

# George Washington AS A FATHER

BY ETHEL TOMES

Author of "Rocket of the Comstock," a biography

THE first president of this country had no children of his own but because he loved children, he adopted, during his lifetime, four youngsters, reared nine children of relatives and financed the education of several other boys and girls.

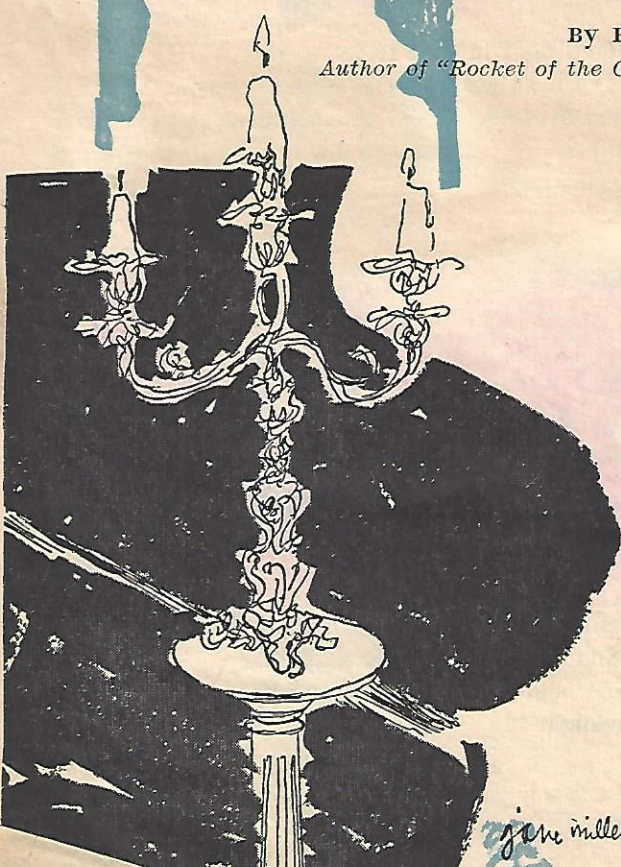
Even before Washington married, he found himself the guardian of his niece Mildred, on the death of his brother, Lawrence Washington. At that time, Washington was living with his brother, who owned Mount Vernon. In a few years, both Mildred and her mother died, leaving the great estate to Washington.

A few years later, the young bachelor attended a dinner party at William's Ferry, and there met Martha Dandridge Custis, a wealthy and beautiful widow. It was, apparently, love at first sight for both George and Martha and in a few days Washington returned to ask her to be his wife.

Martha had two children at the time of their marriage, John (Jackie), six years old, and Martha (Patsy), age four. Washington adopted them at once and grew to love them both dearly.

Patsy, like Washington's niece, Mildred, was a frail child and she was subject to fits of epilepsy. Washington spent much time with her, in spite of heavy business and military duties. He seemed anxious to have her feel that his boundless strength and energy were hers to draw upon. He ordered dolls for her from England and bought her the few children's books that were published at the time. Then one day he surprised her with a spinet. Patsy was enchanted with the instrument and soon learned to play her stepfather's favorite songs. When she tired, he would take her small fingers in his and massage them gently with his big hands. He was always concerned because she was so frail and feared that she might contract tuberculosis—consumption, as it was called. At that time it was considered incurable.

Jackie, Patsy's lively brother, was Martha's pet and a most difficult child to control. The boy resented any attempt at discipline. Washington was anxious to have Jackie develop a good mind, high moral principles and a sense of responsibility and placed him in the care of the reverend Doctor Boucher, an Episcopal clergyman at Annapolis. (Continued on page 68)





**"I'm in love  
with a  
wonderful  
swab"**



**Babies** have been babied with 'Q-Tips' for over 27 years. These smoothly rounded sticks with softest quality cotton, anchored securely at both ends of the applicator, are correctly shaped for gentle baby care. 'Q-Tips' are sterilized right in the package by the best hospital method. There's no finer swab than 'Q-Tips', the original swab. *More doctors have used them than any other.*



**MOTHERS  
—here's a  
new idea  
for you**



'Q-Tips' are a wonderful convenience on the dressing table. Wet one end of the swab and use to clean makeup and powder from eyebrows. Use the dry end to brush brows smooth. Use 'Q-Tips' also to clean up smeared mascara and pencil, remove excess lipstick, and for manicures and pedicures. *For beauty's sake, reach for 'Q-Tips'.*

29¢, 49¢ and 98¢ pkg.  
**Q-TIPS**



The original cotton swab  
...in the famous blue box

Q-TIPS INC., LONG ISLAND CITY, N. Y.

## GEORGE WASHINGTON AS A FATHER

(Continued from page 39)

olis. However, Jackie came home on the slightest pretext and made no attempt to study.

Finally, Jackie set his heart on a trip to Europe and, with considerable maneuvering, succeeded in getting Washington to consent to it. Before he went, however, his stepfather made it clear to the tutor that he had grave misgivings regarding the trip.

"A knowledge of books is the basis upon which all other knowledge is to be built," he wrote the tutor, "whereas in traveling, Jackie is to become acquainted with men and things, rather than books."

Washington further argued that Jackie would one day be the owner of a great estate and should therefore be proficient at mathematics and bookkeeping. Jackie was utterly lacking in knowledge or aptitude when it came to these subjects. But his stepfather felt that most deplorable of all the boy's deficiencies was his lack of information concerning America.

"It is expected," Washington maintained, "that every man who travels should be able to give some description of the situation and government of his own country." To make matters worse, Jackie knew nothing of French which, Washington told him, was a requirement for intelligent traveling. The boy's accomplishments included hunting, riding and dancing, and nothing else seemed important.

When Jackie returned from Europe, Washington's worst fears were realized. He was more unmanageable than ever. He fell in love at the age of seventeen with Eleanor (Nelly) Calvert and publicly announced their engagement. Washington wrote to Eleanor's father, pointing out that his stepson should attend college for at least two years before marrying. Mr. Calvert agreed and Jackie was enrolled in King's College in New York City.

It was at this time that Patsy died. This was one of the most severe blows of Washington's life. After the loss of her daughter, Martha was determined to have Jackie at home with her and Washington, too, felt an overwhelming loneliness without young people about. Jackie returned to Mount Vernon, married sixteen-year-old Nelly and went to live on the Abingdon estate close by. There, in the following years, four children were born to the young couple.

Then came the Revolutionary War and General Washington led the colonies' struggle for independence. Yet he followed with pride Jackie's progress on the farm and his entrance into the army. His stepson rose to the

rank of colonel in spite of his lack of book knowledge, but during the siege of Yorktown in 1781 he contracted a fever and died.

Washington adopted Jackie's two youngest children, Eleanor (Nelly), age two, and George Washington Custis, age six months. Martha and George were both fifty years of age and the babies created quite a disturbance at first in the well-ordered regime of their lives. Yet their love of children made it possible for them to adjust to the change and once again the green lawns of Mount Vernon became a happy playground.

Martha was particularly fond of the little boy and George was delighted with small Nelly. Her liveliness never failed to delight him and

in her company the great and serious Washington found it easy to laugh and joke. He imported a harp for her that cost \$1,000 and Nelly learned to play it well. Four hours of practice a day was required of her and the little girl frequently cried during these sessions. However, she learned to play with skill.

Nelly developed into an accomplished and glamorous young lady, but at times she was headstrong. One summer she insisted on walking alone at night about the estate. Martha made her promise not to do this unless accompanied by a man, but one evening, Nelly was unable to resist the impulse to take a walk. Ever alert, Martha called her to her room the next morning for a scolding.

Just as Martha finished reproving her granddaughter Washington entered the room, but made no attempt to intercede on Nelly's behalf until she started to leave the room.

Then he said to Martha, "My dear, perhaps she was not alone."

Nelly turned swiftly to face him with indignation. "Sir, you brought me up to tell the truth," she said, "and when I told Grandmama that I was alone, I hoped that you would believe it."

Delighted by her frankness, Washington replied gravely, "I beg your pardon, Nelly."

Following the Revolutionary War, the burdens of managing Mount Vernon increased and the number of guests also multiplied. Washington wrote to his nephew, Lawrence Lewis, asking him to live in his home and to act as his assistant. The young man, then a major of cavalry in the new army, accepted this offer and was delighted to find Nelly there. He soon fell in love with her. But Nelly had another suitor, Charles Carroll, who had considerable charm and who

(Continued on page 70)

**Six-year-old Abby marched into the house one afternoon, announcing that she had a new friend who had a puppy. When her mother asked her the name of the friend, Abby said, "I only know the puppy's name because the girl called him Puddles. But I don't know the girl's name—the puppy didn't call her anything!"—B. S., New York City**





# Why FORCE your child to take a Laxative?



Children enjoy taking Fletcher's **CASTORIA** the laxative made especially for them



**Extra Mild—Contains No Harsh Drugs—  
Won't Upset Sensitive Little Stomachs!**

When your child needs a laxative, never upset him with harsh adult preparations. Give Fletcher's Castoria, the laxative especially made and recommended for infants and children of all ages. Fletcher's Castoria is a natural laxative, made of nature's own vegetable products. Contains no cascara, no castor oil, no salts, and no harsh drugs. Won't cause griping, diarrhea, nor upset sensitive digestive systems. Mild Fletcher's Castoria acts gently, thoroughly, and you can regulate dosage *exactly*. What's more, it's so pleasant-tasting, children take it without fussing. Get it now.



**Tastes So Good  
Children  
Lick the Spoon!**

*Chas. H. Fletcher*  
The Original and Genuine

# CASTORIA

Especially Made for Infants and Children of All Ages!

## WASHINGTON

(Continued from page 68)

had just returned from Europe with continental manners. Eventually, however, Nelly followed her grandfather's advice and married Lawrence on Washington's birthday. They continued to live at Mount Vernon while their house, Woodlawn, Washington's wedding gift to them, was being built. (That house is soon to be restored, thanks to a recently announced gift of \$200,000 from an anonymous donor.)

Nelly's brother, George Washington Custis, became something of a ne'er-do-well like his father, Jackie, and he too was set against formal education. When he failed at Princeton University, Washington enrolled him at St. John's College at Annapolis. But in spite of frequent letters of stern advice from Washington, the young man would not study.

He was brought back to Mount Vernon, where a tutor undertook his education. This too proved unsatisfactory. Washington realized the hopelessness of his efforts. "I can govern men," he said with sadness, "but I cannot govern boys."

To make certain that Custis would not be poor, he willed to him a square in the city of Washington and 1,200 acres on Virginia Heights opposite the city. Meanwhile, Custis rose to the rank of colonel and married Mary Lee Fitzhugh. After Washington's death he developed an interest in agriculture and specialized in wool growing. Most of his money went into the building of Arlington Mansion on the acreage left by Washington. Custis' daughter, Mrs. Robert E. Lee, inherited it from him. It is now the famous national Arlington Cemetery.

Nelly's and Custis' two sisters spent a good deal of time at Mount Vernon in later years and, like the other children under Washington's supervision, confided their problems to him. He was sometimes stern but he always made his love apparent.

OTHER children who lived for long periods of time with the Washingtons were Howell, son of George Washington's sister Betty, and Harriet, a daughter of his brother Samuel. There were trying times during Harriet's eleven years at Mount Vernon. Old diaries tell how fond she was of pretty clothes, yet when she undressed she tossed her clothing in a heap on the floor. President Washington, who was meticulous and neat, frequently expressed concern over her future as a wife.

During the Revolution, Washington was obliged to make a trip to Providence, Rhode Island, in company of a friend. A group of school children recognized Washington and gathered about his carriage. He talked with the youngsters for some time, and when he left them, remarked to his companion, "We may be beaten by the English yet, but here's an army which they can never conquer."

To Washington the great promise of America lay in its youth.