

rejoined he, "Washington can never be otherwise than well, the measure of his fame is full. Posterity shall talk of him with reference as the founder of a great empire when my name shall be lost in the vortex of revolutions." Who, then, that has a spark of virtuous curiosity but must wish to know the history of him whose name could thus awaken the sigh even of Bonaparte?

Who? surely enough.

This pertinent anecdote, like many others that enliven Parson Weems's book, it is almost needless to say was the product of his overflowing imagination and, as its admirers may argue, is no more than a piece of fiction. But cause it is without foundation of fact, still an allegory or a parable, a very other fanciful device for getting a good moral or a wholesome example squarely before the reader's mind. To this class of pleasing and instructive inventions belongs the famous hatchet story, which, without any delay, we present in the original words of Weems:

When George was about six years old he was made the wealthy master of a hatchet of which, like most little boys, he was immoderately fond, and was constantly going about chopping everything that came in his way. One day in the garden, where he often amused himself hacking his mother's peasticks; he unluckily tried the edge of his hatchet on the body of a beautiful young English cherry tree, which he barked so terribly that I don't believe the tree ever got the better of it. The next morning the old gentleman, finding out what had befallen his tree, which, by the by, was a great favorite, came into the house and with much warmth asked for the mischievous author, declaring at the same time that he would not have taken five guineas for his tree. Nobody could tell him anything about it. Presently George and his hatchet made their appearance. "George," said his father "do you know who killed that beautiful little cheery tree yonder in the garden?" This was a tough question and George staggered under it for a moment, but quickly recovered himself and, looking at his father with the sweet face of youth brightened with the inexpressible charm of all conquering truth, he bravely cried out. "I can't tell a lie, Pa, you know I can't tell a lie: I did cut it with my hatchet." "Run to my arms, you dearest boy," cried his father, in transports, "run to my arms—glad am I, George, that you ever killed my tree, for you have paid me for it a thousand fold. Such an act of heroism in my son is more worth than a thousand trees though blossomed with silver and fruits of purest gold.

Parson Weems had small idea with this little fiction shaped itself in his head that it was destined to descend to posterity leaving his most labored and eloquent passages in oblivion, and be ground into the heads of children in the nursery as a piece of immortal and instinctive truth. It was in flights like the following that his fancy loved to soar. He is describing the battle of Trenton, and when he gets his hero on a battle field his pen invariably runs away with him:

The sun had just tipped with gold the adjacent hills when snowy Trenton, with the wide tented fields of the foe, hove in sight. To the young in arms this was an awful scene, and nature called a short lived terror to their hearts. But not unscathed of Washington was their fear. He marked the sudden paleness of their cheeks when first they beheld the enemy, and quick, with half-stiffed sighs, turned on him their wistful look.

As the big lion of Zara, calling his brindled sons to battle against the mighty rhinoceros, if he mark their falling manes and crouching to his side, instantly puts on all his terrors; his eyes roll in blood; he shakes the forest with his deepening roar, till kindled by their father's fire the maddening cubs swell with answering rage and spring undaunted on the monster. Thus stately and terrible rode Columbia's first and greatest son along the front of his halted troops.

This is the way that Mr. Weems thought Gen. Washington must have looked when making an address to his officers:

As he spoke his cheeks, naturally pale, were reddened over with virtue's pure emotion, while his eyes of cerulean blue were kindled up with those indescribable glances which fancy lends to an angel orator animating poor mortals to the sublime of goodlike deeds.

An amusing instance of Weems's way of descending suddenly from the sublimest discursions of the imagination to the homeliest illustrations of truth, is presented in the following passage. After speaking of his hero's wonderful virtues as a husband, friend, citizen, farmer, and master, he proceeds:

But his eulogists have denied him these the only scenes which belong to man the great, and have tricked him up in the vile drapery of man the little. See! there he stands, with the port of Mars the destroyer, dark frowning over the fields of war; the lightning of Potter's blade is by his side; the deep-mouthed cannon is before him, disgorging its flesh-mangling balls; his war horse paws with impatience to bare him, a speedy thunderbolt, against the pale and bleeding ranks of Britain. These are the drawings usually given of Washington—drawings masterly no doubt and perhaps justly descriptive of him in some scenes of his life; but scenes they were which I am sure his soul abhorred, and in which at any rate you see nothing of his private virtues. These old-fashioned commodities are generally thrown into the back ground of the picture and treated as the grandees at the London and Paris route treat their good old aunt and grandmothers—huddling them together into the rooms, there to wheeze and cough by themselves, and not depress the fine, laudanum-raised spirits of the young sparklers,

The following description of the reception in England of the news of the French and Indian war, in which Washington followed Braddock; and which was provoked by incursions of the French and English settlements, has no likeness to any thing else that we have ever seen in the range of our little readings:

Swift as the broad winged packets could fly across the deep the news was carried to England. Its effect there was like that of a stone rudely hurled against a nest of hornets. Instantly, from centre to circumference, all is rage and bustle; the hive resounds with the maddening insects; dark, tumbling from their cells, they spread the hasty wing, and, shrill whizzing through the air, they rush to find the foe. Just so, in the sea-ruling island, from queen's house to ale house, from king to cockney, all were fierce for fight. Even the red-nosed porters, where they met, bending under their burdens, would stop full-but in the streets to talk of England's wrongs, and as they talked their fiery snouts were seen to grow more fiery still and more deform. Then throwing their packs to the ground and leaping into the attitude of boxers, with sturdy arms across and rough black jaws stretched out,

they bend forward to the fancied fight. The frog-eating foe, in shirtless ruffles and long, lank cue, seems to give ground; then rising in their might, with fire striking eyes, and foot, with kick and cuff and many a hearty curse, they show the giggling crowd how, damn'em, they would thump the French. The news was brought to Britain's King just as he had despatched his pudding and sat right royally amusing himself with a slice of Gloucester and a nip of ale. From the lips of the King down fell the luckless cheese, alas! Not graced to comfort the stomach of the Lord's anointed while crowned with snowy form, his nut brown ale stood untasted by his plate. Suddenly, as he heard the news, the monarch darkened in his place and answering darkness shrouded all his court. In silence he rolled his eyes of fire on the floor and twirled his terrible thumps—his pages shrunk from his presence, for who could stand before the King of thundering ships when wrath, in gleams of lightning, flashed from his dark red eyes. Starting at length, as from a trance, he swallowed his ale, then, clenching his fist, he gave the table a tremendous knock and cursed the wooden-shod nation by his God. Swift as he cursed the dogs of war bounded from their kennels, keen for the chase, and snuffing the blood of Frenchmen on every gale, they raised a howl of death which reached these peaceful shores.

We have space for but one more selection from the book of this patriot parson. After a description of the deathbed of Washington, conceived in his finest vein, he gives the following characteristic account of the departure of his hero's spirit to the other world:

Swift, on angel's wings, the brightening saint ascended while voices more than human were heard (in fancy's ear) warbling through the happy regions and hymning the great procession toward the gates of heaven. His glorious coming was seen afar off and myriads of mighty angles hastened forth, with golden harps, to welcome the honored stranger. High in front of the shouting hosts were seen the beautiful forms of Franklin, Warren, Mercer, Scam-mel, and him who fell at Quebec, with all the virtuous patriots who, on the side of Columbia, toiled or bled for liberty and truth. But how changed from what they were when, in their days of flesh, bathed in sweat and blood, they fell at the parent feet of their weeping country. Not the homeliest infant suddenly spring into a soul-enchanting Hebe—not dreary winter suddenly brightening into spring, with all her bloom and fragrance ravishing the senses, could equal such glorious change. Oh! where are now their wrinkles and gray hairs? Where their ghastly wounds and clotted blood? Their forms are of the stature of angles, their robes like morning clouds streaked with gold, the stars of heaven like crowns glitter on their heads, immortal youth, celestial rosy red, sits blooming on their cheeks, while infinite benignity and love beam from their eyes. Such were the forms of the sons, O Columbia! Such the brother band of thy martyred saints that now poured forth from heaven's wide opened gates to meet their beloved chief who in the days of his mortality had led their embattled squadrons to the war. At sight of him even these blessed spirits seem to feel new raptures and to look more dazlingly bright. In joyous throngs they pour around him; they devour him with their eyes of love; they embrace him in transports of tenderness unutterable, while from their red-seate cheeks tears of joy such as angles