

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY



WASHINGTON.

HE fame of Washington is so immense and the popular conception of his character so exalted, that some skeptical and fault-finding critics are disposed to question the universal estimate, and especially in the matter of his ability as a soldier and military commander. However much we may wish it otherwise, there is in human nature a mean spirit of envy and dejection which instinctively feels the honors bestowed upon a great man to be an indirect reflection and rebuke to its own littleness and baseness. This spirit cropped out conspicuously in the case of Columbus, in the efforts to belittle his great exploit and to blacken his character. I do not say that criticisms upon Washington's generalship all proceed from base motives, but they doubtless do mostly come from the spirit and innate tendency which I have indicated. This unworthy spirit is as old as history, as old as humanity. It showed itself in a memorable fashion when the old Athenians wrote their sentence of banishment against Aristides because they were tired of hearing him called "the just."

Washington and Napoleon.

Great soldiers are to be judged not alone by success, by battles fought and victories won—though this, of course, is the great popular test—but by all the circumstances and difficulties in which they are placed. There are great commanders in history who have won fame by avoiding battles, like the Roman Fabius, and even by great retreats like Xenophon with his ten thousand Greeks. If Washington is to be compared, to his disadvantage, with Napoleon, then the popular question is, would Napoleon, under the same circumstances, have done any better? It is enough for any commander that he fills the great measure of his requirement. This, of course, is not saying that Washington would have filled the place of Napoleon in the vastly different field and circumstances in which that great soldier won his fame. Nor should it be forgotten, all the while, that ultimately Washington succeeded and founded a nation, while Napoleon failed and lost an empire.

Washington's Difficult Task.

The difficulties which encountered Washington when he took up his great trust as commander-in-chief of the continental army were most complicated and immense. The theater of the struggle was a vast one, geographically, stretching along the Atlantic coast from Massachusetts to South Carolina, while the whole population was only three millions—not very much greater than that of the state of Michigan, and not so great into a million as that of Illinois. Out of this small, scattering and peaceful population an army was to be raised, organized and equipped capable of contending with the chief military and maritime power of the globe. And it was not to be a struggle between government and government, between one nation and another. It was a rebellion, and there was really no central authority, no arms or warlike stores, no navy, no treasury or financial system or responsibility. It was only a brave and patriotic people, small in numbers, without discipline or military experience, without arms and without money, rushing thus bare-handed into a conflict with the mother-country, their own government; a powerful nation, which had recently been raised by the genius of the elder Pitt to the front rank among the great warlike nations of the world—a nation whose military posts and possessions already dotted

the globe, whose victorious navies covered every ocean and sea, whose morning drum beat, as Webster said, was heard round the world. It was against such a power as this that this handful of patriots had thrown down the gage of rebellion and defiance.

When England Closed In.

When England saw that the contest was fairly opened her great navy closed in upon our ports and landed upon our shores different armies of her veteran soldiers, who had fought in the continental wars, and these were soon supplemented by trained Hessian soldiers, hired and paid by her gold. These armies were greater in numbers than the colonies had to oppose to them. And still, as they had to be transported so far, and to cover so wide a field, they were never very large, and the battles of the revolution were never on a great scale as to numbers. The country was new, there was next to no cavalry and not much artillery, and the engagements were thus mainly with infantry and at close range. There was little chance for tactics or maneuvers. All depended upon pluck, hard fighting and endurance.

A Providential Man.

Washington is known in history as a providential man; that is, a man raised up by Providence to fill a great place and perform a great mission. However this may be, he certainly had great parts and great and peculiar fitness for the most difficult and trying place which he filled in history. He had had experience in the previous Indian and French wars, and had proven himself a wise, competent and heroic officer. He had great personal advantages for command. He was of fine physique and imposing presence, a splendid horseman, carrying with him ever the port and air of authority and native majesty—an ideal commander.

Knew It Meant Freedom.

So when this noble Virginian appeared before that northern army and drew his sword as their commander under those Cambridge elms his fame had preceded him and he was received with shouts of welcome and of confidence. Then all men knew it was to be a struggle to the death. I have no room



WASHINGTON THE SOLDIER.

here, of course, to recount the particulars of that seven years' conflict. Patiently and steadily organizing and disciplining the raw patriot militia and volunteers into an army, Washington at the same time closely invested the British in Boston and finally drove them to their ships in the harbor, from which they sailed away, while the patriot army marched into the New England capital, which was never again to be trodden by the footsteps of an enemy. Thus was scored a great success at the opening. Then followed the march to New York to meet the enemy, landing in great force on Long Island; the brave but disastrous battle, followed by that masterly retreat which alone would stamp Washington as a great general; the gallant stand at White Plains; the reluctant but stern and heroic winter retreat through the Jerseys ended by the master counter strokes of Trenton and Princeton, by which the great leader saved the cause of the revolution at its lowest ebb. Then the next year the struggle to save Philadelphia, the defeat at the Brandywine, where Lafayette first shed his blood in our cause; the loss of the continental capital and the well planned but accidentally lost battle of

Germantown. Then the gloomy winter quarters at Valley Forge, which tried the souls of patriot men and proved the great soul of George Washington. Who but he could have held that defeated, freezing, starving army together in that terrible winter? And at the same time the country was filled with the praise of Gates, who had conquered Burgoyne at Saratoga.

In the Darkest Hours.

In this dark hour, too, Washington was beset with cabals and conspiracies, in congress and in the army, to depose him from the command which was to be given to the successful Gates. When in the early summer of 1778 the British commander evacuated Philadelphia, and Washington followed him with his little army to give him battle, on the field of Monmouth he met one of these detractors and conspirators, Gen. Lee, his second in command, disobeying his orders and in shameful and unnecessary retreat. It was here that Washington is said to have lost his temper. It is pretty well demonstrated that he did, and if Gen. Lee received upon his miserable head that day an explosion of titanic wrath it was surely no more than he deserved. Despite this untoward disarrangement of his plans Washington here won a partial success. The battle of Monmouth was his last engagement until the crowning victory of Yorktown, three years later. In the meantime the war was going on in other parts of the great field of operations, battles and skirmishes were being fought and subordinate commanders, like Greene and Wayne and Morgan, were winning some laurels. But the central army was not immediately engaged. It was holding the ground and perfecting its alliance with the French forces, on land and water, which had now come to our assistance. When all was ready came that sudden and rapid march from the Hudson to Virginia and the great final victory at Yorktown.

Had No Personal Ambition.

Even from this briefest outline of Washington's career in the revolution, it will be seen that he had little opportunity for personal distinction as a commander. He was an unlucky general; fortune did not seem to smile upon him and he had more defeats than victories. Long Island, White Plains, Brandywine, Germantown—all these were defeats; some of them disastrous. Monmouth was little more than a drawn battle, while to offset these, Trenton and Princeton, while brilliant in conception and execution and great in effect, were so small in the numbers engaged that they amounted to little more than successful skirmishes. And besides they were with Hessians and not with British regulars. Yorktown was, indeed, a great and crowning success, but it was won with superior numbers and the honors had to be divided with the French.

Greatest Figure in History.

Hardly a better instance does history afford of patience under provocation, of dogged determination under difficulties, of unconquerable will and courage, holding on so long and coming out triumphant at last over such mighty opposition. These great qualities, as we have already seen, belonged to the man more than to the soldier. It was indeed the great man behind the soldier, the man with the great patriotic heart, with the wise head, and the lofty, unshaken soul, that brought us through that long and tremendous struggle and gave us our glorious place and opportunity among the nations. No other man on this continent but he could have done it. Greene, among the generals of the revolution, would have come nearest to it, but he would have failed.

But in looking over the whole field and record, in the light of all the facts and history, it will be seen that Washington made no military mistakes, that he improved all his opportunities, that his generalship will stand the test of criticism. He struck whenever he had the chance, his plans were good, and when compelled, his retreats were masterly.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

LESSON IX, FEB. 28—ACTS 8: 1-17—DISCIPLES DISPERSED.

Golden Text: "They That Were Scattered Abroad Went Everywhere Preaching the Word"—From Acts, Chapter 8, Verse 4—The Good Samaritans.



N the summer of 37 A. D. the events here related took place. Places, Jerusalem and Samaria. The text of the lesson follows:

1. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and haling men and women, committed them to prison. 4. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. 5. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8. And there was great joy in that city. 9. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: 10. To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. 11. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. 12. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13. Then Simon himself believed also; and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. 14. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15. Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. 16. (For as yet he was not fallen upon them, because they had not been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.) 17. Then Simon himself offered them money, saying, Give me this power, that whosoever I lay hands on, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 18. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that thou mightest buy the gift of God with money. 19. And thou art in the gall of bitterness, and thou art in the way of perdition, and thou shalt die the death. 20. Then Simon said, Stay, if I have found favor in thy sight. But Peter said, I have no other gold, but such as I have given thee: therefore, thy part must be with thee. 21. Wherefore he departed hence, without money, and without money. 22. And Simon himself continued with them at Samaria, but he was in the way of perdition, because he thought that he might buy the gift of God with money. 23. But the apostles, when they had prayed, laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. 24. And when they were come to Caesarea, they abode there some days. 25. And Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, came down to Caesarea, and there he dwelt. 26. And there was a certain man, an Ethiopian eunuch, of great authority, treasurer for the queen of Ethiopia: he came to Jerusalem to worship, and he was sitting in the chariot, and reading the book of Isaiah. 27. And Philip found him sitting in the chariot, reading the book of Isaiah. 28. And he came and sat beside him, and he saw that he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29. And he said, Understandest thou what thou art reading? And he said, Yes. And he said, How canst thou understand that which thou art reading, seeing thou art not a teacher? 30. And he said, My lord, I have been a eunuch, and I have no mother nor father, neither have I any kindred, for I have been a eunuch from my birth. 31. And he said, What dost thou desire to have? And he said, I desire to be baptized. 32. And he said, What hindereth thee? I have power to baptize thee. 33. And he said, I have no money to give thee. 34. And he said, I have no money, but I have the word of God. 35. And he said, I have the word of God, and I have the power to baptize thee. 36. And he said, I have the power to baptize thee, and I have the word of God. 37. And he said, I have the word of God, and I have the power to baptize thee. 38. And he said, I have the power to baptize thee, and I have the word of God. 39. And he said, I have the word of God, and I have the power to baptize thee. 40. And he said, I have the power to baptize thee, and I have the word of God. 41. And he said, I have the word of God, and I have the power to baptize thee. 42. And he said, I have the power to baptize thee, and I have the word of God. 43. And he said, I have the word of God, and I have the power to baptize thee. 44. And he said, I have the power to baptize thee, and I have the word of God. 45. 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