at least out of the reach of the danger.

It was high time!

Like a sea of flame the onrushing blaze was sweeping across the dry sod, licking up the long grass of the ravines and making quick work of the crisp covering of the higher lands. The wind had risen and was bringing the attacking army onward with rapid pace. There was no chance for the schoolhouse to escape. In a scrambling, pushing mass the people left the place and their wagons and horses were dotting the flame-lighted plain. Two men found themselves side by side a quarter of a mile from the building, each on his broncho and each galloping toward the north.

As they mounted a little swell in the prairie the blaze lighted their faces. From each came an exclamation: "Borden!" "Glade!"

"I thought you were with her," demanded the former, angrily.

"I thought you were the one."

For an instant the two men glared at each other and then the test came. Borden looked straight in the face of the Englishman and then at the sea of flame sweeping up from the south and whose breath was hot in their faces.

"Well," he demanded, "which shall it be? This is the time to prove which is the true representative of bravery."

"Oh, it's not that sort of a question," pleaded the other.

"It is just that sort of a question. There is a chance for the one who rides into that blaze to come out alive—and only a chance. It will be at the schoolhouse in a moment, and the race there is no small thing in itself, even if the horses will take it."

"We'll go together," after a little thought.

"Very well." The horses' heads were turned and the rivals went toward the long line of leaping flames, each determined to make the other weary of his undertaking. On and on they rode, the horses becoming wilder as each whiff of the wind brought them a stronger smell of smoke.

Finally the Englishman began to fall behind. His horse was not so unruly as Borden's, and there seemed no reason for his retrogression.

"Come on, Cornwallis," called the ranchman, and the cut was felt by the laggard.

Faster and faster rode the frontiersman into the thick of the smoke and was lost to the sight of his comrade.

With head bent low and notrils shielded in the folds of his cloak, he steered toward the schoolhouse whose black form rose out of the flames.

Finally the door was reached and with a shout he called to the teacher. Was she there? He remembered that she had gone to the rear of the building when the alarm was given. She might have thought there was no danger in staying in the schoolhouse.

He leaped from the horse. Into the building he ran and to the rear. What was that—a sobbing? Leaning over a pile of curtains in the corner he took from them a bundle of humanity that was very frightened and very thankful to see him.

"Is it you, Lizzie?" he questioned.

"Yes—and Jimmie."

"Who is that?"

"The widow's little lame boy. I thought he would like the show and brought him. He is too heavy to carry and we had to stay here. What can we do?"

For an answer the strong man lifted the woman in one arm and the boy in the other and rushed to the door. Throwing them to his saddle he bade them cling for their lives. The fire was already around the yard and was eating its way to the building. The intense heat had made the shingles smoke and in a few minutes the whole structure would be a pyramid of blaze.

It was no easy task to control a wild and excited horse in the midst of a fire and also see that two helpless charges did not fall from the back of the animal. But Borden with his superb mastery of horseflesh did it, and the gait that they took through the wall of flame was something marvelous. Had the riders been living a little nearer to civilization they would have called it "record breaker."

"Well, that was a scorcher," remarked Borden, when they had come to a safe place. "Hello, who is that?" as a solitary rider came out of the smoke and approached them.

"Bless me, if it ain't Cornwallis!"

"Woo!" exclaimed the Englishman, wiping his eyes. "I couldn't find the schoolhouse or I would have saved the little school ma'am."

"Was it hot?"

"Awfully so. I suppose it is too late now to do her any good."

"Oh, I don't know, Cornwallis. She is here all right," and the form of Lizzie came to the astonished eyes of the late arrival.

The Englishman looked sheepish for a minute and then hit his horse with his hand and started off.

"Say," called Borden, "that little rivalry is settled now." And then to Lizzie: "I knew that he was not hunting that schoolhouse very hard. You gave him the right character—that is, the side that got licked!"

And Lizzie Dean agreed with him. So thoroughly was the defeat felt that the vanquished suitor did not even deign to come to the wedding—the dedication event of the new schoolhouse that replaced the one destroyed by the fire. Lizzie wanted it that way and Borden was willing to have it so.

"I don't know much about it," he said, "but I take it for granted that Washington always pleased the ladies when he could."

CHARLES MOREAU HARGER.

HIS EARLY BOYHOOD.

A Brief Account of the Family of Washington.

George Washington was cast for his career by a very scant and homely training. Augustine Washington, his father, lacked neither the will nor the means to set him handsomely afoot, with as good a schooling, both in books and in affairs, as was to be had; he would have done all that a liberal and provident man should do to advance his boy in the world had he lived to go with him through his youth. He owned land in four counties, more than 5,000 acres all told, and lying upon both the rivers that refresh the fruitful northern neck, besides several plots of ground in the promising village of Fredericksburg, which lay opposite his lands upon the Rappahannock; and one-twelfth part of the stock of the Principio Iron company, whose mines and furnaces in Maryland and Virginia yielded a better profit than any others in the two colonies. He had commanded a ship in his time, as so many of his neighbors had in the maritime province, carrying iron from the mines to England, and no doubt bringing convict laborers back upon his voyage home again. He himself raised the ore from the mines that lay upon his own land, close to the Potomac, and had it carted the easy six miles to the river. Matters were very well managed there, Col. Byrd said, and no pains were spared to make the business profitable. Capt. Washington had represented his home parish of Truro, too, in the house of burgesses, where his athletic figure, his ruddy skin and frank gray eyes must have made him as conspicuous as his constituents could have wished. He was a man of the world, every inch, generous, hardy, independent. He lived long enough, too, to see how stalwart and capable and of how noble a spirit his young son was to be, with how manly a bearing he was to carry himself in the world; and had loved him and made him his companion accordingly. But the end came for him before he could see the lad out of boyhood. He died April 12, 1743, when he was but 49 years of age, and before George was 12; and in his will there was, of course, for George only a younger son's portion. The active gentleman had been twice married, and there were seven children to be provided for. Two sons of the first marriage survived. The bulk of the estate went, as Virginian custom dictated, to Lawrence, the eldest son. To Augustine, the second, fell most of the rich lands in Westmoreland. George, the eldest born of the second marriage, left to the guardianship of his young mother, shared with the four younger children the residue of the estate. He was to inherit his father's farm upon the Rappahannock, to possess, and to cultivate if he would, when he should come of age; but for the rest his fortunes were to make. He must get such serviceable training as he could for a life of independent endeavor. The two older brothers had been sent to England to get their schooling and preparation for life, as their father before them had been to get his—Lawrence to make ready to take his father's place when the time should come; Augustine, it was at first planned, to fit himself for the law. George could now look for nothing of the kind. He must continue as he had begun, to get such elementary and practical instruction as was to be had of schoolmasters in Virginia, and the young mother's care must stand him in the stead of a father's pilotage and oversight.

Fortunately Mary Washington was a wise and provident mother, a woman of too firm a character and too steadfast a courage to be dismayed by responsibility. She had seemed only a fair and beautiful girl when Augustine Washington married her, and there was a romantic story told of how that gallant Virginian sailor and gentleman had been literally thrown at her feet out of a carriage in the London streets by way of introduction, where she, too, was a visiting stranger out of Virginia. But she had shown a singular capacity for business when the romantic days of courtship were over.—Woodrow Wilson, in Harper's Magazine.

Heaviest Baby Ever Born.

The heaviest baby known is reported from a village near Brussels, where a farmer's wife has just given birth to a child weighing over 21 pounds, which is declared by experts to be the heaviest known.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

THE PARLOR.

A Room in Which There Should Be Comfort.

A vast amount of unhappiness in this world is caused by contrasting our circumstances and surroundings with those of our neighbors and attempting to live up to what we believe they expect of us. Most persons would find that they finally commanded the respect of the most critical, if they showed perfect independence and made their house as attractive and comfortable for themselves as they could, without regard to the opinion of others. The parlor is the room in the house on which the greater part of the money spent in furnishing is often expended, and it is the room of least value to the household.

It has been proposed boldly to do away with this room. In some cases this is the best plan, but in families where there are few or no servants, and many children, the parlor is a necessary room. In a house where a maid keeps every room dusted and swept, and there are no children to invade the sitting-room with their books and playthings, this room may take the place of the parlor. The tired mother, however, whose powers are limited, cannot always keep this room in the perfect order she desires. A parlor is a room of refuge, because it is kept shut up from small but dusty footprints, and the all-invading disorder caused by continual use, which, in spite of her best efforts, must occasionally penetrate into the sitting-room. Literally the parlor means a room for talk. It was formerly the reception room of the convent, where the nuns met occasionally for talk or parlance. It is a room that can be set apart and easily kept well swept and dusted, and always neat, even when all the work is done by one pair of hands, because it is not in continual use, like the sitting-room.

It is a mistake to spend much money on this room, simply because Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Jones does. Reserve the best pictures for the sitting-room, where the family can enjoy them every day. Put the most comfortable chairs in the sitting-room. Furnish the parlor neatly and daintily, without much expenditure. It does not require such strong, durable furniture as the sitting-room. More delicate colors can be used, and less expensive materials may be employed because there is less wear. A simple, dainty little room of this kind in which one may listen to the chat of the casual visitor is a great assistance and relief to the working mother, who will have many guests whom she does not care to receive in the sitting-room. The confusion that may have taken possession of that room becomes a double source of annoyance when it is observed by women whom she knows are not always charitable in their judgment. It is impossible that the sitting-room in a family where it is the playroom of the children, the gathering-room of the family, and subject to the general wear and tear of such a room, should always be in order. It is often akin to "wearing one's heart upon one's sleeve for daws to pick at," to take some visitors into such a disordered room.—N. Y. Tribune.

White Dinners.

Color feasts are still the rage, but gold or silver suppers are highly popular, and recently a "white dinner" was given which was pronounced an artistic success. The mother of the lovely home wore white satin brocade, the debutante daughter white accordion-plaited mousseline de soie over white corded silk, and all the maiden and matron guests were attired in beautiful white gowns of various kinds. A very prodigal use of wax candles and lamps covered with white shades, gave a lovely effect to the dining-room. The table, sideboard and mantels were crowned with masses of white roses, carnations, sweet alyssum, valley lilies, calla blooms, Mary lilies in high, slender vases, and low, white porcelain dishes filled with spired and white geranium blossoms.—Cincinnati Commercial Tribune.

Chestnut Pudding.

Boil some chestnuts for about a quarter of an hour in plenty of water, blanch and peel them; pound in a mortar with any desirable essence (very little of it) and some light French white wine; put into a small preserving pan, cover them with the wine, beat the yolks of three eggs and the whites of two, some grated nutmeg, a pinch of salt and a little melted butter; add gradually one pint of milk (three-quarters of a pint of cream is preferable). Sweeten to taste; stir it over the fire in a china saucepan till thick; put the mixture in a pie dish, lined with puff or other thin paste, and bake in a fairly hot oven.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Shirred Oysters.

Separate the oysters from the liquor, put the liquor in a stewpan, add one pint of water, a wineglassful of cream, a lump of butter the size of an egg and pepper, salt and bread crumbs or small crackers to taste. Let all boil together, then add the oysters and let them cook until thoroughly heated.—Good Housekeeping.

—Raphael Tuck, the well-known Christmas card man, says some of the designers receive very large sums of money for their work. He says the earnings of one lady is $5,000, another $3,500, while the copyists receive at least $15 per week.