

FOUR GREAT AMERICANS

**FOUR GREAT
AMERICANS**

BY

JAMES BALDWIN

YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS

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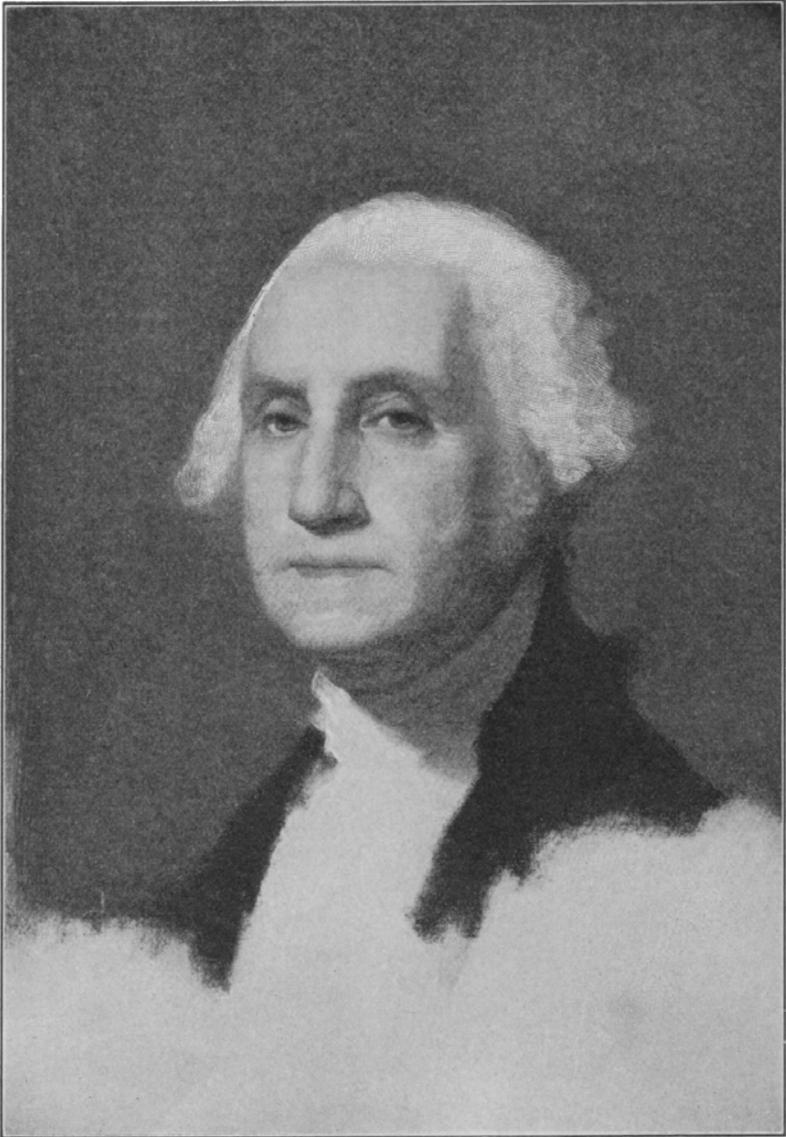
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**THE STORY OF
GEORGE WASHINGTON**



George Washington

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When Washington was a Boy

When George Washington was a boy there was no United States. The land was here, just as it is now, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific; but nearly all of it was wild and unknown.

Between the Atlantic Ocean and the Allegheny Mountains there were thirteen colonies, or great settlements. The most of the people who lived in these colonies were English people, or the children of English people; and so the King of England made their laws and appointed their governors.

The newest of the colonies was Georgia, which was settled the year after George Washington was born.

The oldest colony was Virginia, which had been settled one hundred and twenty-five years. It was also

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the richest colony, and more people were living in it than in any other.

There were only two or three towns in Virginia at that time, and they were quite small.

Most of the people lived on farms or on big plantations, where they raised whatever they needed to eat. They also raised tobacco, which they sent to England to be sold.

The farms, or plantations, were often far apart, with stretches of thick woods between them. Nearly every one was close to a river, or some other large body of water; for there are many rivers in Virginia.

There were no roads, such as we have nowadays, but only paths through the woods. When people wanted to travel from place to place, they had to go on foot, or on horseback, or in small boats.

A few of the rich men who lived on the big plantations had coaches; and now and then they would drive out in grand style behind four or six horses, with a fine array of servants and outriders following them. But they could not drive far where there were no roads, and we can hardly understand how they got any pleasure out of it.

Nearly all the work on the plantations was done by slaves. Ships had been bringing negroes from Africa for more than a hundred years, and now nearly half the people in Virginia were blacks.

Very often, also, poor white men from England were sold as slaves for a few years in order to pay for their passage across the ocean. When their freedom

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was given to them they continued to work at whatever they could find to do; or they cleared small farms in the woods for themselves, or went farther to the west and became woodsmen and hunters.

There was but very little money in Virginia at that time, and, indeed, there was not much use for it. For what could be done with money where there were no shops worth speaking of, and no stores, and nothing to buy?

The common people raised flax and wool, and wove their own cloth; and they made their own tools and furniture. The rich people did the same; but for their better or finer goods they sent to England.

For you must know that in all this country there were no great mills for spinning and weaving as there are now; there were no factories of any kind; there were no foundries where iron could be melted and shaped into all kinds of useful and beautiful things.

When George Washington was a boy the world was not much like it is now.

His Homes

George Washington's father owned a large plantation on the western shore of the Potomac River. George's great-grandfather, John Washington, had settled upon it nearly eighty years before, and there the family had dwelt ever since.

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This plantation was in Westmoreland county, not quite forty miles above the place where the Potomac flows into Chesapeake Bay. By looking at your map of Virginia, you will see that the river is very broad there.

On one side of the plantation, and flowing through it, there was a creek, called Bridge's Creek; and for this reason the place was known as the Bridge's Creek Plantation.

It was here, on the 22d of February, 1732, that George Washington was born.

Although his father was a rich man, the house in which he lived was neither very large nor very fine—at least it would not be thought so now.

It was a square, wooden building, with four rooms on the ground floor and an attic above.

The eaves were low, and the roof was long and sloping. At each end of the house there was a huge chimney; and inside were big fireplaces, one for the kitchen and one for the "great room" where visitors were received.

But George did not live long in this house. When he was about three years old his father moved to another plantation which he owned, near Hunting Creek several miles farther up the river. This new plantation was at first known as the Washington Plantation, but it is now called Mount Vernon.

Four years after this the house of the Washingtons was burned down. But Mr. Washington had still other lands on the Rappahannock River. He had also

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an interest in some iron mines that were being opened there. And so to this place the family was now taken.

The house by the Rappahannock was very much like the one at Bridge's Creek. It stood on high ground, overlooking the river and some low meadows; and on the other side of the river was the village of Fredericksburg, which at that time was a very small village indeed.

George was now about seven years old.

His Schools and Schoolmasters

There were no good schools in Virginia at that time. In fact, the people did not care much about learning.

There were few educated men besides the parsons, and even some of the parsons were very ignorant.

It was the custom of some of the richest families to send their eldest sons to England to the great schools there. But it is doubtful if these young men learned much about books.

They spent a winter or two in the gay society of London, and were taught the manners of gentlemen—and that was about all.

George Washington's father, when a young man, had spent some time at Appleby School in Eng-

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land, and George's half-brothers, Lawrence and Augustine, who were several years older than he, had been sent to the same school.

But book-learning was not thought to be of much use. To know how to manage the business of a plantation, to be polite to one's equals, to be a leader in the affairs of the colony—this was thought to be the best education.

And so, for most of the young men, it was enough if they could read and write a little and keep a few simple accounts. As for the girls, the parson might give them a few lessons now and then; and if they learned good manners and could write letters to their friends, what more could they need?

George Washington's first teacher was a poor sexton, whose name was Mr. Hobby. There is a story that he had been too poor to pay his passage from England, and that he had, therefore, been sold to Mr. Washington as a slave for a short time; but how true this is, I cannot say.

From Mr. Hobby, George learned to spell easy words, and perhaps to write a little; but, although he afterward became a very careful and good penman, he was a poor speller as long as he lived.

When George was about eleven years old his father died. We do not know what his father's intentions had been regarding him. But possibly, if he had lived, he would have given George the best education that his means would afford.

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But now everything was changed. The plantation at Hunting Creek, and, indeed almost all the rest of Mr. Washington's great estate, became the property of the eldest son, Lawrence.

George was sent to Bridge's Creek to live for a while with his brother Augustine, who now owned the old home plantation there. The mother and the younger children remained on the Rappahannock farm.

While at Bridge's Creek, George was sent to school to a Mr. Williams, who had lately come from England.

There are still to be seen some exercises which the lad wrote at that time. There is also a little book, called *The Young Man's Companion*, from which he copied, with great care, a set of rules for good behavior and right living.

Not many boys twelve years old would care for such a book nowadays. But you must know that in those days there were no books for children, and, indeed, very few for older people.

The maxims and wise sayings which George copied were, no doubt, very interesting to him—so interesting that many of them were never forgotten.

There are many other things also in this *Young Man's Companion*, and we have reason to believe that George studied them all.

There are short chapters on arithmetic and surveying, rules for the measuring of land and lumber, and a set of forms for notes, deeds, and other legal

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documents. A knowledge of these things was, doubtless, of greater importance to him than the reading of many books would have been.

Just what else George may have studied in Mr. William's school I cannot say. But all this time he was growing to be a stout, manly boy, tall and strong, and well-behaved. And both his brothers and himself were beginning to think of what he should do when he should become a man.

Going to Sea

Once every summer a ship came up the river to the plantation, and was moored near the shore.

It had come across the sea from far-away England, and it brought many things for those who were rich enough to pay for them.

It brought bonnets and pretty dresses for George's mother and sisters; it brought perhaps a hat and a tailor-made suit for himself; it brought tools and furniture, and once a yellow coach that had been made in London, for his brother.

When all these things had been taken ashore, the ship would hoist her sails and go on, farther up the river, to leave goods at other plantations.

In a few weeks it would come back and be moored again at the same place.

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Then there was a busy time on shore. The tobacco that had been raised during the last year must be carried on shipboard to be taken to the great tobacco markets in England.

The slaves on the plantation were running back and forth, rolling barrels and carrying bales of tobacco down to the landing.

Letters were written to friends in England, and orders were made out for the goods that were to be brought back next year.

But in a day or two, all this stir was over. The sails were again spread, and the ship glided away on its long voyage across the sea.

George had seen this ship coming and going every year since he could remember. He must have thought how pleasant it would be to sail away to foreign lands and see the many wonderful things that are there.

And then, like many another active boy, he began to grow tired of the quiet life on the farm, and wish that he might be a sailor.

He was now about fourteen years old. Since the death of his father, his mother had found it hard work, with her five children, to manage her farm on the Rappahannock and make everything come out even at the end of each year. Was it not time that George should be earning something for himself? But what should he do?

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He wanted to go to sea. His brother Lawrence, and even his mother, thought that this might be the best thing.

A bright boy like George would not long be a common sailor. He would soon make his way to a high place in the king's navy. So, at least, his friends believed.

And so the matter was at last settled. A sea-captain who was known to the family, agreed to take George with him. He was to sail in a short time.

The day came. His mother, his brothers, his sisters, were all there to bid him good-bye. But in the meanwhile a letter had come to his mother, from his uncle who lived in England.

"If you care for the boy's future," said the letter, "do not let him go to sea. Places in the king's navy are not easy to obtain. If he begins as a sailor, he will never be aught else."

The letter convinced George's mother—it half convinced his brothers—that this going to sea would be a sad mistake. But George, like other boys of his age, was headstrong. He would not listen to reason. A sailor he would be.

The ship was in the river waiting for him. A boat had come to the landing to take him on board.

The little chest which held his clothing had been carried down to the bank. George was in high glee at the thought of going.

"Good-bye, mother," he said.

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He stood on the doorstep and looked back into the house. He saw the kind faces of those whom he loved. He began to feel very sad at the thought of leaving them.

“Good-bye, George!”

He saw the tears welling up in his mother’s eyes. He saw them rolling down her cheeks. He knew now that she did not want him to go. He could not bear to see her grief.

“Mother, I have changed my mind,” he said. “I will not be a sailor. I will not leave you.”

Then he turned to the black boy who was waiting by the door, and said, “Run down to the landing and tell them not to put the chest on board. Tell them that I have thought differently of the matter and that I am going to stay at home.”

If George had not changed his mind, but had really gone to sea, how different the history of this country would have been!

He now went to his studies with a better will than before; and although he read but few books he learned much that was useful to him in life. He studied surveying with especial care, and made himself as thorough in that branch of knowledge as it was possible to do with so few advantages.

The Young Surveyor

Lawrence Washington was about fourteen years older than his brother George.

As I have already said, he had been to England and had spent some time at Appleby School. He had served in the king's army for a little while, and had been with Admiral Vernon's squadron in the West Indies.

He had formed so great a liking for the admiral that when he came home he changed the name of his plantation at Hunting Creek, and called it Mount Vernon—a name by which it is still known.

Not far from Mount Vernon there was another fine plantation called Belvoir, that was owned by William Fairfax, an English gentleman of much wealth and influence. Now this Mr. Fairfax had a young daughter, as wise as she was beautiful; and so, what should Lawrence Washington do but ask her to be his wife? He built a large house at Mount Vernon with a great porch fronting on the Potomac; and when Miss Fairfax became Mrs. Washington and went into this home as its mistress, people said that there was not a handsomer or happier young couple in all Virginia.

After young George Washington had changed his mind about going to sea, he went up to Mount Vernon to live with his elder brother. For Lawrence had great love for the boy, and treated him as his father would have done.

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At Mount Vernon George kept on with his studies in surveying. He had a compass and surveyor's chain, and hardly a day passed that he was not out on the plantation, running lines and measuring his brother's fields.

Sometimes when he was busy at this kind of work, a tall, white-haired gentleman would come over from Belvoir to see what he was doing and to talk with him. This gentleman was Sir Thomas Fairfax, a cousin of the owner of Belvoir. He was sixty years old, and had lately come from England to look after his lands in Virginia; for he was the owner of many thousands of acres among the mountains and in the wild woods.

Sir Thomas was a courtly old gentleman, and he had seen much of the world. He was a fine scholar; and had been a soldier, and then a man of letters; and he belonged to a rich and noble family.

It was not long until he and George were the best of friends. Often they would spend the morning together, talking or surveying; and in the afternoon they would ride out with servants and hounds, hunting foxes and making fine sport of it among the woods and hills.

And when Sir Thomas Fairfax saw how manly and brave his young friend was, and how very exact and careful in all that he did, he said: "Here is a boy who gives promise of great things. I can trust him."

Before the winter was over he had made a bargain with George to survey his lands that lay beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains.

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I have already told you that at this time nearly all the country west of the mountains was a wild and unknown region. In fact, all the western part of Virginia was an unbroken wilderness, with only here and there a hunter's camp or the solitary hut of some daring woodsman.

But Sir Thomas hoped that by having the land surveyed, and some part of it laid out into farms, people might be persuaded to go there and settle. And who in all the colony could do this work better than his young friend, George Washington?

It was a bright day in March, 1748, when George started out on his first trip across the mountains. His only company was a young son of William Fairfax of Belvoir.

The two friends were mounted on good horses; and both had guns, for there was fine hunting in the woods. It was nearly a hundred miles to the mountain-gap through which they passed into the country beyond. As there were no roads, but only paths through the forest, they could not travel very fast.

After several days they reached the beautiful valley of the Shenandoah. They now began their surveying. They went up the river for some distance; then they crossed and went down on the other side. At last they reached the Potomac River, near where Harpers Ferry now stands.

At night they slept sometimes by a camp fire in the woods, and sometimes in the rude hut of a settler or a hunter. They were often wet and cold. They cooked their meat by broiling it on sticks above the

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coals. They ate without dishes, and drank water from the running streams.

One day they met a party of Indians, the first red men they had seen. There were thirty of them, with their bodies painted in true savage style; for they were just going home from a war with some other tribe.

The Indians were very friendly to the young surveyors. It was evening, and they built a huge fire under the trees. Then they danced their war dance around it, and sang and yelled and made hideous sport until far in the night.

To George and his friend it was a strange sight; but they were brave young men, and not likely to be afraid even though the danger had been greater.

They had many other adventures in the woods of which I cannot tell you in this little book—shooting wild game, swimming rivers, climbing mountains. But about the middle of April they returned in safety to Mount Vernon.

It would seem that the object of this first trip was to get a general knowledge of the extent of Sir Thomas Fairfax's great woodland estate—to learn where the richest bottom lands lay, and where were the best hunting grounds.

The young men had not done much if any real surveying; they had been exploring.

George Washington had written an account of everything in a little notebook which he carried with him.

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Sir Thomas was so highly pleased with the report which the young men brought back that he made up his mind to move across the Blue Ridge and spend the rest of his life on his own lands.

And so, that very summer, he built in the midst of the great woods a hunting lodge which he called Greenway Court. It was a large, square house, with broad gables and a long roof sloping almost to the ground.

When he moved into this lodge he expected soon to build a splendid mansion and make a grand home there, like the homes he had known in England. But time passed, and as the lodge was roomy and comfortable, he still lived in it and put off beginning another house.

Washington was now seventeen years old. Through the influence of Sir Thomas Fairfax he was appointed public surveyor; and nothing would do but that he must spend the most of his time at Greenway Court and keep on with the work that he had begun.

For the greater part of three years he worked in the woods and among the mountains, surveying Sir Thomas's lands. And Sir Thomas paid him well—a doubloon (\$8.24) for each day, and more than that if the work was very hard.

But there were times when the young surveyor did not go out to work, but stayed at Greenway Court with his good friend, Sir Thomas. The old gentleman had something of a library, and on days when they could neither work nor hunt, George spent the time in

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reading. He read the *Spectator* and a history of England, and possibly some other works.

And so it came about that the three years which young Washington spent in surveying were of much profit to him.

The work in the open air gave him health and strength. He gained courage and self-reliance. He became acquainted with the ways of the backwoodsmen and of the savage Indians. And from Sir Thomas Fairfax he learned a great deal about the history, the laws, and the military affairs of old England.

And in whatever he undertook to do or to learn, he was careful and systematic and thorough. He did nothing by guess; he never left anything half done. And therein, let me say to you, lie the secrets of success in any calling.

The Ohio Country

You have already learned how the English people had control of all that part of our country which borders upon the Atlantic Ocean. You have learned, also, that they had made thirteen great settlements along the coast, while all the vast region west of the mountains remained a wild and unknown land.

Now, because Englishmen had been the first white men to see the line of shore that stretches from Maine to Georgia, they set up a claim to all the land west of that line.

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They had no idea how far the land extended. They knew almost nothing about its great rivers, its vast forests, its lofty mountains, its rich prairies. They cared nothing for the claims of the Indians whose homes were there.

“All the land from ocean to ocean,” they said, “belongs to the King of England.”

But there were other people who also had something to say about this matter.

The French had explored the Mississippi River. They had sailed on the Great Lakes. Their hunters and trappers were roaming through the western forests. They had made treaties with the Indians; and they had built trading posts, here and there, along the water-courses.

They said, “The English people may keep their strip of land between the mountains and the sea. But these great river valleys and this country around the Lakes are ours, because we have been the first to explore and make use of them.”

Now, about the time that George Washington was thinking of becoming a sailor, some of the rich planters in Virginia began to hear wonderful stories about a fertile region west of the Alleghenies, watered by a noble river, and rich in game and fur-bearing animals.

This region was called the Ohio Country, from the name of the river; and those who took pains to learn the most about it were satisfied that it would, at

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some time, be of very great importance to the people who should control it.

And so these Virginian planters and certain Englishmen formed a company called the Ohio Company, the object of which was to explore the country, and make money by establishing trading posts and settlements there. And of this company, Lawrence Washington was one of the chief managers.

Lawrence Washington and his brother George had often talked about this enterprise.

“We shall have trouble with the French,” said Lawrence. “They have already sent men into the Ohio Country; and they are trying in every way to prove that the land belongs to them.”

“It looks as if we should have to drive them out by force,” said George.

“Yes, and there will probably be some hard fighting,” said Lawrence; “and you, as a young man, must get yourself ready to have a hand in it.”

And Lawrence followed this up by persuading the governor of the colony to appoint George as one of the adjutants-general of Virginia.

George was only nineteen years old, but he was now Major Washington, and one of the most promising soldiers in America.

A Change of Circumstances

Although George Washington spent so much of his time at Greenway Court, he still called Mount Vernon his home.

Going down home in the autumn, just before he was twenty years old, he found matters in a sad state, and greatly changed.

His brother Lawrence was very ill—indeed, he had been ill a long time. He had tried a trip to England; he had spent a summer at the warm springs; but all to no purpose. He was losing strength every day.

The sick man dreaded the coming of cold weather. If he could only go to the warm West Indies before winter set in, perhaps that would prolong his life. Would George go with him?

No loving brother could refuse a request like that.

The captain of a ship in the West India trade agreed to take them; and so, while it was still pleasant September, the two Washingtons embarked for Barbadoes, which, then as now, belonged to the English.

It was the first time that George had ever been outside of his native land, and it proved to be also the last. He took careful notice of everything that he saw; and, in the little notebook which he seems to have al-

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ways had with him, he wrote a brief account of the trip.

He had not been three weeks at Barbadoes before he was taken down with the smallpox; and for a month he was very sick. And so his winter in the West Indies could not have been very pleasant.

In February the two brothers returned home to Mount Vernon. Lawrence's health had not been bettered by the journey. He was now very feeble; but he lingered on until July, when he died.

By his will Lawrence Washington left his fine estate of Mount Vernon, and all the rest of his wealth, to his little daughter. But George was to be the daughter's guardian; and in case of her death, all her vast property was to be his own.

And so, before he was quite twenty-one years old, George Washington was settled at Mount Vernon as the manager of one of the richest estates in Virginia. The death of his little niece not long afterward made him the owner of this estate, and, of course, a very wealthy man.

But within a brief time, events occurred which called him way from his peaceful employments.

A Perilous Journey

Early the very next year news was brought to Virginia that the French were building forts along the

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Ohio, and making friends with the Indians there. This of course meant that they intended to keep the English out of that country.

The governor of Virginia thought that the time had come to speak out about this matter. He would send a messenger with a letter to these Frenchmen, telling them that all the land belonged to the English, and that no trespassing would be allowed.

The first messenger that he sent became alarmed before he was within a hundred miles of a Frenchman, and went back to say that everything was as good as lost.

It was very plain that a man with some courage must be chosen for such an undertaking.

“I will send Major George Washington,” said the governor. “He is very young, but he is the bravest man in the colony.”

Now, promptness was one of those traits of character which made George Washington the great man which he afterward became. And so, on the very day that he received his appointment he set out for the Ohio Country.

He took with him three white hunters, two Indians, and a famous woodsman, whose name was Christopher Gist. A small tent or two, and such few things as they would need on the journey, were strapped on the backs of horses.

They pushed through the woods in a north-westwardly direction, and at last reached a place called Venango, not very far from where Pittsburgh now

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stands. This was the first outpost of the French; and there Washington met some of the French officers, and heard them talk about what they proposed to do.

Then, after a long ride to the north, they came to another fort. The French commandant was here, and he welcomed Washington with a great show of kindness.

Washington gave him the letter which he had brought from the governor of Virginia.

The commandant read it, and two days afterward gave him an answer.

He said that he would forward the letter to the French governor; but as for the Ohio Country, he had been ordered to hold it, and he meant to do so.

Of course Washington could do nothing further. But it was plain to him that the news ought to be carried back to Virginia without delay.

It was now midwinter. As no horse could travel through the trackless woods at this time of year, he must make his way on foot.

So, with only the woodsman, Gist, he shouldered his rifle and knapsack, and bravely started home.

It was a terrible journey. The ground was covered with snow; the rivers were frozen; there was not even a path through the forest. If Gist had not been so fine a woodsman they would hardly have seen Virginia again.

Once an Indian shot at Washington from behind a tree. Once the brave young man fell into a river,

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among floating ice, and would have been drowned but for Gist.

At last they reached the house of a trader on the Monongahela River. There they were kindly welcomed, and urged to stay until the weather should grow milder.

But Washington would not delay.

Sixteen days after that, he was back in Virginia, telling the governor all about his adventures, and giving his opinion about the best way to deal with the French.

His First Battle

It was now very plain that if the English were going to hold the Ohio Country and the vast western region which they claimed as their own, they must fight for it.

The people of Virginia were not very anxious to go to war. But their governor was not willing to be beaten by the French.

He made George Washington a lieutenant-colonel of Virginia troops and set about raising an army to send into the Ohio country.

Early in the spring Colonel Washington, with a hundred and fifty men, was marching across the country toward the head waters of the Ohio. It was a small

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army to advance against the thousands of French and Indians who now held that region.

But other officers, with stronger forces, were expected to follow close behind.

Late in May the little army reached the valley of the Monongahela, and began to build a fort at a place called Great Meadows.

By this time the French and Indians were aroused, and hundreds of them were hurrying forward to defend the Ohio Country from the English. One of their scouting parties, coming up the river, was met by Washington with forty men.

The French were not expecting any foe at this place. There were but thirty-two of them; and of these only one escaped. Ten were killed, and the rest were taken prisoners.

This was Washington's first battle, and he was more proud of it than you might suppose. He sent his prisoners to Virginia, and was ready now, with his handful of men, to meet all the French and Indians that might come against him!

And they did come, and in greater numbers than he had expected. He made haste to finish, if possible, the fort that had been begun.

But they were upon him before he was ready. They had four men to his one. They surrounded the fort and shut his little Virginian army in.

What could Colonel Washington do? His soldiers were already half-starved. There was but little food in the fort, and no way to get any more.

FOUR GREAT AMERICANS

The French leader asked if he did not think it would be a wise thing to surrender. Washington hated the very thought of it; but nothing else could be done.

“If you will march your men straight home and give me a pledge that they and all Virginians will stay out of the Ohio Country for the next twelve months, you may go,” said the Frenchman.

It was done.

Washington, full of disappointment, went back to Mount Vernon. But he felt more like fighting than ever before.

He was now twenty-two years old.

The French and Indian War

In the meanwhile the King of England had heard how the French were building forts along the Ohio and how they were sending their traders to the Great Lakes and to the valley of the Mississippi.

“If we allow them to go on in this way, they will soon take all that vast western country away from us,” he said.

And so, the very next winter, he sent over an army under General Edward Braddock to drive the French out of that part of America and at the same time teach their Indian friends a lesson.

It was in February, 1755, when General Braddock and his troops went into camp at Alexandria in

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Virginia. As Alexandria was only a few miles from Mount Vernon, Washington rode over to see the fine array and become acquainted with the officers.

When General Braddock heard that this was the young man who had ventured so boldly into the Ohio Country, he offered him a place on his staff. This was very pleasing to Washington, for there was nothing more attractive to him than soldiering.

It was several weeks before the army was ready to start: and then it moved so slowly that it did not reach the Monongahela until July.

The soldiers in their fine uniforms made a splendid appearance as they marched in regular order across the country.

Benjamin Franklin, one of the wisest men in America, had told General Braddock that his greatest danger would be from unseen foes hidden among the underbrush and trees.

“They may be dangerous to your backwoods-men,” said Braddock; “but to the trained soldiers of the king they can give no trouble at all.”

But scarcely had the army crossed the Monongahela when it was fired upon by unseen enemies. The woods rang with the cries of savage men.

The soldiers knew not how to return the fire. They were shot down in their tracks like animals in a pen.

“Let the men take to the shelter of the trees!” was Washington’s advice.

FOUR GREAT AMERICANS

But Braddock would not listen to it. They must keep in order and fight as they had been trained to fight.

Washington rode hither and thither trying his best to save the day. Two horses were shot under him; four bullets passed through his coat; and still he was unhurt. The Indians thought that he bore a charmed life, for none of them could hit him.

It was a dreadful affair—more like a slaughter than a battle. Seven hundred of Braddock's fine soldiers, and more than half of his officers, were killed or wounded. And all this havoc was made by two hundred Frenchmen and about six hundred Indians hidden among the trees.

At last Braddock gave the order to retreat. It soon became a wild flight rather than a retreat; and yet, had it not been for Washington, it would have been much worse.

The General himself had been fatally wounded. There was no one but Washington who could restore courage to the frightened men, and lead them safely from the place of defeat.

Four days after the battle General Braddock died, and the remnant of the army being now led by a Colonel Dunbar, hurried back to the eastern settlements.

Of all the men who took part in that unfortunate expedition against the French, there was only one who gained any renown therefrom, and that one was Colonel George Washington.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

He went back to Mount Vernon, wishing never to be sent to the Ohio Country again.

The people of Virginia were so fearful lest the French and Indians should follow up their victory and attack the settlements, that they quickly raised a regiment of a thousand men to defend their colony. And so highly did they esteem Colonel Washington that they made him commander of all the forces of the colony, to do with them as he might deem best.

The war with the French for the possession of the Ohio Country and the valley of the Mississippi, had now fairly begun. It would be more than seven years before it came to an end.

But most of the fighting was done at the north—in New York and Canada; and so Washington and his Virginian soldiers did not distinguish themselves in any very great enterprise.

It was for them to keep watch of the western frontier of the colony lest the Indians should cross the mountains and attack the settlements.

Once, near the middle of the war, Washington led a company into the very country where he had once traveled on foot with Christopher Gist.

The French had built a fort at the place where the Ohio River has its beginning, and they had named it Fort Duquesne. When they heard that Washington was coming they set fire to the fort and fled down the river in boats.

FOUR GREAT AMERICANS

The English built a new fort at this same place, and called it Fort Pitt; and there the city of Pittsburgh has since grown up.

And now Washington resigned his commission as commander of the little Virginian army. Perhaps he was tired of the war. Perhaps his great plantation of Mount Vernon needed his care. We cannot tell.

But we know that, a few days later, he was married to Mrs. Martha Custis, a handsome young widow who owned a fine estate not a great way from Williamsburg, the capital of the colony. This was in January, 1759.

At about the same time he was elected a member of the House of Burgesses of Virginia; and three months later, he went down to Williamsburg to have a hand in making some of the laws for the colony.

He was now twenty-seven years old. Young as he was, he was one of the richest men in the colony, and he was known throughout the country as the bravest of American soldiers.

The war was still going on at the north. To most of the Virginians it seemed to be a thing far away.

At last, in 1763, a treaty of peace was made. The French had been beaten, and they were obliged to give up everything to the English. They lost not only the Ohio Country and all the great West, but Canada also.