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Story and Incident.

From the Treasury.

The Religious Character of Washington.

BY RT. REV. WM. STEVENS PERRY,
Bishop of Iowa.

Born at a time when, in his home and family, the greatest reverence was shown to the forms and usages of religion, the record of his baptism is still extant, and there is no reason to doubt that he, who at the font in the old Pope's Creek church was made "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," was, by the pious care and teaching of parents and godparents, instructed not alone in "the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments," but in those "other parts of the Church's Catechism," which a child "ought to know and believe to his soul's health." It was at a time when the training and disciplining of the home took the place of the public school or the academy of a later day; and so, up to his twelfth year, the young Washington had the loving care and oversight of his parents.

At the age of thirteen he drew up, from works he had read, a number of resolutions for the conduct of his life. We find among these aphorisms the following: "When you speak of God or his attributes, let it be seriously, in reverence;" "Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called Conscience;" "Honor and obey your parents, whatever may be their condition." Two years later his filial piety was shown in his relinquishment, at his mother's desire, of his purpose of entering the British navy, in strict fulfillment of this latter resolution, based on the "commandment with promise."

The youth thus trained proved worthy of his teachers, and true to the lessons of religion and morality they taught. We are not surprised to find him, in his early manhood, when at the head of an expedition against the French and savages, counselled by his "paternal adviser," Mr. William Fairfax, of Belvoir, in these words:

I will not doubt your having public prayer in the camp, especially when the Indian families are your guests, that they, seeing your plain manner of worship, may have their curiosity to be informed why we do not use the ceremonies of the French, which, being well explained to their understanding, will more and more dispose them to receive one baptism and unite in strict bonds of cordial friendship.

In 1759 Washington married, and took his seat in the House of Burgesses. He became, at the outset of his domestic life, interested in the formation of the interests of the Church; and the old vestry-book at Truro parish affords abundant proof of his personal share in the erection of those historic shrines known as Payne's and Pohick churches. We find the young vestryman and churchwarden—for such he assumed again—occupied in sending a friend and neighbor to England for Holy Orders, in procuring a glebe, and in fitting up a house for their chosen pastor and priest. It is in keeping with his interest in the work of his parish that we learn of his gifts for the adornment of the church, the site of which he himself had chosen, and of his importation from England of pulpit cushions and altar cloths of crimson velvet with gold fringe, and folio Prayer Book, bound sumptuously in morocco, and lettered in gilt with the parish name.

While thus occupied in promoting the temporal interests of the Church, it is the testimony of his rector, the Rev. Lee Massey, "that he was equally attentive to his spiritual duties." "I never knew," writes Rev. Mr. Massey, "so constant an attendant on church as Washington. His behavior in the house of God was ever so reverential that it produced the happiest effect upon my congregation, and greatly assisted me in my pulpit labors. No company ever kept him from church." Abundant testimony is given that he was a frequent and devout recipient of the holy communion of the body and blood of Christ.

On the very day after taking command of the Continental Army, in 1775, the following order was issued:

The General requires and expects of all officers and soldiers not engaged in actual duty a punctual attendance on divine service, to implore the blessings of heaven upon the means used for our safety and defense.

On May 15, 1776, Congress having appointed a day of humiliation and prayer, the following order was given:

The General commands all officers and soldiers to pay strict obedience to the order of the Continental Congress, that by their unfeigned and pious observance of their religious duties, they may incline the Lord and Giver of victory to prosper our armies.

He forbade gambling, drunkenness, and profanity—"wicked practices, hitherto but little known in the American army," adding, "We can have but little hope of the blessing of God if we insult him by our blasphemies, vices so

low and without temptation that every man of sense and character detests them."

In anticipation of an impending battle, he thus addressed his soldiers:

The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of the army. Let us rely upon the goodness of the cause and the aid of the Supreme Being, in whose hand victory is, to animate and encourage us to noble actions. . . .

We find him referring his successes to "that divine Providence which has manifestly appeared in our behalf during the whole struggle;" while, in referring to his reverses, he adds, "All would have been lost but for that bountiful Providence which has never failed us in the hour of distress."

On the proclamation of peace, in the year 1783, . . . the General called upon the chaplain of the forces "to render thanks to God for his overruling the wrath of man to his own glory, and causing the rage of war to cease." A few months later he concluded a letter to the Governor of the State with the—

Earnest prayer that God may have you and the State over which you preside in his holy protection; that he would incline the citizens to obedience to government; to entertain a brotherly love for one another, for their fellow-citizens of the United States in general, and particularly for those who have served in the field; that he would be pleased to dispose them to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean themselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper which were the characteristics of the divine Author of our blessed religion, without a humble imitation of whose example in those things we can never hope to be a happy nation.

Is it to be wondered, then, that when the "last enemy" came, the patriot could say, "I am not afraid to go!" The strength which had been his through life was not to fail him now. His place of refuge was in the Everlasting Arms. The Word of God was on his bed when he died. She who so often shared with him the holiest offices of their common faith ministered to his last wants. His words were: "'Tis well." He closed his own eyes, folded his arms across his breast and "fell asleep."

From the Independent.

Washington as a Christian.

BY JAS. M. BUCKLEY, D. D.

Editor of *Christian Advocate*.

In March and April, 1896, Gen. A. W. Greely contributed to *The Ladies' Home Journal*, the first article being on "The Personal Side of Washington," and the second upon his "Domestic and Religious Life." These articles are of exceeding interest. They treat equitably several unfounded or exaggerated criticisms: point out that though Washington drank moderately of the customary beverages, he soon noted the ravages made by drink, and early in his military career deplored drunkenness as a serious vice, and counselled his nephew to "refrain from drink, which is the source of all evil and the ruin of half the workmen of this country."

He held the prevalent opinion of lotteries, patronized them for charitable purposes, but did not consider them gambling, though he indulged moderately in the games of chance then common.

General Greely defends Washington from the charge of being unfilial, and does it so conclusively as to merit the thanks of the American people.

Thus far General Greely makes a fair statement of the facts, and answers incidentally many of the criticisms against the Father of his Country in the animadverting works to which I have referred. If the facts show Washington to be a man of like passions with his countrymen, no harm is done to his reputation, since he so controlled them that the sum of his character far transcended that of any of his contemporaries, most of his predecessors, and all who have appeared in public life since he finished his career.

But when the General comes to the religious life of Washington, I think that he has unintentionally done his memory a wrong and has made in an *ex cathedra* style a number of incorrect statements.

In view of the state of the country, the burdens upon the mind of Washington, the embarrassment of his estate (the result of his unavoidable neglect), the necessity of corresponding with patriots in every part of the land, the unfounded disparagement of his methods and motives, and frequently the lack of sympathy of the Continental Congress with him, the mutinous spirit often displayed by his soldiers, and the cabals against himself arising here and there, it is not at all wonderful that not having been brought up a strict Sabbatarian in the Puritan sense of the word, he should not regularly attend church during the greater part of his public life; and not being fluent in conversation, and being averse to everything of the nature of cant, it is not wonderful that he should not regularly communicate. That he should visit all denominations when he did attend service, as he desired to unite all in support of the Government, is obvious. That he should visit the Roman Catholic Church, was an exhibition of tolerance and in harmony with his desire

to win over the French Canadians to the support of the struggle for independence—a subject of much thought with him, and upon which he often spoke.

As he was a self-contained and generally a silent man, he would not be expected on ordinary occasions to express his feelings on the subject of religion. Yet Irving records that on his return in 1773, when he found that his stepdaughter, Miss Custis, who had long been an object of extreme solicitude on account of her feeble health, was in the last stage of consumption, "though not a man given to bursts of sensibility, he is said on this occasion to have evinced the deepest affliction, falling by her bedside and pouring out earnest prayers for her recovery."

The same authority informs us that when in camp before Boston in 1775, "he had prayers morning and evening, and was regular in attendance at the church at which he was a communicant." In 1776 he issued a general order:

That the troops may have an opportunity of attending public worship, as well as to take some rest after the great fatigue they have gone through, the General in future excuses them from fatigue duty on Sunday, except at the ship-yards or on special occasions, until further orders. . . . He hopes that the officers will, by example, as well as by influence, endeavor to check it [profane swearing], and that both they and the men will reflect that we can have but little hope of the blessings of heaven on our arms if we insult it by our impiety and folly.

In 1789, Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, in their capacity as bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, presented a congratulatory address to George Washington. Washington required of them a copy of the address before it was formally delivered, and appointed a day when he would receive the bishops. The address said:

We have received the most grateful satisfaction from the humble and entire dependence on the great Governor of the universe which you have repeatedly expressed, acknowledging Him the source of every blessing. . . . And hence we enjoy a holy expectation that you will always prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine and vital religion, the grand end of our creation and present probationary existence. We promise you our fervent prayers to the throne of grace that God Almighty may endue you with all the grace and gifts of His Holy Spirit, etc.

In Washington's reply, after returning thanks to them individually, and to their Society collectively, for their expressions of affection and joy offered in their behalf of his late appointment, Washington said:

It shall be my endeavor to manifest the purity of my inclinations for promoting the happiness of mankind, as well as the sincerity of my desires to contribute whatever may be in my power toward the civil and religious liberties of the American people. In pursuing this line of conduct, I hope, by the assistance of divine Providence, not altogether to disappoint the confidence which you have been pleased to repose in me. . . . After mentioning that I trust the people of every denomination who demean themselves as good citizens will have occasion to be convinced that I shall always strive to prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine vital religion, I must assure you in particular that I take in the kindest part the promise you make of presenting your prayers at the throne of grace for me, and that I likewise implore the divine benediction upon yourselves and religious community.

The universal testimony of friend and foe, of adverse and commendatory critic, is that there was no cant in the composition of George Washington. If that be true, the repetition of the phrases "genuine vital religion," and "the throne of grace," implied an honest profession of his positive belief in the power of prayer, in the providence of God, and his recognition of a distinction between mere formality in religion and its vital principle.

It is noteworthy that neither the President, nor those evangelical bishops, who had the utmost horror of worldliness, and the most exalted and concentrated estimate of the dependence of all Christians upon Jesus Christ, mentioned the name of Christ, their thoughts being occupied with the idea of God as the "Governor among the nations."

Francis Asbury knew Washington well, and with him had many personal and friendly interviews, availing himself of such whenever opportunity offered, explaining to them the peculiar views of personal religious experience of which he was the exponent. In his Journal, January 4, 1800, he wrote:

Slow moved the post on New Year's Day and brought the heart-distressing information of the death of Washington, who departed this life, December 14, 1799. Washington, the calm, independent chief, the disinterested friend, first father and temporal saviour of his country, under divine protection and direction. . . . At all times he honored the providence of God and never was he ashamed of his Redeemer, we believe he died not fearing death.

Irving, in his "Life of Washington," Volume I, page 285, speaking of Washington's relation to the Church of England, says:

Washington was vestryman of two parishes, Fairfax and Truro, the parochial church of the former was at Alexandria, ten miles from Mount Vernon; and the latter at Pohick, about seven miles. The church at Pohick was rebuilt on a plan of his own, and in a great measure at his expense. At one or other of these churches he attended every Sunday, when the weather and roads permitted. His demeanor was reverential and devout. Mrs. Washington knelt during the prayers, he always stood as was the custom at that time. Both were communicants.

The period covered by these statements is from 1759 to 1763, inclusive.

The presumption this affords that Washington was a communicant, is derived from the fact that Irving had an

opportunity and took great pains to ascertain all the minor facts, and that he affirms it as something universally known, of which there was no question—in addition to the fact that he was a vestryman, which, neither then nor now, could shed any light upon the question of the incumbent's being a communicant.

Communing With the Presbyterians At Morristown, N. J.*

I will now take up the disputed account of Washington's taking the holy communion under peculiarly interesting circumstances when his army lay encamped in the environs of Morristown, N. J. I am a native of New Jersey, and heard that statement in my boyhood from the sons and daughters of persons who were contemporary with the events; and on removing to Morristown, seventeen years ago, I took the pains to inquire among the descendants of the most influential families whose grandparents and great-grandparents were contemporary with Washington in that place.

The late Dr. Samuel Hanson Cox first attracted general attention to this subject, having received the account from Dr. Hillyer, who had it from the lips of the Rev. Dr. Timothy Johnes himself, who was pastor of the church at that time. The only denominations having organization in Morristown were the Presbyterian and Baptist, and it was then the custom of the former to administer the Holy Communion semi-annually. The Presbyterian church was then used as a hospital for the smallpox patients, that disease being epidemic in the army; and the religious services were held on the grounds of the parsonage. According to Dr. Hillyer, in a morning of the previous week the General, after his customary inspection of the camp, visited Dr. Johnes and said:

"Doctor, I understand that the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated with you next Sunday. I would learn if it accords with the canons of your Church to admit communicants of another denomination?"

The Doctor rejoined: "Most certainly: ours is not the Presbyterian table, but the Lord's table; and we hence give the Lord's invitation to all his followers of whatever name."

The General replied: "I am glad of it; that is as it ought to be; but as I was not quite sure of the fact, I thought I would ascertain it from yourself, as I propose to join with you on that occasion. Though a member of the Church of England, I have no exclusive partialities."

On the next Sabbath the General was present, seated on his own camp-stool brought over, from the residence which he occupied, for the purpose, and communed with the people.

This is the story as given in the Presbyterian Magazine in articles in the February and December numbers for 1851.

Being convinced that if that story was correct, such an event would have been commonly known in all the important families who have descended directly from the most influential inhabitants of Morristown, I began an investigation among them, with the following results:

I. First I place a certificate signed by Mrs. Anna Johnes Little, wife of the Hon. Theodore Little, a well-known lawyer in Morristown, an elder in the Presbyterian church, and President of the First National Bank.

It has always been the tradition in my family that Washington took the communion in a hollow back of the parsonage during the ministry of my great-grandfather, the Rev. Timothy Johnes, D. D., who was pastor of the Presbyterian church for fifty years. The churches were at that time used as hospitals, and the services were held out-of-doors behind the parsonage.

Washington frequently asked Dr. Johnes' advice during his residence in Morristown, and they were on the most friendly terms. [Signed] MRS. ANNA JOHNES LITTLE, January, 1898.

II. This certificate is signed by two ladies descended on both sides from important families in Morristown at the time referred to.

MILLS ST., MORRISTOWN, N. J. I have always heard, from my father and mother both, this story: That General Washington partook of the communion at the outdoor service held in the little hollow behind Parson Johnes' house. General Washington asked him if he might commune with them, and Dr. Johnes' reply was that it was the Lord's table. It was always understood that such was the case. [Signed] IRENE MILLS, MARIA B. MILLS, January, 1898.

III. The following is from the Hon. John Whitehead, United States Commis-

*In our issue of last week Dr. Buckley gave at length the evidence to prove that George Washington communed with the Presbyterian church while his army lay encamped at Morristown, N. J. The earliest form of the story which he gives is taken from the Presbyterian Magazine of 1851. We are indebted to Mr. J. G. Batterson, of Hartford, Conn. for calling our attention to the fact that the story is told in Dick's Works, page 148, where it is quoted from Stuart's "Three Years in America" while Stuart gets it from David Hosack's "Memoirs of De Witt Clinton," published in 1829, which seems to give us the earliest printed authority for the facts. Dr. Hosack was born in 1769, was educated in Columbia College and the College of New Jersey, and received the degree of M. D. in Philadelphia in 1791; after which he was professor of botany and materia medica in Columbia College. He was president for eight years of the New York Historical Society, and was a man who was not likely to be deceived on a matter of this sort. He tells the story precisely as given by Dr. Buckley.—Independent (of a week later).

sioner for New Jersey, and author of the "Judicial and Civil History of New Jersey," and of several hundred historical articles in the historical and analogous publications in the State:

MORRISTOWN, N. J., Feb. 16, 1897. My Dear Dr. Buckley.—My relations with Morristown, prior to my continued residence there, which began in 1861, have always been of the most intimate character. My ancestors were Morristown people extending back four or five generations. I cannot remember the time when I did not believe fully that Washington, while here with the army during the Revolution, partook of the communion with the Presbyterian church. It was one of those traditions which are believed as much as though they were actual fact, known to have occurred. So, when I heard some years ago that it was doubted whether such an occurrence had actually happened, I took measures to satisfy myself on the subject. I was quite astounded and more disappointed to learn that there was so little evidence on the subject. The conviction of its truth was shattered, and I began to imagine that, after all, it only rested on tradition, and, almost in despair, I gave up the attempt to fortify my belief.

But, to my very great delight, I was furnished with proof which seemed to be almost irrefragable. An old lady, one of the representatives of our most respected families, informed me that her father, who was then a ruling elder in the Presbyterian church, told her that he was present on the occasion when General Washington partook of the elements at the table, and that he himself handed him the bread and wine. . . . Very truly and sincerely yours, J. WHITEHEAD.

IV. Knowing that the Burnham family have a Colonial and Revolutionary ancestry, unsurpassed, if equalled, in the State in the number of its lines, I applied to the Hon. Frederick G. Burnham for information upon this subject.

MORRISTOWN, N. J., February 15, 1897. Dear Dr. Buckley.— . . . When Washington with his army was encamped at Morristown, I suppose in the winter of 1777, but the year my aunt did not mention, her father, my great-grandfather, was in the army; and it greatly delighted her from time to time to tell me about the Revolutionary matters which happened at that time. The statement which she made to me is as follows:

The Presbyterian church building of Morristown had been handed over to the army to be used as a hospital. The Rev. Mr. Johnes, then its pastor, resided on the property now used by the Memorial Hospital of Morristown. His congregation, having given up their church building, were accustomed to worship on the Sabbath on a part of the grounds belonging to Mr. Johnes' residence, where, as my aunt said, "the cold winter winds whistled over the heads of the people." Such an arrangement was made by placing benches and chairs around the pastor, that with their winter clothing and by the help of foot-stoves, the people kept reasonably warm. In this secluded spot, with nothing over them but the blue sky, the congregation worshipped from Sunday to Sunday, except in stormy weather.

As the time approached, when in accordance with the Presbyterian usage the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was to be administered, Washington wrote to Mr. Johnes that he understood such to be the case; that he was unaware of the rules obtaining in the Presbyterian Church, as he was a communicant of the Established Church of England, but that if it was in accordance with the rules of the Presbyterian Church, it would give him great pleasure to worship with them on that occasion and to partake of the Sacrament. To this letter the Rev. Mr. Johnes replied that the custom of the Presbyterian Church was to invite all Christians to the table of the Lord, as it was in no wise an ordinance belonging to the Presbyterian Church alone, and that it would give him great pleasure to welcome General Washington at the service on the coming Sabbath. When the next Sabbath came, the usual preparations for the church service and for the administration of the Lord's Supper were made in the open air, on the spot where they were accustomed to worship, as I have said. General Washington attended, was seated with the congregation, remained through the service, and there partook of the Lord's Supper. The only thing which I wish I could remember distinctly, is whether my aunt said that she was present herself and saw General Washington. Very truly yours, FREDERICK G. BURNHAM.

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