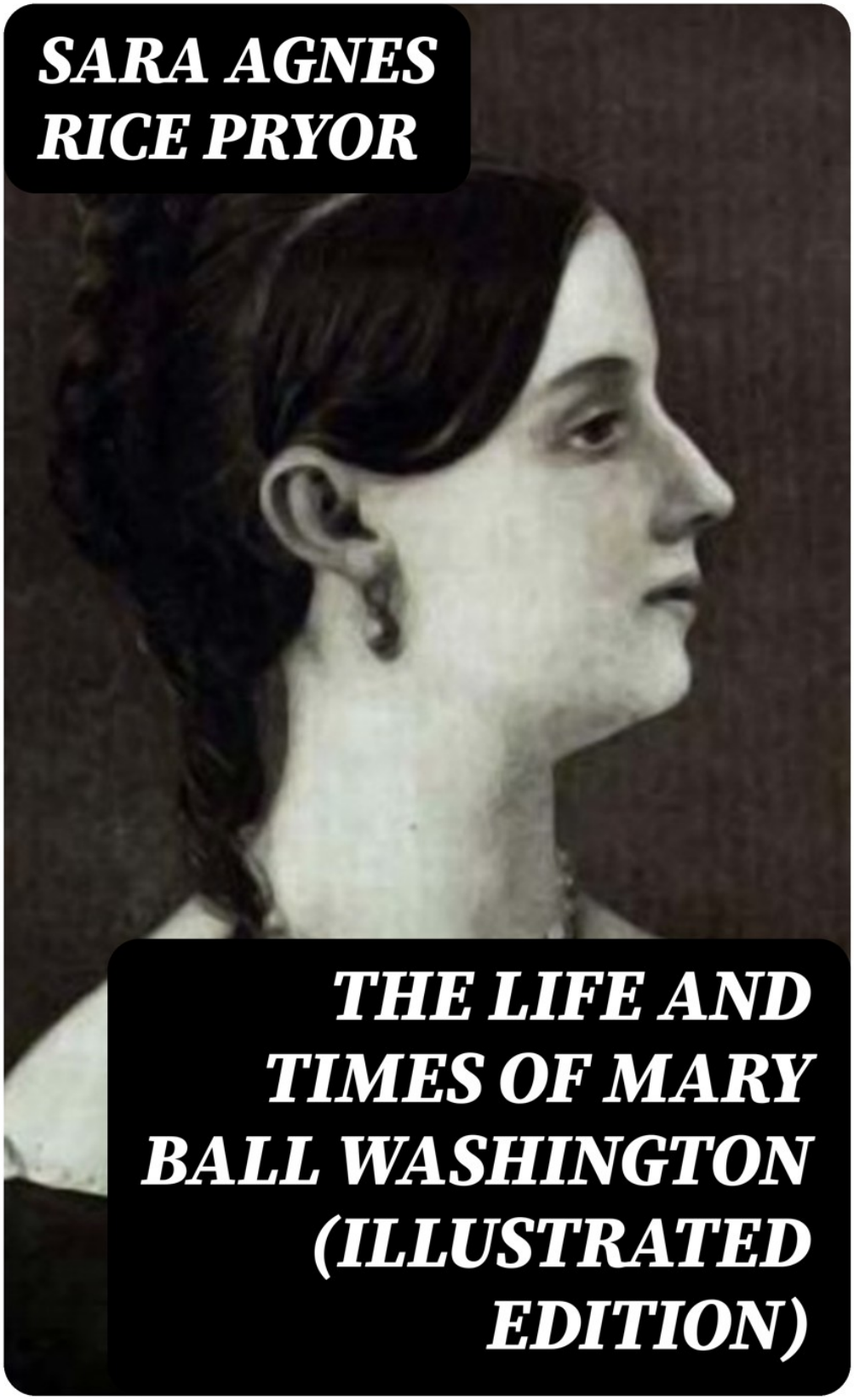
SARA AGNES RICE PRYOR
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MARY BALL WASHINGTON (ILLUSTRATED EDITION)

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The Life and Times of Mary Ball Washington (Illustrated Edition)

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SUPPOSED PORTRAIT OF MARY WASHINGTON.

PART I

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTORY

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The mothers of famous men survive only in their sons. This is a rule almost as invariable as a law of nature. Whatever the aspirations and energies of the mother, memorable achievement is not for her. No memoir has been written in this country of the women who bore, fostered, and trained our great men. What do we know of the mother of Daniel Webster, or John Adams, or Patrick Henry, or Andrew Jackson, or of the mothers of our Revolutionary generals?

When the American boy studies the history of his country, his soul soars within him as he reads of his own forefathers: how they rescued a wilderness from the savage and caused it to bloom into fruitful fields and gardens, how they won its independence through eight years of hardship and struggle, how they assured its prosperity by a wise Constitution and firm laws. But he may look in vain for some tribute to the mothers who trained his heroes. In his Roman history he finds Cornelia, Virginia, Lucretia, and Veturia on the same pages with Horatius, Regulus, Brutus, and Cincinnatus. If he be a boy of some thought and perception, he will see that the early seventeenth century women of his own land must have borne a similar relation to their country as these women to the Roman Republic. But our histories as utterly ignore them as if they never existed. The heroes of our Revolution might have sprung armed from the head of Jove for aught the American boy can find to the contrary.

Thus American history defrauds these noble mothers of their crown — not self-won, but won by their sons.

Letitia Romolino was known to few, while the fame of "Madame Mère" is as universal as the glory of Napoleon himself. But Madame Mère had her historian. The pioneer

woman of America, who "broke the way with tears," retires into darkness and oblivion; while "many follow with a song" the son to whom she gave her life and her keen intelligence born of her strong faith and love.

Biographers have occasionally seemed to feel that something is due the mothers of their heroes. Women have some rights after all! And so we can usually find, tucked away somewhere, a short perfunctory phrase of courtesy, "He is said to have inherited many of his qualities from his mother," reminding us of "The Ladies — God bless 'em," after everybody else has been toasted at a banquet, and just before the toasters are ripe for the song, "We won't go home till morning!"

But — if we are willing to be appeased by such a *douceur* — there is literature galore anent the women who have amused "great" men: Helen of Troy, Madame de Pompadour, Madame du Barry, Lady Hamilton, the Countess Guicciola, and such. We may comfort ourselves for this humiliating fact only by reflecting that the world craves novelty, and that these dames are interesting to the reading public, solely because they are exceptional, while the noble, unselfish woman, being the rule of motherhood, is familiar to every one of us and needs no historian.

It is the noble, unselfish woman who must shine, if she shine at all, by the light reflected from her son. *Her* life, for the most part, must be hidden by the obscurity of domestic duties. While herself thus inactive and retired, her son is developed for glory, and the world is his arena. It is only when he reaches renown that she becomes an object of attention, but it is then too late to take her measure in the plenitude of her powers. Emitting at best but a feeble ray, her genius is soon lost in the splendor of his meridian.

Nay more, her reputation is often the sport of a love of contrast, and her simplicity and his magnificence the paradox of a gossiping public.

Mary Washington presents no exception to this picture. As the mother of the man who has hitherto done most for the good and glory of humanity, the details of her life are now of world-wide and enduring interest. Those details were lost in the seclusion and obscurity of her earlier years or else absorbed in the splendor of her later career. It is not deniable, too, that in the absence of authentic information, tradition has made free with her name, and has imputed to her motives and habits altogether foreign to her real character. The mother of Washington was in no sense a commonplace woman. Still less was she hard, uncultured, undignified, unrefined.

The writer hopes to trace the disparaging traditions, and to refute them by showing that all the known actions of her life were the emanations of a noble heart, high courage, and sound understanding.

"Characters," said the great Englishman who lived in her time, "should never be given by an historian unless he knew the people whom he describes, or copies from those who knew them." "A hard saying for picturesque writers of history," says Mr. Augustine Birrell, who knows so well how to be picturesque and yet faithful to the truth. Even he laments how little we can know of a dead man we never saw. "His books, if he wrote books, will tell us something; his letters, if he wrote any, and they are preserved, may perchance fling a shadow on the sheet for a moment or two; a portrait if painted in a lucky hour may lend a show of substance to our dim surmisings; the things he did must carefully be taken into account, but as a man is much more than the mere sum of his actions even these cannot be relied upon with great confidence. For the purpose, therefore, of getting at any one's character, the testimony of those who knew the living man is of all the material likely to be within our reach the most useful."

How truly the words of this brilliant writer apply to the ensuing pages will be apparent to every intelligent reader.

No temptation has availed with the compiler to accept any, the most attractive, theory or tradition. The testimony of those who knew Mary Washington is the groundwork of the picture, and controls its every detail.

A few years ago an episode of interest was awakened in Mary Washington's life. There was a decided Mary Washington Renaissance. She passed this way — as Joan of Arc — as Napoleon Bonaparte, Burns, Emerson, and others pass. A society of women banded themselves together into a Mary Washington Memorial Association. Silver and gold medals bearing her gentle, imagined face were struck off, and when the demand for them was at its height, their number was restricted to six hundred, to be bequeathed for all time from mother to daughter, the pledge being a perpetual vigil over the tomb of Mary Washington, thus forming a Guard of Honor of six hundred American women. The Princess Eulalia of Spain, and Maria Pilar Colon, a descendant of Christopher Columbus, were admitted into this Guard of Honor, and wear its insignia.

This "Renaissance" grew out of an advertisement in the Washington papers to the effect that the "Grave of Mary, the Mother of General Washington," was to be "sold at Public Auction, the same to be offered at Public Outcry," under the shadow of the monument erected in her son's honor, and in the city planned by him and bearing his name.

A number of the descendants of Mary Washington's old Fredericksburg neighbors assembled the next summer at the White Sulphur Springs in Virginia. It was decided that a ball be given at the watering-place to aid the noble efforts of the widow of Chief Justice Waite to avert the disaster, purchase the park, and erect a monument over the ashes of the mother of Washington. One of the guests was selected to personate her: General Fitzhugh Lee to represent her son George.

A thousand patrons assured the success of the ball. They wore Mary Washington's colors — blue and white — and

assumed the picturesque garb of pre-Revolutionary days. The bachelor governor of New York, learning what was toward with these fair ladies, sent his own state flag to grace the occasion, and its snow-white folds mingled with the blue of the state banner contributed by the governor of Virginia.

The gowns of the Virginia beauties were yellow with age, and wrinkled from having been hastily exhumed from the lavender-scented chests; for when lovely Juliet Carter chose the identical gown of her great, great grandmother, — blue brocade, looped over a white satin quilted petticoat, — the genuine example was followed by all the rest. The Madam Washington of the hour was strictly taken in hand by the Fredericksburg contingent. Her kerchief had been worn at the Fredericksburg Peace Ball, her mob cap was cut by a pattern preserved by Mary Washington's old neighbors. There were mittens, a reticule, and a fan made of the bronze feathers of the wild turkey of Virginia. Standing with her son George in the midst of the old-time assembly, old-time music in the air, old-time pictures on the walls, Madam Washington received her guests and presented them to her son, whose miniature she wore on her bosom. "I am glad to meet your son, Madam Washington!" said pretty Ellen Lee, as she dropped her courtesy; "I always heard he was a truthful child!"

The lawn and cloister-like corridors of the large hotel were crowded at an early hour with the country people, arriving on foot, on horseback, and in every vehicle known to the mountain roads. These rustic folk — weather-beaten, unkempt old trappers and huntsmen, with their sons and daughters, wives and little children — gathered in the verandas and filled the windows of the ball-room. When the procession made the rounds of the room the comments of the holders of the window-boxes were not altogether flattering. The quaint dress of "the tea-cup time of hoop and

hood" was disappointing. They had expected a glimpse of the latest fashions of the metropolis.

"I don't think much of that Mrs. Washington," said one.

"Well," drawled another, a wiry old graybeard, "she looks quiet and peaceable! The ole one was a turrible ole woman! My grandfather's father used to live close to ole Mrs. Washington. The ole man used to say she would mount a stool to rap her man on the head with the smoke-'ouse key! She was that little, an' hot-tempered."

"That was *Martha* Washington, grandfather," corrected a girl who had been to school in Lewisburg. "*She* was the short one."

"Well, Martha or Mary, it makes no differ," grimly answered the graybeard. "They was much of a muchness to my thinkin'," and this was the first of the irreverent traditions which caught the ear of the writer, and led to investigation. They cropped up fast enough from many a dark corner!

About this time many balls and costume entertainments were given to aid the monument fund. There were charming garden parties to

"Bring back the hour
Of glory in the grass and splendor in the flower,"

when the Mother of Washington was beautiful, young, and happy. A notable theatrical entertainment, the "Mary Washington matinée," was arranged by Mrs. Charles Avery Doremus, the clever New York playwright. The theatre was hung with colors lent by the Secretary of the Navy, the order therefor signed by "George Dewey." Everybody wore the Mary Washington colors — as did Adelina Patti, who flashed from her box the perennial smile we are yet to see again. Despite the hydra-headed traditions the Mother of Washington had her apotheosis.

Brought face to face with my reader, and devoutly praying I may hold his interest to the end, I wish I could spare him every twice-told tale — every dull word.

But "we are made of the shreds and patches of many ancestors." What we are we owe to them. God forbid we should inherit and repeat all their actions! The courage, the fortitude, the persistence, are what we inherit — not the deeds through which they were expressed. A successful housebreaker's courage may blossom in the valor of a descendant on the field who has been trained in a better school than his ancestor.

Dull as the public is prone to regard genealogical data, the faithful biographer is bound to give them.

And therefore the reader must submit to an introduction to the Ball family, otherwise he cannot understand the Mother of Washington or Washington himself. One of them, perhaps the one most deserving eminence through her own beneficence, we cannot place exactly in our records. She was an English "Dinah Morris," and her name was Hannah Ball. She was the originator of Sunday-schools, holding her own school in 1772, twelve years before the reputed founder, Robert Raikes, established Sunday-schools in England.

CHAPTER II
MARY WASHINGTON'S ENGLISH ANCESTRY

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The family of Ball from which Mary, the mother of Washington, descended, can be traced in direct line only as far back as the year 1480. They came originally from "Barkham, anciently 'Boercham'; noted as the spot at which William the Conqueror paused on his devastating march from the bloody field of Hastings:[1] 'wasting ye land, burning ye towns and sleaing (*sic*) ye people till he came to Boerchum where he stayed his ruthless hand.'"

In the "History of the Ball family of Barkham, Comitatis Berks, taken from the Visitation Booke of London marked O. 24, in the College of Arms," we find that "William Ball, Lord of the Manor of Barkham, Com. Berks, died in the year 1480." From this William Ball, George Washington was *eighth* in direct descent.

The entry in the old visitation book sounds imposing, but Barkham was probably a small town nestled amid the green hills of Berkshire, whose beauty possibly so reminded the Conqueror of his Normandy that "he stayed his ruthless hand." A century ago it was a village of some fifty houses attached to the estate of the Levison Gowers.

There is no reason to suppose that the intervening Balls in the line, — Robert, William, two Johns, — all of whom lived in Barkham, or the William of Lincoln's Inn, who became "attorney in the Office of Pleas in the Exchequer," were men of wealth or rank. The "getting of gear was never," said one of their descendants, "a family trait, nor even the ability to hold it when gotten"; but nowhere is it recorded that they ever wronged man or woman in the getting. They won their worldly goods honorably, used them beneficently, and laid them down cheerfully when duty to king or country

demanded the sacrifice, and when it pleased God to call them out of the world. They were simply men "doing their duty in their day and generation and deserving well of their fellows."

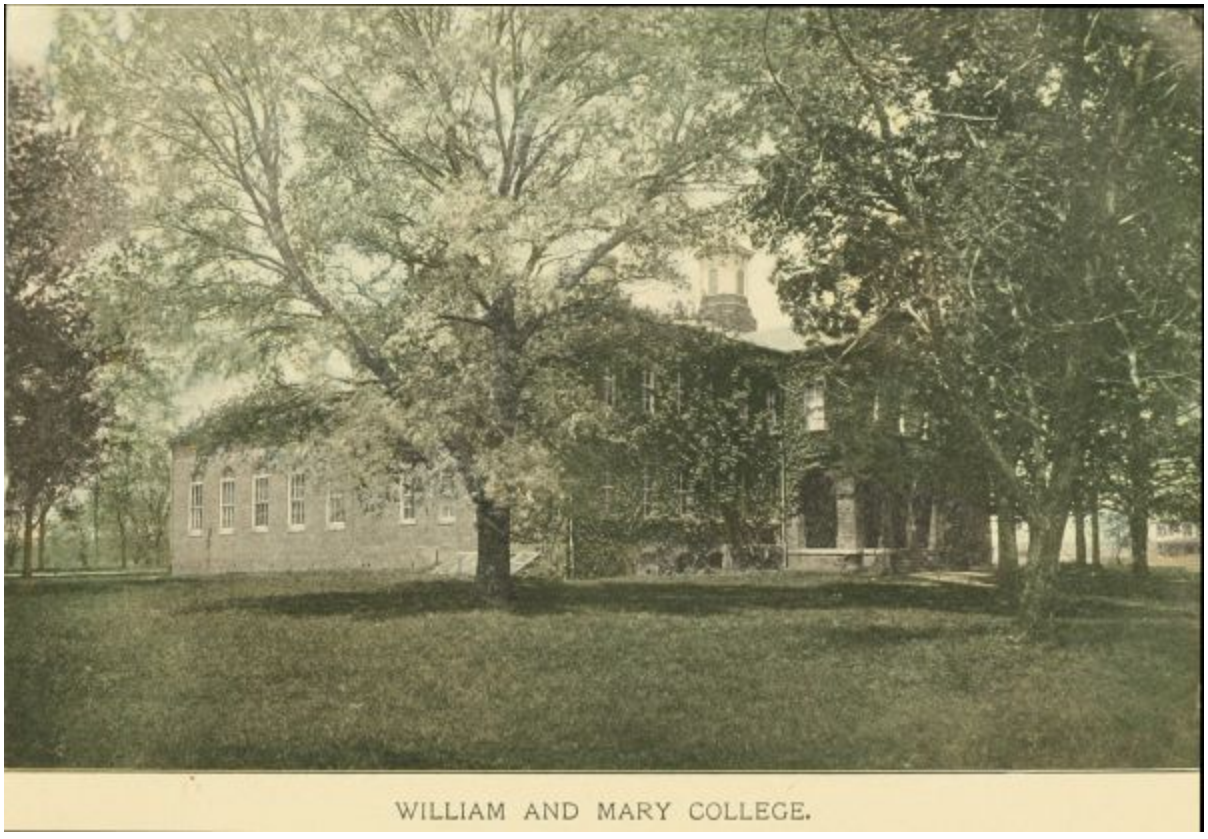
They belonged to the Landed Gentry of England. This does not presuppose their estates to have been extensive. A few starved acres of land sufficed to class them among the Landed Gentry, distinguishing them from laborers. As such they may have been entitled to the distinction of "Gentleman," the title in England next lowest to "Yeoman." No one of them had ever bowed his shoulders to the royal accolade, nor held even the position of esquire to a baronet. But the title "Gentleman" was a social distinction of value. "Ordinarily the King," says Sir Thomas Smith, "doth only make Knights and create Barons or higher degrees; as for *gentlemen*, they be made good cheap in this Kingdom; for whosoever studieth the laws of the realm, who studieth in the universities, who professeth the liberal sciences, he shall be taken for a gentleman; for gentlemen be those whom their blood and race doth make noble and known." By "a gentleman born" was usually understood the son of a gentleman by birth, and grandson of a gentleman by position. "It takes three generations to make a gentleman," we say to-day, and this seems to have been an ancient rule in England.

The Balls might well be proud to belong to old England's middle classes — her landed, untitled Gentry. A few great minds — Lord Francis Verulam, for instance — came from her nobility; and some gifted writers — the inspired dreamer, for instance — from her tinkers and tradesmen; but the mighty host of her scholars, poets, and philosophers belonged to her middle classes. They sent from their ranks Shakespeare and Milton, Locke and Sir Isaac Newton, Gibbon, Dryden, "old Sam Johnson," Pope, Macaulay, Stuart Mill, Huxley, Darwin, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Burke, Disraeli, Cowper, Sir William Blackstone, and nearly all of the Chief

Justices of England. These are but a few of the great names that shine along the ranks of England's middle classes.

Many of these men were called to the foot of the throne by a grateful sovereign to receive some distinction, — so paltry by comparison with glory of their own earning, — and among them came one day an ancestor of the mother of George Washington. Who he was we know not, nor yet what had been his service to his country; but he was deemed worthy to bear upon his shield a lion rampant, the most honorable emblem of heraldry, and the lion's paws held aloft a ball! This much we know of him, — that in addition to his valor and fidelity he possessed a poet's soul. He chose for the motto, the *cri de guerre* of his clan, a suggestive phrase from these lines of Ovid: —

"He gave to man a noble countenance and commanded him to gaze upon the heavens, and to carry his looks upward to the stars."



WILLIAM AND MARY COLLEGE.

[1] *The Maternal Ancestry of Washington*, by George Washington Ball.

CHAPTER III
THE BALL FAMILY IN VIRGINIA

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The first of the family of Ball to come to Virginia was William Ball, who settled in Lancaster County in 1650. He was the son of the attorney of Lincoln's Inn. He emigrated, with other cavaliers because of the overthrow of the royal house and the persecution of its adherents.

Before this time one John Washington, an Englishman and a loyalist, had settled in Westmoreland. He became a man of influence in the colony, rising rapidly from major to colonel, justice of Westmoreland, and member of the House of Burgesses; accepting positions under the Commonwealth, as did others of King Charles's adherents; doing their duty under the present conditions, and consoling themselves by calling everything — towns, counties, rivers, and their own sons — after the "Martyred Monarch"; and in rearing mulberry trees and silkworms to spin the coronation robe of purple for the surely coming time of the Restoration.

John Washington married three times, — two Annes and one Frances, — and, innocently unconscious of the tremendous importance to future historians of his every action, he neglected to place on record the date of these events. In his day a woman appeared before the public only three times, — at her baptism, marriage, and death. But one of Colonel Washington's wives emerges bravely from obscurity. A bold sinner and hard swearer, having been arraigned before her husband, she was minded to improve her opportunity; and the Westmoreland record hath it that "Madam Washington said to ye prisoner, 'if you were advised by yr wife, you need not acome to this passe,' and he answered, having the courage of his convictions, ' — — — — my wife! If it were to doe, I would do it againe.'"

And so no more of Madam Washington! This trouble had grown out of what was characterized as "ye horrid, traiterous, and rebellious practices" of a young Englishman on the James River, whose only fault lay in the unfortunate circumstance of his having been born a hundred years too soon. Bacon's cause had been just, and he was eloquent enough and young and handsome enough to draw all men's hearts to himself, but his own was stilled in death before he could right his neighbors' wrongs.

And now, the Fates that move the pieces on the chess-board of life ordained that two prophetic names should appear together to suppress the first rebellion against the English government. When the Grand Assembly cast about for loyal men and true to lay "a Levy in ye Northern Necke for ye charges in Raisinge ye forces thereof for suppressing ye late Rebellion," the lot fell on "Coll. John Washington and Coll: W^{m}. Ball," the latter journeying up from his home in Lancaster to meet Colonel Washington at Mr. Beale's, in Westmoreland.

Colonel Ball's Lancaster home was near the old White Chapel church, around which are clustered a large number of strong, heavy tombstones which betoken to-day "a deep regard of the living for the dead."

Almost all of them are inscribed with the name of Ball. In their old vestry books are stern records. A man was fined five thousand pounds of tobacco for profane swearing; unlucky John Clinton, for some unmentioned misdemeanor, was required four times to appear on bended knees and four times to ask pardon. As late as 1727 men were presented for drunkenness, for being absent one month from church, for swearing, for selling crawfish and posting accounts on Sunday. "And in addition to above," adds Bishop Meade, "the family of Ball was very active in promoting good things," as well as zealous in the punishment of evil. Overt acts — swearing, fishing on Sunday, absence from church —

could easily be detected and punished. But how about drunkenness? There are degrees of intoxication. At what point was it punishable?

An old Book of Instructions settled the matter. "Where ye same legges which carry a Man into a house cannot bring him out againe, it is Sufficient Sign of Drunkennesse."

The descendants of William Ball held good positions in the social life of the colony. Their names appear in Bishop Meade's list of vestrymen, as founders and patrons of the Indian schools, and fourteen times in the House of Burgesses. They intermarried with the leading families in Virginia; and the Balls, in great numbers, settled the counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Westmoreland, and Stafford. They are not quoted as eminent in the councils of the time, or as distinguished in letters. That they were good citizens is more to their credit than that they should have filled prominent official positions; for high offices have been held by men who were not loyal to their trusts, and even genius — that beacon of light in the hands of true men — has been a torch of destruction in those of the unworthy.

They, like their English ancestors, bore for their arms a lion rampant holding a ball, and for their motto *Cælumque tueri*, taken, as we have said, from these lines of Ovid: —

> "Os homini sublime dedit, cælumque tueri
> Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus."

The rampant lion holding the ball appears on an armorial document belonging to the first emigrant. On the back of this document are the following words, written in the round, large script of those days, which, whatever it left undone, permitted no possible doubt of the meaning it meant to convey: —

"The Coat of Arms of Colonel William Ball, who came from England about the year 1650, leaving two sons — William of Millenbeck [the paternal seat] and Joseph of Epping Forest

— and one daughter, Hannah, who married Daniel Fox.... Joseph's male issue is extinct."[1]

George Washington was the grandson of this Joseph Ball through his youngest daughter Mary. She was born at Epping Forest, in Lancaster, Virginia, in 1708, and "not as is persistently stated by careless writers on Nov: 30th 1706 — a year before her parents were married."

[1] Horace Edwin Hayden in *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. iii, p. 74.

CHAPTER IV
COAT ARMOR AND THE RIGHT TO BEAR IT

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Bishop Meade says of William Ball's coat of arms: "There is much that is bold about it: as a lion rampant with a globe in his paw, with helmet, shield and visor, and other things betokening strength and courage, but none these things suit of my work! There is, however, one thing that does. On a scroll are these words, *Cælum tueri!* May it be a memento to all his posterity to look upward and seek the things which are above!"

The Bishop attached, probably, more importance to the heraldic distinction than did the mother of Washington. Virginia families used the arms to which they had a right with no thought of ostentation — simply as something belonging to them, as a matter of course. They sealed their deeds and contracts with their family crest and motto, displayed their arms on the panels of their coaches, carved them on their gate-posts and on the tombstones of their people; for such had been the custom in the old country which they fondly called "home."

The pedigrees and coats of arms of the families, from which Mary Ball and her illustrious son descended, have been much discussed by historians. "Truly has it been said that all the glories of ancestral escutcheons are so overshadowed by the deeds of Washington that they fade into insignificance; that a just democracy, scornful of honors not self-won, pays its tribute solely to the man, the woman, and the deed; that George Washington was great because he stood for the freedom of his people, and Mary Washington was great because she implanted in his youthful breast righteous indignation against wrong, which must ever be the inspiration of the hero. And yet the insignia of a

noble name, handed down from generation to generation, and held up as an incentive to integrity and valor, may well be cherished." The significance of the shield granted as reward, and the sentiment chosen as the family motto, are not to be ignored. The shield witnesses a sovereign's appreciation; the motto affords a key-note to the aspirations of the man who chose it. Not of the women! for only under limitations could women use the shield; the motto they were forbidden to use at all. Mottoes often expressed lofty sentiments. Witness a few taken from Virginia families of English descent: *Malo mori quam fœdari*. *Sperate et Virite Fortes* (Bland), *Sine Deo Cares* (Cary), *Ostendo non ostento* (Isham), *Rêve et Révéle* (Atkinson), etc.

At the present moment the distinction of a coat of arms is highly esteemed in this country. Families of English descent can always find a shield or crest on some branch, more or less remote, of the Family Tree. The title to these arms may have long been extinct — but who will take the trouble to investigate? The American cousin scorns and defies rules of heraldry! To be sure, he would prefer assuming a shield once borne by some ancestor, but if that be impossible, he is quite capable of marshalling his arms to suit himself. Is not "a shield of pretence" arms which a lord claims and which he adds to his own? Thus it comes to pass that the crest, hard won in deadly conflict, and the motto once the challenging battle-cry, find themselves embalmed in the perfume of a fine lady's tinted billet, or proudly displayed on the panels of her park equipage. Thus is many a hard-won crest and proud escutcheon of old England made to suffer the extreme penalty of the English law, "drawn and quartered," and dragged captive in boastful triumph at the chariot wheels of the Great Obscure! They can be made to order by any engraver. They are used, unchallenged, by any and every body willing to pay for them.

It may, therefore, be instructive to turn the pages of old Thomas Fuller's "Worthies of England," and learn the rigid laws governing the use of arms by these "Worthies."

The "fixing of hereditary arms in England was a hundred years ancienter than Richard the Second" — in 1277, therefore. Before his second invasion into France, Henry V issued a proclamation to the sheriffs to this effect: "Because there are divers men who have assumed to themselves arms and coat-armours where neither they nor their ancestors in times past used such arms or coat-armours, all such shall show cause on the day of muster why he useth arms and by virtue of whose gift he enjoyeth the same: those only excepted who carried arms with us at the battle of Agincourt;" and all detected frauds were to be punished "with the loss of wages, as also the rasing out and breaking off of said arms called coat-armours — and this," adds his Majesty, with emphasis, "you shall in no case omit."

By a later order there was a more searching investigation into the right to bear arms. A high heraldic officer, usually one of the kings-at-arms, was sent into all the counties to examine the pedigrees of the landed gentry, with a view of ascertaining whether the arms borne by them were unwarrantably assumed. The king-at-arms was accompanied on such occasions by secretaries or draftsmen. The "Herald's Visitations," as they were termed, were regularly held as early as 1433, and until between 1686 and 1700. Their object was by no means to create coats of arms but to reject the unauthorized, and confirm and verify those that were authentic. Thus the arms of the Ball and Washington families had been subjected to strict scrutiny before being registered in the Heralds' College. They could not have been unlawfully assumed by the first immigrant, nor would he, while living in England, have been allowed to mark his property or seal his papers with those arms nor use them in any British colony.

CHAPTER V
TRADITIONS OF MARY BALL'S EARLY LIFE

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Of the ancestry of Mary Washington's mother nothing is known. She was the "Widow Johnson," said to have descended from the Montagus of England, and supposed to have been a housekeeper in Joseph Ball's family, and married to him after the death of his first wife. Members of the Ball family, after Mary Washington's death, instituted diligent search to discover something of her mother's birth and lineage. Their inquiries availed to show that she was an Englishwoman. No connection of hers could be found in Virginia. Since then, eminent historians and genealogists, notably Mr. Hayden and Mr. Moncure Conway, have given time and research "to the most important problem in Virginia genealogy, — Who and whence was Mary Johnson, widow, mother of Mary Washington?" The Montagu family has claimed her and discovered that the griffin of the house of Montagu sometimes displaced the raven in General Washington's crest; and it was asserted that the griffin had been discovered perched upon the tomb of one Katharine Washington, at Piankatnk. To verify this, the editor of the *William and Mary Quarterly* journeyed to the tomb of Katharine, and found the crest to be neither a raven or a griffin but a wolf's head!

It matters little whether or no the mother of Washington came of noble English blood; for while an honorable ancestry is a gift of the gods, and should be regarded as such by those who possess it, an honorable ancestry is not merely a titled ancestry. Descent from nobles may be interesting, but it can only be honorable when the strawberry leaves have crowned a wise head and the ermine warmed a true heart. Three hundred years ago an

English wit declared that "Noblemen have seldom anything in print save their clothes."

Knowing that Mary Johnson was an Englishwoman, we might, had we learned her maiden name, have rejoiced in tracing her to some family of position, learning, or wealth; for position and learning are desirable gifts, and wealth has been, and ever will be, a synonym of power. It can buy the title and command genius. It can win friendship, pour sunshine into dark places, cause the desert to bloom. It can prolong and sweeten life, and alleviate the pangs of death.

These brilliant settings, for the woman we would fain honor, are denied us. That she was a jewel in herself, there can be no doubt. We must judge of her as we judge of a tree by its fruits; as we judge a fountain by the streams issuing therefrom. She was the mother of a great woman "whose precepts and discipline in the education of her illustrious son, himself acknowledged to have been the foundation of his fortune and fame: — a woman who possessed not the ambitions which are common to meaner minds." This was said of her by one who knew Mary, the mother of Washington, — Mary, the daughter of the obscure Widow Johnson.

Indeed, she was so obscure that the only clew we have to her identity as Joseph Ball's wife is found in a clause of his will written June 25, 1711, a few weeks before his death, where he mentions "Eliza Johnson, daughter of my beloved wife."

Until a few months ago it was supposed that Mary Ball spent her childhood and girlhood at Epping Forest, in Lancaster County; that she had no schooling outside her home circle until her seventeenth year; that she visited Williamsburg with her mother about that time; that in 1728 her mother died, and she went to England to visit her brother Joseph, a wealthy barrister in London. Her biographers accepted these supposed facts and wove around them an enthusiastic romance. They indulged in

fancies of her social triumphs in Williamsburg, the gay capital of the colony; of her beauty, her lovers; how she was the "Rose of Epping Forest," the "Toast of the Gallants of her Day." They followed her to England, — whence also Augustine Washington was declared to have followed her, — sat with her for her portrait, and brought her back either the bride, or soon to become the bride, of Augustine Washington; brought back also the portrait, and challenged the world to disprove the fact that it must be genuine and a capital likeness, for had it not "George Washington's cast of countenance"?

The search-light of investigation had been turned in vain upon the county records of Lancaster. There she had not left even a fairy footprint. What joy then to learn the truth from an accidental discovery by a Union soldier of a bundle of old letters in an abandoned house in Yorktown at the close of the Civil War! These letters seemed to lift the veil of obscurity from the youthful unmarried years of Mary, the mother of Washington. The first letter is from Williamsburg, 1722: —

> "Dear Sukey — Madam Ball of Lancaster and her sweet Molly have gone Hom. Mama thinks Molly the Comliest Maiden She Knows. She is about 16 yrs. old, is taller than Me, is verry Sensable, Modest and Loving. Her Hair is like unto Flax. Her Eyes are the colour of Yours, and her Chekes are like May blossoms. I wish You could see Her."

A letter was also found purporting to have been written by Mary herself to her brother in England; defective in orthography, to be sure, but written in a plain, round hand: —

> "We have not had a schoolmaster in our neighborhood until now in five years. We have now a

young minister living with us who was educated at Oxford, took orders and came over as assistant to Rev. Kemp at Gloucester. That parish is too poor to keep both, and he teaches school for his board. He teaches Sister Susie and me, and Madam Carter's boy and two girls. I am now learning pretty fast. Mama and Susie and all send love to you and Mary. This from your loving sister,

"Mary Ball."

The fragment of another letter was found by the Union soldier. This letter is signed "Lizzie Burwell" and written to "Nelly Car — — ," but here, alas! the paper is torn. Only a part of a sentence can be deciphered. "... understand Molly Ball is going Home with her Brother, a lawyer who lives in England. Her Mother is dead three months ago." The date is "May ye 15th, 1728," and Mary Ball is now twenty years old.

Could any admiring biographer ask more? Flaxen hair, May blossoms — delightful suggestion of Virginia peach-blooms, flowering almond, hedge roses! "Sensible, Modest, and Loving!" What an enchanting picture of the girlhood of the most eminent of American women! The flying steeds of imagination were given free rein. Away they went! They bore her to the gay life in Williamsburg, then the provincial capital and centre of fashionable society in the Old Dominion. There she rode in the heavy coaches drawn by four horses, lumbering through the dusty streets: or she paid her morning visits in the sedan-chairs, with tops hitherto flat but now beginning to arch to admit the lofty head-dresses of the dames within. She met, perhaps, the haughty soldier ex-Governor, who could show a ball which had passed through his coat at Blenheim: and also her Serene Highness, Lady Spotswood, immortalized by William Byrd as "gracious, moderate, and good-humored." Who had not heard of her pier glasses broken by the tame deer and how he fell back upon a table laden with rare bric-a-brac to