

Christmas at Mount Vernon

CHRISTMAS at Mount Vernon in the peaceful days which followed the Revolution was always exceedingly merry. The Virginians of those days, being cavaliers, made the most of the holiday which the grim Puritans of New England ignored.

It was a season of profuse hospitality. But in all the northern neck of Virginia no house was the scene of more joyous doings than that of George Washington. Often mere strangers, bearing letters of introduction, came and went at will, sometimes staying for weeks, or even months.

Though stern, Washington could unbend considerably on such an occasion. He was getting to be an old man, and his adopted son, George Custis, describes him as wearing habitually at that period plain drab clothes, with a broad-brimmed white hat, and carrying an umbrella with a long staff attached to his saddle-bow when he rode to shelter him from the sun, his skin being tender and burning easily.

While yet a young man he had inherited the Mount Vernon estate from his half-brother. The house was much smaller than it is today, being what was then called a "four-room cottage"—that is to say, with only that many rooms on the ground floor. It had been built in 1743 by Lawrence Washington by the labor of transported convicts from



MOUNT VERNON



WASHINGTON AT MOUNT VERNON

England, the main timbers being cut from the nearby forest, while the outer sheathing of North Carolina pine was hewn into blocks to resemble stone.

There were about a dozen bedrooms, all of them small, and doubtless they were rather crowded at Christmas time—some of the people, very likely, "doubling up." All of the rooms had low ceilings; there was no paper on the walls; water pipes of all kinds were conspicuous by their absence; no furnace heated the mansion (there were no stoves, indeed), and the only illumination in the evening was furnished by candles. Yet, as things went in those days, this was a luxurious establishment.

The Christmas dinner was at 3 o'clock in the "banquet hall," and probably twenty-five or thirty people sat down to the feast. The table was covered with a snowy damask cloth, and there were fine linen napkins—both being luxuries rather exceptional in those days. But this was by no means all. There was a handsome service of pure silver, most of which had belonged to the widow Custis when she married Mr. Washington, and also there was a big display of cut glass even more precious. Most remarkable of all, however, there were real silver forks—a rarity indeed!

Ladies and gentlemen ate with their knives in those days in a way that would now be considered shocking. It was a matter almost of necessity, inasmuch as the forks they used, which had only three tines, did not serve very well for some purposes, such as the carrying of peas to the mouth, for example. It is painful to think of the Father of His Country at his Christmas dinner putting his knife into the mouth, but there is no doubt that he did so. Another oddity, as nowadays it would be considered, was the arrangement of the table, upon which all the dishes to be served, including even the puddings and pies, were placed at once. No wonder that in those times a festive board was said to "groan" beneath the weight of the viands!

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Christmas brings the remembrance of a gift so great and wonderful that all who realize what it meant to the world feel the desire to give something in return though it may be nothing more than the expression of a wish for a merry Christmas. No one was anxious to receive the gift at first. People do not always know the value of what is given them. The only door opened to receive it, led into a cattle stable! But now, whose door does not fly open at Christmas to send out some blessing, some word of good will?

The old carol, sung to a few shepherds, has gone around the world

now, and the message of peace and good will has been carried everywhere. Somehow, when you lay a new-born babe in a man's arms, you are pretty sure to bring a smile to his face, and a softening to his heart as well. An infant is a great peace-bringer. What has touched and softened the heart of this grim world more than anything else, is the remembrance that Christmas brought a blessed child down to earth and laid him confidently in the arms of humanity, brought him from home, and left him outcast, that the opportunity might be given to every man to take him in and give him the love and tenderness which is every child's birthright.

This it is, which moves us to strive to make children happy at Christmas. They may be like those who float along with the river, knowing nothing of its lovely source high up in the everlasting hills. But even if they do not know why, most of us do want to make it a merry time for children. It is emphatically the children's festival. No one ever regrets it who goes out of the way to help some little ones to be happy at Christmas. They are the special friends of the Christmas child, and it is well to be able to entertain the king's friends, if not the king himself.

It does the world good to open its heart and take in the season's greeting. Business goes on all the happier,

One may view the scene in imagination, as, the moment having arrived for an important act of ceremony, Washington rises to his feet from his place at the table, holding a glass of Madeira in his hand. He is a very tall man, two inches above six feet in height and large of frame. His nose is slightly aquiline, his mouth broad, his chin square, his cheek bones high, and his complexion rather florid. He is dressed in a suit of costly black velvet, with knee breeches, black silk stockings, and silver buckles on his shoes. At his wrists are fine lace ruffles, and his hair is drawn back and done up behind in queue.

"Gentlemen," he says, bowing right and left, "I drink to my guests!"

The natural response, at the instance of the most distinguished guest present, is a health drunk to Lady Washington. This is followed, perhaps, by five or ten minutes of general conversation, after which Mrs. Washington gives the signal by pushing back her chair, and the women rise to take their departure. The General himself walks to the door, throwing it wide open, and each of the ladies courtesies deeply as she goes out, in response to the bows of the host and the other men.

If, when the time comes to rejoin the ladies, two or three of the guests find themselves hardly in a condition to do so, they are handed over to the care of the African major domo, who sees that they are put to bed. Such things are bound to happen occasionally, and it is not likely that any of the women will have the bad tact to ask what has become of them.

There is a good long evening, which, appropriately to Christmas, is given up to a romp. Such old-fashioned games as blind man's buff and hunt the slipper furnish incidental opportunities for much incidental flirtation and love-making. Perhaps there may even be a kissing game or two; and a spray of mistletoe fastened over a doorway gives excuse for some osculation and a great deal of merriment. It is all very delightful. Christmas gifts are exhibited, and Nellie Custis, it is likely, plays a bit on her harpsichord.

A negro fiddler, one of the slaves on the estate, in picturesque plantation garb, starts some merry music, while the young people choose partners for the dance. But the older ladies and gentlemen prefer cards, and sit about little tables, shuffling and dealing. The host himself plays, for small stakes only, gambling for money to considerable amounts being one of the vices he most abhors. As for Mrs. Washington, she talks to a neighbor and knits. When not otherwise busily occupied she always has knitting in her hands, having acquired the habit in camp during the Revolution, when she made stockings for destitute soldiers.

Fortunately, the frame, or setting, as it might be called, of the Christmas festivities here described in such crude outline is still preserved intact, thanks to the efforts of a few patriotic women who have made this their loving task. The United States government has never paid one cent to keep the home of Washington from destruction. Many years ago congress refused to give the money to buy it. But in the hands of the Mount Vernon Association the historic mansion and its immediate surroundings are kept in such excellent repair that Mount Vernon today is practically as it was more than a century ago, when George and his wife, Martha, kept open house and offered a generous hospitality, not only at Christmastide but at all other seasons of the year.

because there is a warm charitable feeling in a man's soul towards his employers, or employees, or acquaintances. We are all so busy, we are apt to forget to be considerate, forgiving, and kind. It is well to let the brain rest, and allow the heart to rule sometimes, or men may lose the faculty of loving and being charitable.

Centuries of experience have proved that it is well also to make a clearing house of the season, to square accounts by wiping off all the old grudges and settling old quarrels, and listen once again to the message of peace and good will. Anger and malice never gave a man happiness; nothing but forgiveness and charity can do that.

DICKING A PRESENT FOR PLATT

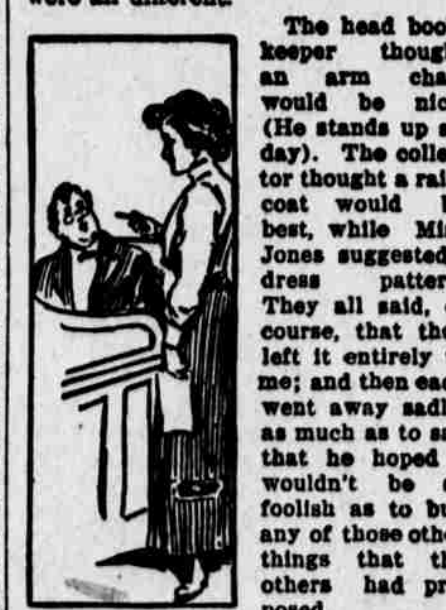
By DOUGLAS MALLOCH

W HEN Harry Platt and that girl friend of the Greens (I forget her name) were married, it was one of those my-goodness-gracious-just-think-of-that affairs, with no one in the secret except the suburban minister who tied the knot, the cabman who drove them out there and the girl from the minister's kitchen, who was a witness, and left a thumb-print of grease on the certificate (she was trying doughnuts at the time) and the minister's wife (at least the name was the same). Let's see, where was I? Oh, yes, when the Platts were married, it being that kind of a wedding, there was no chance to send them a wedding gift as I would have liked to do, or to have done, (whichever is proper, or grammatical, though I'm sure I can never tell which). But Mr. Platt is one of the nicest men in the office, that is, he was before this happened. So I felt we ought to do something for him, just to show our good will—and, anyhow, we've dug down for others we thought much less of, so why shouldn't we for him? But the wedding was over, without invitations, or even a reception, and they were housekeeping before we knew it. So what could we do?

Well, just then Christmas came along not just then but two months after the wedding. They were married October 29, so it wasn't quite two months, but that's close enough. When Christmas came along, that is, just before it came along, I suggested that we make up a purse and give them a sort of delayed wedding present, just to show our good will. Everybody thought it was a splendid idea, that is, of course, except Mr. Platt, whom, of course, I didn't consult. So I got up a subscription paper and went to everybody in the office (except Mr. Platt, of course). I got \$26.60, including ten cents from the janitor, who wasn't expected to give anything but wanted to give something, which shows just how popular Mr. Platt was with everyone in the building, when a janitor even would chip in.

Christmas shopping is hard enough, goodness knows, when you do it for yourself; but when you do it for a stock company capitalised at \$26.60, with 28 stockholders, with 28 different kinds of ideas and tastes, then Christmas shopping rises above a mere annoyance to the dignity of a real trouble. And that's what I was up against. I thought it would be nice to get an expression of opinion. So I went around one morning and asked for ideas. But I couldn't get a word. Nobody could think of anything. I couldn't myself. At noon I went out and looked. I walked miles. I priced, then I went back to the office. You should have seen my desk. Honest, you would have thought some one had turned in a general alarm. They couldn't wait for me to get back. There they were—28 of them, (that is, 27, or 28 with me). They all had suggestions, and they were all different.

The head book-keeper thought an arm chair would be nice. (He stands up all day). The collector thought a raincoat would be best, while Miss Jones suggested a dress pattern. They all said, of course, that they left it entirely to me; and then each went away sadly, as much as to say that he hoped I wouldn't be so foolish as to buy any of those other things that the others had proposed.



The next day I looked again. But either a thing was too expensive or I would have money left. It is remarkable how few things there are in the world you can buy for \$26.60, no more, no less.

And then I saw it. It was in a department store, and marked down from \$50 to \$26.60! There it was, to a cent! A great, big, glittering, magnificent Punch Bowl! Nobody had thought of that!

But, to make sure, I sent the sales ticket with it and told the Platts they could exchange the punch bowl, if they wished, for something they liked better.

And what do you suppose those Platts did?

In January they traded in that magnificent punch bowl for three tons of coal!

JUDGED BY THEIR CLOTHES

Smart Cigar Store Clerk Ready With Apology That by No Means Mended Situation.

Herman Fellner tells this story on himself, according to the New York correspondent of the Cincinnati Times Star. He was in Washington on business recently and met three or four friends on the street. After a moment's chat he beckoned them to come with him. "I'm off the stuff," said he, "but I want to buy you each a cigar."

They happened to be in front of a combination cigar and news stand at the moment. Led by Mr. Fellner, they all trooped in. The clerk hurried to the cigar case to wait upon them. Before Mr. Fellner could indicate his wishes the clerk had slapped a box on the glass case. "Here y' are," said he. "Best dime smoker in town."

Mr. Fellner is sort of fussy about his smokes. He looked at the cigar then shoved the box away. "Have you no other price?" he asked.

The clerk shoved the box in the case. "Sure thing," said he. "My mistake and your treat."

Having pulled off this time-worn witticism, he addressed Mr. Fellner confidentially. "Your clothes sort of fooled me," said he. "You fellows are a pretty well-dressed lot, you know." Then he put another box on the counter. "Here," said he, "is the best nickel smoker in the village."

ECZEMA DISFIGURED BABY

"Our little boy Gilbert was troubled with eczema when but a few weeks old. His little face was covered with sores even to back of his ears. The poor little fellow suffered very much. The sores began as pimples, his little face was disfigured very much. We hardly knew what he looked like. The face looked like raw meat. We tied little bags of cloth over his hands to prevent him from scratching. He was very restless at night, his little face itched."

"We consulted two doctors at Chicago, where we resided at that time. After trying all the medicine of the two doctors without any result, we read of the Cuticura Remedies, and at once bought Cuticura Soap and Ointment. Following the directions carefully and promptly we saw the result, and after four weeks, the dear child's face was as fine and clean as any little baby's face. Every one who saw Gilbert after using the Cuticura Remedies was surprised. He has a head of hair which is a pride for any boy of his age, three years. We can only recommend the Cuticura Remedies to everybody." (Signed) Mrs. H. Albrecht, Box 883, West Point, Neb., Oct. 26, 1910. Although Cuticura Soap and Ointment are sold by druggists and dealers everywhere, a sample of each, with 32-page book, will be mailed free on application to "Cuticura," Dept. 14 L, Boston.

Just Like Bennett. "Arnold Bennett, the latest visitor to these shores," said a New York editor, "is said to be the greatest living English novelist. I plump for Wells or Conrad myself. However—"

The editor smiled. "A critic at the club the other day was listening to an execrable young novelist. The young man boasted on interminably, but at last I heard the critic get in the words:

"Do you know, you remind me of Arnold Bennett?"

"Really?" The novelist blushed and laughed for pleasure. "Really? Come now, do you really think—"

"Yes; you stutter so," said the critic."

He Knew Her Well. "Now, old man, make yourself comfortable, and let's talk over the good old times. We haven't seen each other since we were boys together. I told you I was married, didn't I? By the way, did you ever live in Painesville?"

"Yes, I lived there three years." "Ever met Miss Katish?" "Ha! ha! Why, I was engaged to her! But that's nothing—all the fellows in my crowd were engaged to her at one time or another. I see you've lived in Painesville. Why did you ask about her, in particular? Come—confess!"

"Why, I—er—I married her."

Not Uncommon Fallacy. "Why do you insist on investing your money away from your home town?"

"Well," replied Farmer Cornfussel, "I've got a good deal of local pride, I have, and I regard the people in this here township as being so smart that none of 'em is goin' to let any real bargains git away from him."

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Bears the Signature of *Dr. J. C. Fletcher* In Use For Over 30 Years. Children Cry for Fletcher's Castoria

Awful. "The cry of Potts when he found the state of his boot was harrowing."

"Why so?"

"Because it was the cry of a lost sole."

Both Sides.

She—Just look at the trouble money can get you into.

He—Yes, but look at the trouble it can get you out of.

Pericles wore his hair pretty close to his eyes—but nobody ever called him a low-brow!