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PARSON WEEMS

of the CHERRY TREE

MASON LOCKE WEEMS

PARSON WEEMS

OF

THE CHERRY-TREE

Being a short account of the Eventful Life

OF

The Reverend M. L. WEEMS,

AUTHOR OF MANY BOOKS AND TRACTS, ITINERANT PEDLAR OF DIVERS VOLUMES OF MERIT: PREACHER OF VIGOUR AND MUCH RENOWN,

AND

FIRST BIOGRAPHER

OF

G. Washington.

Faithfully set down by a latter-day scrivener and writer of noteworthy lives,

HAROLD KELLOCK

Embellished with several superb illustrations & plates from the books & tracts of the REVEREND DOCTOR.

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Parson Weems of the Cherry-Tree

I

A SUBJECT BECOMES A CITIZEN

In the first quarter of the last century, an elderly gentleman in black clerical garb, with a ruddy, merry face, and benevolent white locks flowing from under his hat, was a familiar figure on the incredibly ill-kept main roads of travel through the States south of Pennsylvania. A little horn of ink would be tied to the lapel of his coat and a quill pen stuck in his hat. The "Jersey waggon" in which he drove contained a roomy portable bookcase, stuffed with volumes of the times, a violin, and generally numerous manuscripts in course of completion. The vehicle was without springs, but the seat was swung on leather straps.

This itinerant patriarch was the Reverend

Mason Locke Weems, preacher, publisher, writer of moral and patriotic biographies, tractarian, fiddler, wanderer, plying his trade of traveling book-agent in a broad radius from Philadelphia to Savannah. To the lettered elect, he was most distinguished as the author of the first biography of Washington, a book that ran through twenty editions in Weems's lifetime, and eventually reached over seventy, to say nothing of the numerous pirated imprints; but to the common man, he was merely the pastor book-peddler of uncommon liveliness and high good humor. In reality, he was a rare bird indeed. As a purveyor of American folk-lore, whether distilled from native legends or the synthetic product of his own fecund imagination, he had no rival in his own day or in the century that has followed him. The story of Washington and the cherry-tree, which is familiar to children along the upper reaches of the Amazon and the Yangtze and

is perhaps the most widely known folk-lore in any tongue, originally rolled into the world from his quill pen, and this is but one of a long series of antic moralities which the good parson passed on to posterity.

Parson Weems knew the country and the common habits and speech of its people probably better than any other man of his day; and he himself was not the least remarkable of its products. He was equally prepared to speak before a fair or any other social or civic gathering, to take part in a wedding or funeral service, to preach before a congregation of any religious persuasion, always upholding the moralities and man's hope of salvation, and incidentally extolling the fine line of intellectual provender which he was ever ready to display. On occasion, also, it appears that he was ready to beguile the rustic bosom with a performance on his fiddle—usually as a preliminary to making a sale. In the pantheon of

book-agents, he would doubtless deserve a central niche. He was indeed the first of the long dynasty of salemen and go-getters who combine an indefatigable pushing ability with the instinct for giving the public wl at it wants. Doubtless he was greatly aided, in a material sense, in that period of narrow and lugubrious formality, by a rare human sympathy which made it easy for people of all classes to look upon him as a friend and brother. In his day-to-day contacts he was jolly and anecdotal, and in his speech as well as in his writings the current slang flowed naturally.

Indeed, in his younger years, when he held a parish, his ecclesiastical superiors, and apparently the majority of his more formal and substantial parishioners, were scandalized by an occasional ripple of laughter in the house of worship, evoked in the course of his sermons and even, occasionally, during his prayers. His humane spirit, it should be added,

took more substantial form than merely showing forth in his speech. When he was called on to officiate in a church, during his wanderings as a book-agent, he not uncommonly distributed his fee among the poor. Negroes, ne'er-do-wells, and even disreputable persons were not too low in station for his kindnesses, and any person too poor to pay for one of his tracts could have it for nothing. His philanthropy was particularly enlisted by French refugees. One of these, whom he had assisted, painted Weems's portrait out of gratitude, and another gave him a fine old violin, which he preserved very carefully at home.

It is also reported that Weems, like the humane Chancellor Wythe [1] of Virginia, freed his own slaves. While the legend is thoroughly

[1] Chancellor Wythe instilled into Thomas Jefferson such an aversion to the institution of slavery that Jefferson was moved to embody a pledge for its eradication in his first draft of the Declaration of Independence. This radical animadversion against a form of private property was deleted by his southern colleagues in the Congress assisted by the New England shipping group led by John Adams.

in character, it does not seem to be borne out by any record. Less than two years before his death, according to a deed of gift on file at Manassas, Virginia, Weems presented to his daughter Charlotte, who was married to a man who was not doing very well, three female slaves from his own flock of blacks; and in the months that intervened before his death, Weems was away from home, and probably did not emancipate his slaves by correspondence, and he could not have done so in his will, because he died intestate. It is possible that the emancipation legend had its origin in the fact that his son, Jesse Ewall Weems, really did free his slaves. Jesse was ordained as a Methodist minister two years after his father's death, and the Methodist Church of that day did not favor the possession of black chattels.

Posterity has treated the romantic Parson Weems with ill-deserved shabbiness. Though

his writings enjoyed a singularly broad circulation in his own time, and one of his books at least has survived in popular favor for over a century and a quarter, though he was one of the most widely known characters of his generation, he is to-day almost completely forgotten. One tender-hearted librarian dug him out of the past ten years ago and devoted to him a slender volume. [1] Aside from this, a few casual paragraphs in the various literary encyclopedias are his only monuments on the printed page. He died in 1825.

Weems was born in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, October 1, 1759, one of the youngest, and possibly the very youngest, of a robust colonial family of nineteen children. His father, David Weems, has been commonly, if somewhat lightly, reputed to have been one of the children of the younger brother of the third Earl of Wemyss. However, according to

[1] "Parson Weems," by Lawrence C. Wroth. Eichelberger Book Company, Baltimore, Md.

the records of the Wemyss family, the younger brother of the third earl died in boyhood, so that Parson Weems's title to simple faith seems less obscure than his claim to Norman blood. None the less, if not a title, there was money connected with the family. David Weems, along with his brother James and his sister Williamina, was brought to America about 1715, at the age of nine, by his mother's brother, Dr. William Locke (or Loch, as it is spelled in his will). Locke was apparently a man of affluence. He was advanced in years, childless, and was prepared to make the three children his heirs. However, he married a young wife to look after him in his declining years, and astonished the family by producing a son. None the less, he brought up the niece and two nephews, according to his original plan, and treated them generously at his death. Williamina married William Moore, of Moore Hall, Pennsylvania, a man of substance, and

her daughter became the wife of Dr. William Smith, called the Father of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America. David was able to maintain his numerous hostages to fortune and give them exceptional educational advantages. His uncle named him as coadministrator, with the widow, of the Locke estate.

David Weems was married to Hester Hill, Mason Locke's mother, in 1742. The bride was the daughter of Abell and Suzannah Hill, and had been born in St. James's Parish. The record of the marriage in the parish register somewhat carelessly describes the lady as "Mrs. Easter Hill." She was twenty-five years old; David, eleven years her senior. It was not his first marriage.

David had inherited a farm from his uncle, but later he acquired by purchase the comfortable manor of Marshes Seat, near Herring Creek, in Anne Arundel County. Here, in the fertile lowlands below Annapolis, on the shore

of Chesapeake Bay, Mason Locke was born, and here he spent a boyhood of which we have no intimate record beyond the story that he went on at least two long voyages with older brothers who were sea-captains. In his old age he liked to tell of floating on the Mediterranean in the shell of a giant turtle during one of these trips. It is not improbable that these farings forth stimulated that roving spirit which later made him one of the most widely traveled Americans in his own country.

Herring Creek, though but a tiny settlement, was the seat of the Church of St. James's Parish, and, by that token, the social center of that section of the Colony of Maryland. Every taxable person in the parish, were he Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Quaker, or non-believer, was compelled to pay an annual poll-tax of thirty pounds of tobacco, worth perhaps from $1.00 to $1.50, for the maintenance of the establishment of the

Church of England in St. James's, and every subject of King George in the parish was compelled to submit to a special levy for the new brick church, costing fourteen hundred pounds, whose construction was begun two years after Weems was born.

The contract for this edifice was let to John Weems, evidently a cousin of the infant Mason Locke. The public notice of the contract, in the original phraseology, gives an indication of the degree of literacy that prevailed among people of the better class in Weems's early environment. The notice read:

Likewise Mr. John Weems has undertaking the building of a breek church in the sd Parrish according to the draft of the plan that was this day layd before the vestry, and is to build the sd church att fourteen hundred pounds cur. (one thousand and fifty pounds sterling) without any further charges to the said Parrish in any shape whatever, in case that the vestry git ann act of Assembly

for what tob. will be wanting of the sum that is to build the said church; for as they hant tob. enufe in hand for the finniching of the sd church.

Apparently the vestrymen secured "enufe tob.," for the church was completed in 1765. David Weems had a pew there, and doubtless young Mason Locke became thoroughly familiar with the house of worship, built of substantial brick, with its square, high-backed pews and its lofty oaken pulpit near the wall in the middle of the north side. Doubtless, also, he observed with much interest the whipping-post and the stocks, standing beside the roadway near the church, at which the vestrymen would on occasion administer punishment to persons who affronted their sense of propriety by drunkenness or foul language, or intruders who seated themselves in one of the pews which some family of substance had paid for and held as a personal possession.

The stocks and the whipping-post were not called into use as much in Maryland as in the sterner atmosphere of New England, and of course a public humiliation was inflicted only on persons of the meaner sort. When the vestrymen felt moved to call to account some person of substance for infractions of the social code, the punishment was a light fine.

The rector was a mighty power in the community, in contrast to the position of the clergyman in England, who was content to marry some young woman in service in the manor-house and was himself looked upon by the gentry more or less as a servant. When Weems was a boy, the living at St. James's was worth three hundred pounds a year, a round sum in that day, and the rector enjoyed in addition the free use of a homestead and comfortable glebe-lands. He was able to maintain an establishment of slaves, like any other

freeholder, and at the time it was not thought inconsistent that a shepherd of Christ should possess human chattels.

Of the immediate institutions in the boy's community, the church was undoubtedly the most impressive. Its powers and prerogatives and emoluments were outstanding facts in everyday life. It was a focus of material existence, with a background of divinity. If Mason Locke Weems's remarkable imagination began to operate at an early age, it is inevitable that the church must have absorbed much of his speculations for the future.

Education in a general sense was virtually non-existent. The mass of the rural population went to their graves unable to spell or to write their names. Here and there on the countryside a sporadic hedge-school flashed its little rushlight in the darkness. Some of the more energetic clergymen conducted classes, in ad-

dition to their labors within their holy office, but these usually took in only children from families of the better sort. The more prosperous planters had tutors for their children, generally young men with an English education. David Weems must have had a succession of tutors for his brood of nineteen.

As Mason Locke grew into full boyhood he was sent to Kent County School, at Chestertown, across the bay from Baltimore. This school was founded as far back as 1723, and after 1782 it was to become Washington College. Its polite curriculum comprehended Latin, Greek, English, French, merchants' accounts, mathematics, and writing.

Young Weems's career in this institution is lost to view. A fire destroyed all the school records. In the Ethan Allen manuscript,[1] one

[1] Rev. Ethan Allen rambled about Maryland during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, avariciously gathering information and gossip on the old days and writing down his gleanings in a fine, minute hand. His manuscript is preserved in the fine collection of the Maryland Diocesan Library.

of Weems's daughters stands sponsor for the statement that her father graduated.

However, it is further recorded that at the early age of fourteen he was sent to Great Britain to study medicine. His father's golden uncle, Dr. William Locke, had been a graduate in medicine at the University of Edinburgh, so there was family precedent for the step. Weems appears to have studied at both London and Edinburgh. Ethan Allen says that after three years he received his doctor's degree at Edinburgh, though none of his friends in later days refers to him as a physician. Several reports state that at the end of his studies he served for a time as surgeon on a British ship of war. Such naval service may have been a sort of internship. If the reports are true, the year must have been 1776. That was hardly a time for any American of spirit to be serving in any capacity on a British ship of war. It is possible that Weems started on

this apprentice voyage quite innocent of the fact that his fellow-colonists were cutting the painter, and returned to find himself almost an alien enemy on British soil.

The seas were not particularly safe for Americans at that time, but he seems to have found his way home. A family record states that he returned on his brother's ship late in 1776.

Weems had sailed for England as a British subject. He returned to find himself an American citizen. The adoption of Mr. Jefferson's Declaration by the Continental Congress at Philadelphia on July 2, with full concurrence of the Maryland delegates, and its publication on July 4, had effected this change in status. The royal governor of Maryland had departed hastily for England, the newly chosen State Assembly had adopted a free constitution, and several companies of Marylanders had already marched off to the north and

aligned themselves in General Washington's Continental Army in time to participate in the battle of Long Island. The whole country along the Atlantic Coast was in revolutionary ferment and the throes of a complete social reorientation.

II

THE CROSS OLD GENTLEMAN AT CANTERBURY

WEEMS was seventeen or thereabouts at the time of his return to America. Washington and his little army were being chased across New Jersey by the British, and Tom Paine, writing on a drumhead by the light of a campfire, was turning out the first of his great evocatory war pamphlets beginning, "These are the times that try men's souls." Weems was hardly of fighting age then, but he was at man's estate well before Cornwallis surrendered his sword at Yorktown. On the rolls of the State it appears that David and William Weems, Mason Locke's brothers, and John, Richard, and Thomas Weems, probably his cousins, volunteered for war service of one kind or

another,—usually on local security committees or in the state militia,—but no scrap of record has been unearthed to show that young Mason Locke ever took up a musket.

Of course, there was no particular impulsion in rural Maryland for a boy to join the Continental Army. That colony was not a theater of war. Yet it does seem odd that, during the entire period of the Revolution, this bouncing patriot, the creator of a model George Washington, the biographer of the indefatigable Marion, the purveyor of shrewd piosities from the lips of Franklin and William Penn, should simply disappear from view. There is no current record of his activities, and in his later writings no references occur to his life during those dramatic years. In 1778, Weems's brother William commanded a privateer, the sloop *Little Sam*, and, in the following year, a larger ship, *Porpoise*, both owned by David Weems and associates. One

likes to think that Mason Locke saw service in these.

Weems's father died in 1779. Six surviving children, including Mason Locke, were named in the will. The homestead went to David, the oldest son. Mason Locke received a negro boy, a reversion on a tract of land left to his brother William, and a third of the undivided share of the estate. The last two paragraphs of the will, on file at Annapolis, read:

I give my son Mason Weems my Negro Boy Mead. Lastly I ordain that all the residue and remaindering part of my Estate, be it of what nature or kind so ever, be equally divided between my Sons, David, William and Mason Loch Weems or there Increase.

I appoint my loving Son David Weems my Hole and sole Executor of this my last will.

During the latter days of the war period, Weems must have come into some association

with the Rev. Dr. William Smith, who was married to Weems's cousin, Rebecca Moore. Dr. Smith began acting as rector at Chestertown late in 1779 and took over the proprietorship of Kent County School, which he was presently to develop into Washington College. Dr. Smith was an early type of the hustling, practical-minded American churchman. The church establishment in Maryland had gone almost completely to smash at the beginning of the Revolution, and he was bending his energies to revive it as a going concern under the new order. It was this work which helped to earn him the title of Father of the Episcopal Church. Had it not been for a worldly passion for dabbling in real estate and a habit of conviviality, he would probably have been consecrated as a bishop. After the colonies declared their independence, the clergy of the Church of England establishment in Maryland and Virginia were faced by a grave dilemma.

A clause in their sacred oath of ordination had pledged them to fealty to the British crown, but the temper of their parishioners required them to abjure the king and all his works. As most of them were staunch royalists in sympathy, and all were bound by strong ties of a cultural and sentimental nature to the mother church, the major part of them regarded the immortal Declaration as a decided annoyance.

There were forty-five parishes in Maryland, each with a rector and some with a curate besides. In the early days of the Revolution, nine of the gentlemen of the cloth fled to England to take refuge under the robe of George III. Six slipped over the line into Virginia before their patriotic flocks could offer them personal injury, and two fled to other States. Eight others moved away from the clerical manors and unobtrusively entered into private life. Twenty-five hastily took the oath of fidelity to the new

State of Maryland, as required by the Assembly, but the larger number of these did it only to save their skins.

"For more than six months," wrote Rev. Mr. Boucher, a staunch loyalist who held forth in a parish in St. George's County, in 1775, "I preached, when I did preach, with a pair of loaded pistols lying on the cushion, having given notice that if any man or body of men could possibly be so lost to all sense of duty or propriety as to drag me out of my own pulpit, I should think myself justified before God and man in repelling violence."

However, one day when he came to preach, Rev. Boucher found his curate, a low republican, already holding forth in the pulpit, while a group of determined parishioners in the doorway blocked the rector's way and forbade him to enter. Forcing his way to the door, sermon in one hand and pistol in the other, the Rev. Boucher replied that he would either preach

or lose his life. As the crowd still milled about him, he seized the leader by the collar, and, cocking his pistol, cried that if any one attacked him, he would blow the man's brains out. No one offered him any violence; he was merely pushed out of the door and escorted home by the crowd, while a lad on the outskirts, with a fife, discreetly played "The Rogue's March." In the privacy of his study, the Rev. Boucher thought it over, and he took the first available boat for England.

By the time Dr. Smith called a convention, in Chestertown, in the fall of 1780, to save the church from ruin, there were only six clergymen of the former establishment left in Maryland, including Dr. Smith himself. Two of these, and twenty-four laymen, answered his call. Two years later, Maryland boasted nine clergymen of the new Protestant Episcopal Church—one for every five parishes.

On these meager foundations the indefati-

gable Dr. Smith proceeded to build up the new church organization. He is said to have taken a warm interest in his wife's family, and it is impossible that a man with such exceptional talents for the pulpit as his wife's cousin, Mason Locke Weems, could have escaped his proselytizing zeal.

Dr. Smith was more than thirty years older than Weems, and a man with rare powers of what is now called salesmanship. He doubtless offered both spiritual and patriotic arguments to persuade his kinsman by marriage to join him in the church, and one may be sure that, as a good realtor, he did not neglect the material considerations. The welfare of both the church and the country demanded that the pulpits be filled. The church was indeed at low ebb, but it was at the threshold of a new growth, and one beginning a novitiate would, so to speak, be getting in on the ground floor. New-comers there were virtually none, as there were no

bishops in America to ordain them. The clergy had occupied a powerful, in some cases a dictatorial, rôle in the life of the colonies, and might, when conditions were readjusted, reassume their social supremacy.

Under the circumstances, there were not a few practical reasons that may have influenced this young man, with a vivid imagination, a persuasive oratorial habit, and the best anecdotal gift of his day, to think that, for his talents, the tongue was mightier than the scalpel, the pulpit a more promising field than the surgery. It would be unfair, however, to give the impression that such reasons outweighed the spiritual considerations with Mason Locke Weems. To his energy, his simple Christian philosophy, and his broad humanitarian spirit, the call to help rebuild the church must have made a strong appeal.

Whatever the decisive argument was, in 1782 we find Weems again in London, this

time an aspirant for holy orders. Before he left Maryland he was already assured of a parish. Though he was not yet ordained, by grace of the powerful Dr. Smith his name was carried on the parish lists as rector of All-Hallows, the parish situated just to the north of his home parish of St. James. Apparently no salary attached to this designation *in absentia.* It was merely a sort of undated promissory note.

For an American, however, to become a clergyman of the Church of England was no simple matter at that time. The Revolution was over, but the treaty of peace with England was not signed until November, 1782, after a long wrangle over Canadian fishery rights and the compensation of exiled Tories whose American properties had been confiscated by the enthusiastic patriots in the States. Relations between the American Congress and the British Government were still chaotic, partly

because of the confusion in American finances and the centrifugal tendencies of the American federation, partly because the British Crown was not taking its American humiliation gracefully. American vessels were not yet received at British ports, and it appears that Weems had to make his trip to England by way of France. There is a record made by the American consul at Nantes of a passport issued to "Dr. Mason Weems," and that is the sole indication that has come down to us that Weems was ever regarded as a full-fledged physician.

Weems and Edward Gantt, Jr. of Maryland, later a clergyman of some distinction, who accompanied him on the same quest, were bluntly told by the English bishops that they could not be ordained without taking the oath of allegiance to King George, which was part of the sacred formula. This, for practical as well as patriotic reasons, they were compelled to refuse, as they well knew that if they went

home after swearing to honor and obey George III, they would be chased out of any parish in the country by a mob of furious hundred-per-centers. They negotiated for some time without advancing their business, and then they took the matter up by mail with Ambassador Benjamin Franklin in Paris and Ambassador John Adams at the Hague. These worthies were both cordially detested at that time by the gentlemen who managed the affairs of Britain, and they were impotent to assist the applicants for a clerical cut.

The venerable philosopher of Printing House Square replied to Weems and Gantt promptly, with characteristic urbanity, advising them to proceed to the practice of their profession without regular ordination. If the British Isles, he wrote, were suddenly engulfed in the ocean, a not impossible catastrophe (which Dr. Franklin obviously could contemplate with unaffected equanimity), Anglican

communicants in America would still have to have clergymen, and some informality would have to be devised.

"A hundred years hence, when people are more enlightened," he continued, "it will be wondered at that men in America, qualified in their learning and Piety to pray for and instruct their neighbors, should not be permitted to do it until they have made a voyage of six thousand miles to ask leave of a cross old Gentleman at Canterbury, who seems by your account to have as little regard for the Souls of the People of Maryland as King William's Attorney General, Seymour, had for those of Virginia." (Seymour, after refusing an appeal for a grant for a college with religious instruction in Virginia, was told that such an institution was necessary for the souls of the colonists. "Souls!" he replied. "Damn your souls. Make tobacco.")

Thus Franklin. Adams, who was what is

sometimes called a practical man, spent some energy in devising a wholly impracticable expedient. He persuaded the bishop of the Danish Church to offer to ordain the two Americans by the rite of the Danish Church. When this plan was communicated to Congress, the Anglican clergy in the various colonies rejected it, and neither Weems nor Gantt made any effort to take advantage of it. Probably they had reason to suspect that any such roundabout ordination would make them outlaws as far as the "cross old Gentleman at Canterbury" was concerned. In all, they had been in London for well over two years when Parliament passed an enabling act permitting men who were to preach abroad to secure ordination without taking the regal oath. In September, 1784, Weems was ordained by the Bishop of Chester, and one week later the Archbishop of Canterbury admitted him to the

priesthood. He sailed at once for America.

The Rev. Samuel Seabury, of Connecticut, who had gone to London with a petition signed by the other Anglican clergymen of his colony, praying that he be consecrated as a bishop, had poorer luck than Weems and Gantt. Parliament made no provision for American bishops, so he was left high and dry. The Rev. Seabury, however, was a man of resource, so in the autumn he journeyed to Scotland and persuaded the nonjuring Scotch bishops to grant him a sort of bootleg bishopric. The Bishop of Aberdeen formally elevated him in November.

A curious anecdote has come down to us of Weems's stay in London. It is said that his companions became uneasy at one time because he would disappear mysteriously in the evenings and not return to his lodgings until a late hour. Fearful for the young man's mor-

als, and perhaps not unmoved by a not wholly pious curiosity, his friends followed him one night and traced him to a lowly cellar, where they discovered him "exhorting to repentance a poor wretch, once the gayest of the gay, but now languishing on a death-bed and deserted by the world."

This is a pretty story, and sufficiently credible, though it is somewhat marred by a competitive tale told by several of the biographers of Weems. According to this anecdote, Weems, at the age of fourteen, was for a time a guest of the Jenifer family, of Charles County, Maryland. In this case also the family was perturbed at his unexplained nocturnal disappearances, and, as the story runs, they finally dogged his steps and found him giving religious instruction to a group of poor children in a hut in the pine-barrens. The similarity of the stories leads to a guess that the incorrigible creator of folk-lore made them up himself. Probably

he was weaving over his own head the first sample of his imposing fabric of moral legends which later became ineradicably patched upon American history.

III

THE ROUND PEG

It was September 5, 1784, when the cross old Gentleman at Canterbury composed himself to permit General Washington's republican countryman to kiss his hand without swearing fealty to King George. It was the latter part of November before Weems arrived home on some obscure sailing-vessel, and he was promptly installed as rector of All-Hallows. On November 30, Bishop Francis Asbury, of the Methodist Church, in the course of his wanderings to and fro about the earth, "preached with enlargement to rich and poor" at Herring Creek or thereabouts, and recorded in his diary, "The Rev. M. W——s and myself had an interesting conversation on the subject of the Episcopal mode of church government."

Bishop Asbury spent the night at the house of David Weems, Mason Locke's brother, and was permitted to preach the Word to his host's slaves. During succeeding years, several members of the Weems clan conceived an attraction for the Methodist persuasion. Apparently, Captain William Weems, another of Mason Locke's brothers, joined the Methodists, and on several occasions, on his visits to that part of Maryland, Bishop Asbury notes that he "preached at Weems's chapel," apparently the private chapel set up on Captain William Weems's estate.

If Dr. Smith had held out to Mason Locke high material promise for a career in the church, his optimism, as Weems speedily discovered, was unjustified.

The established church in Maryland, as in the other colonies, had fallen into disestablishment and evil days. Since over two thirds of the clergymen in the colony had been loyal-

ists during the Revolution, and most of these had found it expedient to leave the country without staying to collect more than hand baggage, it was easy enough to get a charge; but it was difficult for the rector to keep himself alive in it.

A period of slim pickings had set in for the clergy. Before the Revolution, these gentlemen had set up as social and moral mentors in the colonies. They imposed their wills on the colonial legislatures in matters of conduct, observance, and worship, and infractions of their rule were punishable by fines, public beatings, loss of civil rights, banishment, or even, in some cases, by death. The stocks, the whipping-post, and the ducking-stool were symbols of their tyranny, operated through the secular arm.

In most of the colonies any criticism of a clergyman of the establishment was held to be a form of blasphemy and provoked ingenious

punishments, such as boring through the tongue with red-hot iron. Citizenship was not uncommonly limited to male members of the established church, and in no colony did dissenters have full civil rights. In Maryland the Roman Catholics were disfranchised by a law which compelled each elector at the polls to sign an oath that he did not believe in the doctrine of transubstantiation.

In several of the colonies, Sabbath-day attendance at the establishment was compulsory, and in many the miscreants who stayed away were literally beaten to the church by the authorities, or, if they were persons of substance, were subjected to fines. All persons, also, whatever their religious views, must pay taxes to the clerical establishment, sometimes, as in Virginia, under the tithe system, sometimes, as in Maryland, in the form of a poll-tax. From 1702, when the Church of England became the establishment in Maryland, the individual

poll-tax was fixed at forty pounds of tobacco; in 1763, it was reduced to thirty pounds. Several of the livings in the colony prior to the Revolution were worth the munificent sum of one thousand pounds a year in salary, and only three of the forty-four were less than one hundred pounds. In Virginia, ministers of the establishment received salaries equivalent to sixteen thousand pounds of tobacco, and in addition they were allowed liberal glebe-lands, commonly two hundred and fifty acres, and a clerical establishment well stocked with horses, cattle, pigs, etc.

The Anglican establishment in the Southern colonies did not go to the lengths of the Congregational establishment in New England, which fathered laws attempting to regulate the style of women's dress, including sleeve lengths and skirt lengths, and decreed that male colonists who committed the crime of smoking in public must repent in solitary confinement. In

New England the clerical dictators made it a prison offense to drive or even to take an innocent constitutional on the Sabbath, or, in fact, to indulge, during that ironclad day, in any activity except going to church or being buried —and a law of 1728 specifically forbade even the last-named recreation. In Boston, a large corps of special officers had to be appointed to hale to the dungeons rascally slackers who attempted to sneak out of town on a Saturday evening to escape the horrors of the Puritan day of rest.

While the Anglican Church avoided such excesses, it was the most unpopular of establishments after the Revolution. Its name and the fact that the major part of its clergy remained loyal to King George and many of them refused to obey the hastily passed revolutionary statutes forbidding prayers for His Majesty multiplied the popular disaffection. It was natural that the conflict should be fol-

lowed by a general outbreak of hundred-per-cent Americanism, in which persons who took no stalwart part in the actual fighting for liberty were particularly prominent. Much of the ire of these patriots was directed against what remained of the Church of England in America. Roman Catholics, Baptists, Quakers, Methodists, and other dissenters, who had been compelled to pay their annual tribute to the rival church, were quite excusably active in promoting the propaganda. In every colony the free citizens joyously disestablished the clerical establishment and did away with its prerogative of taxation. Most of the colonies, including Maryland and Virginia, passed laws forbidding political activity among gentlemen of the cloth. In Maryland the poll-tax for the establishment went by the board even before the fighting started at Lexington. Not a few of the churches were razed. In Virginia the number of Anglican clergymen was reduced from

ninety-one to twenty-eight, of whom only fifteen dared to appear for services, and over a fourth of the parishes were wiped out. Eventually, the glebe-lands and even the church plate were sold to swell the public purse. In Maryland, as we have noted, the ranks of the clergy suffered a decimation similar to that in Virginia.

Several circumstances in Maryland contributed to the popular feeling against the established church. Not the least among these were the laws bestowing extraordinary police powers upon the vestrymen. It was the duty of these respectable gentlemen to sell into slavery, under the court's decree, "immoral women and their children." At the Sabbath-day service the head vestryman embellished the occasion by reading the names of persons guilty of major or minor immoralities, from cohabitation to fishing on Sunday, and warning the offenders to desist or suffer the ap-

propriate punishments. This divine right of snoopery was doubtless a constant annoyance to the patient colonists. Furthermore, the plain folk in the congregations were not always reconciled to the fact that the vestrymen built the churches, picked the church sites, let all contracts for building and repairs, and on Sunday sat in state in their special pews, apart from the herd.

The clergymen usually, perforce, took their tone from the vestry, and stood by them as they stood by Canterbury and King George. On them primarily the popular wrath descended as the growing crisis in Massachusetts roused people in the other colonies against the Crown.

Thus, what with one thing and another, Parson Weems brought his talents to a poor market. The fat livings and all the clerical prerogatives had vanished, and the unfortunate clergymen were compelled to rely on the

voluntary contributions of a sadly disaffected population. To the older men, it must have seemed like the end of the world. During most of his five years at All-Hallows, Weems eked out his slender living by conducting a school for girls. In 1790, he was without a charge. In 1791 and part of 1792, he presided over the neighboring parish of Westminster. After that, he gave up the struggle and took to the road as a peddler of books.

In fact, as the rector of a parish, Weems was a failure. Probably his temperament unfitted him for such a static profession. He was unpopular among the more influential people in his parish, who must have resented his crusading zeal, his breadth of view in matters purely dogmatic, his curious outbursts of liberalism, and his lack of dignity.

It is interesting to note that in May, 1785, Weems was elected a member of the exclusive South River Club. This festive institution has

endured for upward of two centuries, and as far back as Weems's day it was distinguished for its treatment of the terrapin, the canvas-back duck, the oyster, the soft-shell crab, and other natural resources of the Chesapeake region. Its meetings were wholly epicurean and convivial, and clergymen were something of a rarity on its rolls. The dues in Weems's day of three shillings ninepence a year were, of course, merely nominal.

The meetings at that time were held once a month at the club-house, each of the members in turn being responsible for the ordering of the feast. "Then served the Revd. Mason Weems agreeable to rule," reads the formal minute of the meeting in June, the next after Weems's admission. It is interesting to note that on the occasion of the monthly meeting it was the duty of the steward to see that two and a half gallons of spirits were on hand, with other ingredients for a toddy, and also "suf-

ficient dinner with clean pipes and tobacco."

Parson Weems, though not a prohibitionist, was one of the first conspicuous advocates of the cause of temperance in America. While he did not disdain a glass of wine on occasion, he was a stout antagonist of hard liquors. He was not, however, one of those who berate the Demon Rum on the public platform and embrace him in the privacy of their clubs. Thus, while the South River Club was not given to formal discussion of matters of civic virtue, the minute of the meeting of July, 1786, showed that he made a brave attempt to lower the alcoholic content of the club's famous brews. The minute for this occasion reads:

Then served Doctor Robert Welsh agreeable to rule; when the following question proposed by the Revd Mason L. Weems for public discussion was brought forward: Is not the use of Spirituous Liquors, except in cases of Ill Health, an idle and unnecessary practice.

We may be sure that the affirmative case was ably and racily presented, though the cause of Spirituous Liquors had the heavier battalions on its side. During Weems's membership, his club-mates' enjoyment of his lively anecdotal gift was somewhat mitigated by his habit of adorning his tales with moralistic propaganda. His resignation was accepted at the November meeting in 1787. He was scheduled to act as host on that occasion, but being detained on clerical business, he gave his dinner at the December meeting, after his resignation, like the good sport that he was. He and his companions parted on excellent terms.[1]

[1] The simple minutes of the South River Club, from 1742 on, are preserved in the Maryland Historical Society, along with the more profuse records of its wicked little brother, the Delphian Society, which is now but a memory. The Delphian, a literary organization, came after Weems's time. Its prize relic is a poem by Francis Scott Key addressed to a young lady taking a shower-bath. This effort is devoid of political implications such as appear in Key's later lyric beginning. "Oh say, can you see," but it is equally spirited in its way.

In 1788, the church appointed supervisory committees, each of which was to maintain personal contact with the parishes in a section of the State. Though only twenty-nine, Weems was selected as a member of the committee to supervise the flocks in Frederick, Montgomery, and part of Anne Arundel counties.

We have glimpses of Weems, during this period, in the diary of the Rev. William Duke, his neighbor in Prince George County, which is fortunately preserved in manuscript in the Maryland Diocesan Library. Duke was an obscure person, utterly conventional, and unblessed with any gleam of humor, obsessed with fears about his health, and afflicted with a long-term affair of the heart which did not get on very well; but he was a solidly methodical diarist. He set down his daily intercourse conscientiously, and he saw much of the rector of All-Hallows.

In one of his visits to Weems we find the

Rev. Duke, who had once been a Methodist, expressing his horror at those who indulged in a friendly game of cards. "I gave it my opinion that the most innocent use of cards was countenancing what is really criminal in others, but however I was so unfortunate as to be singular in that sentiment." Shocked at Weems's more liberal view on the peccadilloes of the layman, Mr. Duke determined on the morrow "to have some serious conversation with Mr. Weems on the subject of amusement." He records further: "We agreed in general. But I could not yield to the Maxim of assuming the Complexion and entering into the Spirit of Whatever Company you happen in. We exchanged our Sentiments with Candor and finally agreed to act upon the united Principles of Reason and Religion."

At a later meeting, Rev. Duke notes: "From a motive of good will (I think) I told Mr. W—— of something that I blamed in him. He

seemed to take it well." Probably the occasion for this reproof was Weems's liking for his fiddle. Playing upon this profane instrument was bad enough for a shepherd of the Lord, but Weems actually seemed to enjoy sawing out rollicking tunes that savored dangerously of mundane pleasure. In New England, as everyone knew, fiddling or piping in one's room of an evening would bring down a visit from the tithing-man, who would haul one out for a fine or a beating.

Though the Rev. Duke was often dismayed at the oddities of conduct of his fellow-clergyman, he apparently had a real affection for him, and frequently called on Weems or rode about the country with him. "A good deal of talk with Mr. Weems. He drives Jehu-like," reads one entry. Another recites: "Rode to Marlboro. Mr. W—— preached in the Ball-room." Rev. Duke would never have preached in a ball-room.

Another clergyman, the Rev. Dr. Thomas J. Claggett, who subsequently became a bishop, wrote to a fellow-cleric a bitter criticism of Weems for preaching before a Methodist congregation in his neighborhood. "His conduct, I verily believe, has materially affected ye Interest of our Church in this Quarter," wrote the outraged Dr. Claggett. "I have a great regard for M. Weems, his zeal and attention to ye Duties of his sacred office merit esteem; but in proportion as this zeal and Dilligence are applied to ye Methodist interest, it weakens us. You will be so kind as to consider how such a line of conduct as I have stated above squares with our Canons and Rules."

Other clergymen, and not a few serious-minded laymen, noted with concern that some of Weems's sermons were actually amusing, and his habit of occasionally injecting a charitable word for some notorious infidel filled the unco' guid with dismay.

Finally, every other Friday, Weems held a service for negroes. "A charitable attempt—I hope it will be successful," comments the Rev. Duke, but it is clear that he was doubtful of the propriety of such a departure, and, doubtless, right-thinking persons held that wasting a church service on colored chattels was hardly compatible with the dignity of a white, Nordic pastor. Though there were upward of 50,000 negroes in Maryland at the time of the Revolution, the Anglican establishment had always acted warily in inviting them into the Christian fellowship. For a long period, slaves were rarely baptized, for in this matter the church was agitated by a delicate point of law and ethics. Since baptism would make them inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, many authorities held that it would automatically set them free. In 1715, the State Assembly passed an act setting forth that the baptism of a slave had no effect on his mundane status, but the church

still made no attempt to embrace the black brethren in wholesale lots, and this Jim Crow prejudice persisted after the Revolution.

Thus in one way and another Weems's liberalism made him unpopular. The Rev. Duke notes that "the dislike and disapprobation that he (Weems) meets with" was a topic of discussion in the country-side by 1790. In referring to the matter, the Rev. Duke adds loyally, "As he is chiefly remarkable for his Zeal and Industry, I could not help attributing the opposition generally to the diabolical spirit which is enmity against God." Obviously, the good man had his training from the days when criticism of a clergyman was blasphemy against the Almighty.

Some time in the Spring of 1792, Weems left his charge at Westminster for good. Whether the "dislike and disapprobation" he had aroused culminated in a request from stiff-necked vestrymen for his resignation, or

whether he quit of his own initiative, is a matter of conjecture.

Despite his resignation, Weems bobbed up at Annapolis at the convention of the church held in June, 1792. The Rev. Duke notes that he and Weems roomed together. As Weems no longer had a parish, there was some question raised about his admission to the convention, but on the second day a special rule was passed permitting him to take his seat.

He had embarked upon his first publishing venture and came with large numbers of copies of his product which he proceeded to vend among the delegates. The volume was a popular medical pamphlet entitled "Onania," which he had doubtless reprinted from an English original.

Toward the end of the month, the Rev. Duke observed that the pamphlet was in a good many hands, but was exciting a ribald rather than a serious consideration. Shortly after-

ward he set forth in his diary that Brother Weems had "incurred a great deal of ridicule as well as serious blame for his odd publication." Clearly, in that primitive society a frank exposition of a form of perversion was regarded as obscene.

Probably if Weems hoped to get another pastorate, his "odd publication" ended that hope. The evidence tends to the conclusion that he wound up without regret his career as a pastor, and there is no record to show that he ever again assumed the responsibility of a parish.

IV

THE PEDDLER OF CULTURE

THUS Parson Weems became an itinerant purveyor of culture and morality, and in this rôle began his wanderings, which were to last for a third of a century. If he could sell a medical pamphlet of sorts to his fellow-clergymen and to coarse-grained commoners, he could sell other works to the common man. At first he pursued his new vocation afoot, going from door to door, from village to village, probably carrying his slender stock in a pack on his back. The Rev. Duke about this time moved to Elkton, Maryland, and in his not infrequent journeys between Baltimore and Philadelphia, Weems usually spent a night or so with his old friend. The Rev. Duke confided to his diary that he "was sorry to see Weems's peddling

way of life, but God knows best by what methods we can most directly answer the designations of his Providence."

However, there was nothing ignominious about the occupation of traveling book-peddler. He was still a curiosity, not a recognized nuisance. Moreover, in that scattered society a stranger was always a welcome novelty. Weems's clerical garb was a badge of respectability, his versatile tongue an open-sesame to food and shelter. In some Southern cities, tavern-keepers of that day complained that as soon as a stranger arrived he was so besieged with private invitations to spend the night that the bedrooms of the public house were useless. Doubtless, young Weems did not have to worry about tavern charges. Substantial citizens were glad to entertain him, to listen to his gossip and anecdotes of distant places and men, and to send him on his way in the morning with a lighter pack and a heavier purse.

Weems presently made another publishing venture. In 1749, Samuel and John Adams, of Wilmington, printed for him Wilson's "Account of the Pelew Islands," a lively and simple narrative, parts of which he had heard William Duke read aloud three years before. He also projected a volume of American sermons from various divines, and for this scheme sought to interest Dr. Claggett, who had now become bishop of the diocese of Maryland. Bishop Claggett, however, still seems to have borne resentment from the occasion when Weems preached to the Methodists within his clerical province, and nothing came of this plan.

About this time, also, Weems established a connection with Mathew Carey, the famous Philadelphia publisher, who was then struggling with debts and overproduction and the blighting effects of the epidemic of yellow fever that had smitten the town in the late

summer and fall of 1793. The Episcopal clergyman and the Irish Roman Catholic publisher struck up a solid business friendship from the start, and Weems went forth on the roads with a good stock of volumes bearing Carey's imprint. Their business association continued, with one or two intervals, for nearly a third of a century.

The parson-bookseller's itinerary took him as far north as New York and south into Virginia. Probably on one of his southerly jaunts he made the acquaintance of the Ewall family of the Potomac River port of Dumfries, Virginia. The Ewalls were people of substance and culture who had been prominent in the tobacco trade, and Colonal Jesse Ewall and his household lived in a fine country mansion, Bel Air, standing in the hill country five miles back of mosquito-ridden Dumfries. In July, 1795, Weems married Fanny Ewall, a daughter of this affluent household. He was thirty-six years

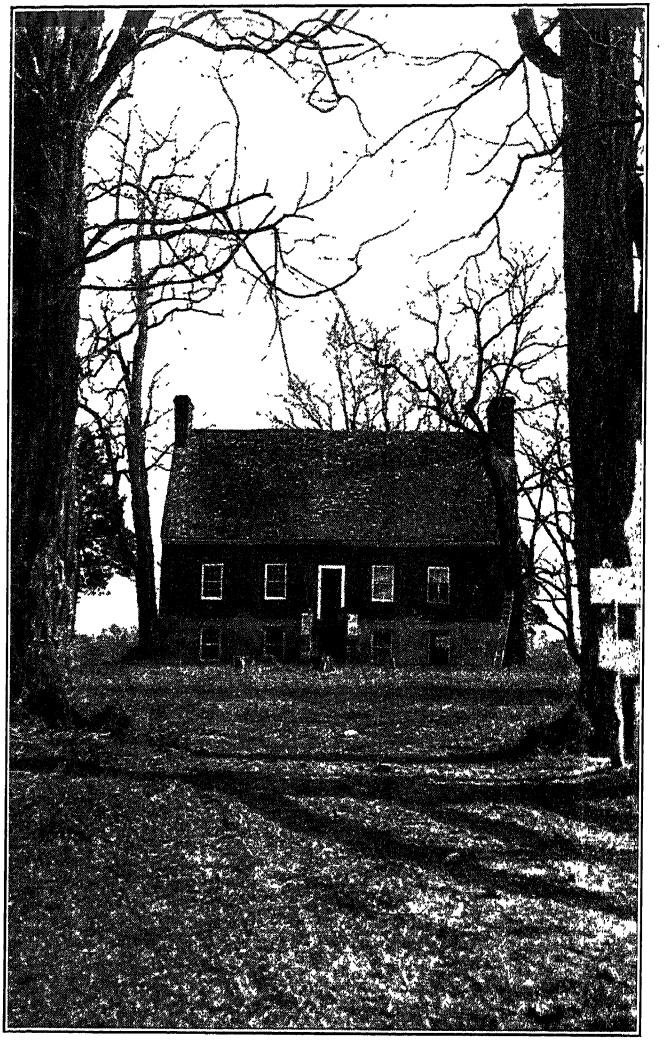
old, she barely twenty. It must be assumed that at this time he was no ragged clerical outcast, or Fanny Ewall would have turned up her nose at his suit.

Indeed, there is evidence that Weems had found his true vocation and was already making a go of it. "I wonder at Weems to travel afoot," notes the Rev. Duke, in his diary, as his friend passed through Elkton a few months after the marriage, but the itinerant go-getter was already at that time putting some money by. The county records at Manassas reveal that in the summer of 1798 Weems paid thirty-five pounds, "current money of Virginia," for "one lott or half acre of land in the Town of Dumfries"; and on November 1 of the same year he bought "a lott, dwelling house, kitchen, ice house, stable, garden," etc., in Dumfries, for the sum of three hundred dollars. After his marriage he had taken up his residence in his wife's town, and for the rest of his life he was

a citizen of Virginia. A few years after his marriage he moved to Bel Air, probably after the death of Colonel Ewall, in 1806. Colonel Ewall's will, along with other family documents, was literally torn to pieces by Union soldiers in the Civil War, who indulged in much wanton destruction among the county records stored in the court-house at Manassas.

All that now remains of Dumfries is a roadside sign and two or three somewhat dilapidated houses on the automobile highway between Washington and Fredericksburg on the west side of the Potomac, eighteen miles below Washington's old home at Mount Vernon. Before the Revolution, the place was a flourishing tobacco port that promised to grow into an important city.

Time was when the present automobile road was an Indian trail. In colonial days it was known as "The Potomac Path," and in the latter part of that period the post stages travel-



PARSON WEEMS'S HOME, "BEL AIR" NEAR DUMFRIES, VIRGINIA

ing between Washington and Richmond via Fredericksburg struggled through its mud and dust and precariously forded the various runs that emptied into the Potomac. With the coming of the steamboats and the railways, the story of this historic artery vanished for a time, as Mr. Fairfax Harrison, president of the Southern Railway, has remarked, "in a mist of steam," to be renewed with the later appearance of the motor-car.

In Weems's day, though this highway was cited in the current guide-books as one of the main American highways, making a journey on it was a dangerous adventure. If the traveler escaped being bogged in Chipawansic Swamp, he probably had to battle for his life in crossing Accotink Run, near Mount Vernon, which spread itself in a raging flood over the countryside in time of freshet. Dr. Thomas Coke, the English traveler, had a narrow escape from drowning there in 1795, the year Weems was

married. A quarter of a century later, John Randolph records that he waded though it "for nearly a mile up to the saddle-bags." Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1790 that the roads were so bad "we could never go more than three miles an hour, sometimes not more than two, and in the night but one."

As late as 1820, thirty years later, the mail stage required sixteen hours to get from Alexandria to Fredericksburg, fifty miles. Thomas Moore, the poet, took the trip in the mail stage in June, 1804, and described the journey in a letter written to his mother from Baltimore. He wrote:

I have passed the Potomac, the Rappahannock, the Occoquan, the Potapsio, and many other rivers with names as barbarous as the inhabitants. Such a road as I have come, and in such a conveyance! The mail takes twelve passengers, which generally consist of squalling children, stinking negroes, and republicans smoking cigars! How often has it oc-

curred to me that nothing can be more emblematic of the government of this country than its stages, filled with a motley mixture, all "hail fellow well met," driving through mud and filth, which bespatters them as they raise it, and risking an upset at every step.

Dumfries, on Quantico Creek, was founded by Scotch merchants, interested in the tobacco trade, who named their town after the home of Robert Burns. In the neighboring country-side one still comes upon an occasional family with the crisp Scotch bur in their speech, in contrast to the negro drawl prevalent among blacks and whites alike. Dumfries was the first town founded in Prince William County, its charter dating from 1749. Ten years later it became the county-seat. During its first decades it easily outstripped in population and importance the rival town of Alexandria, farther up the river. Tide-water came up to the main street in those days, and tobacco from all

the great plantations of northern Virginia poured into Dumfries to be loaded on ships for Glasgow.

Before long, the town boasted a public warehouse, several private warehouses, busy shops, a church, and even a theater, which Washington attended on at least one occasion before the Revolution when he rode down from Mount Vernon for a court session. Members of the great families of the county would drive into Dumfries in their chariots to attend balls and "tea drinkings."

Then came the Revolution, and most of the Scotch traders returned to the old country and turned their attention to trade in West Indian sugar. They never came back. To complete the reversal, the mouth of Quantico Creek gradually choked up with silt, so that Dumfries was left high and dry, five miles inland from the point where ocean carrying ships could find enough water. The little town faded from the

scene almost as rapidly as it had risen. The county-seat was not removed until 1822, but long before that, Dumfries was but a shadow of its former glory.

The decay of the town was well advanced when Weems moved there after his marriage, and the fortunes of the Ewall family had fallen with the town. The Ewalls entered into several schemes to retrieve their losses by building a new port at the mouth of the creek or by dredging the mouth and thus restoring the shipping trade to the old wharves, but the various plans came to nothing.

After the death of Colonel Ewall, in 1806, the family became so reduced in circumstances that Weems was compelled to advance to his mother-in-law considerable sums at various times to enable her to keep the estate together. By January, 1812, these advances amounted to twenty-three hundred dollars, and Mrs. Ewall gave Weems a mortgage on the estate to

cover the debt. Four months later she was compelled to borrow a thousand dollars more from him to avoid a forced sale of the estate. Mrs. Ewall died in 1823, and in August of the following year, Bel Air, with its seven hundred acres, was sold at public auction. In Weems's absence, his son-in-law, Henry Slade, bought it in for him for $2212.

Though Dumfries has vanished, Bel Air still stands on its commanding hilltop, a short drive off the "back road" (which parallels the automobile highway six miles inland), not far from the tiny settlement of Minnieville. It is a proud three-story house of English brick, the dominant feature of the rolling, wooded country-side. The lofty drawing-room is still a gracious chamber of agreeable lines with broad windows giving plenty of sunlight, and the basement dining-hall contains a fireplace literally wide enough to roast an ox. Near-by is a sealed brick chamber in which, according to

tradition, recalcitrant slaves would be locked until terror of the darkness reduced them to submission. One may assume that during the twenty years of Weems's occupancy this dungeon was used for no purpose more terrifying than a storage-room for preserves. Though the house must be nearly two hundred years old, it is still stout and habitable.

On a slope beyond the barn, now falling into ruin, is the old burial-plot. Weems lies there, along with some members of his wife's family, but all the old gravestones were stolen by vandals a few years ago and his resting-place is unmarked.

Though the Ewall family was financially on the downgrade when Weems married into it, his marriage helped materially to lay the foundation for his fame and fortune. The Ewalls were closely related to the Balls, the family of George Washington's mother. Colonel Ewall's sister was married to Dr. Craik, Washington's

family physician. Washington was an occasional visitor at Bel Air during Colonel Ewall's day.

Thus personally, as well as geographically, Weems achieved a sort of contact with the greatest name of his time. Moreover, the marriage gave him social position, and even at that late day, probably brought something in the way of financial credit. Within a year he undertook a new publishing venture, somewhat more ambitious than his previous ones. With unerring editorial instinct, he got together a symposium by Benjamin Franklin and by other less remembered advocates of the homely virtues and the simple life and produced it under the title of "The Immortal Mentor, or Man's Unerring Guide to a Healthy, Wealthy and Happy Life." The modern commercial editor would invent a title more in accord with our briefer usage, but he could scarcely discover a more appropriate lure for the go-getter spirit.

Washington, amiably lending his name to aid the enterprise of the interesting young parson who had married Ewall's daughter, stood father to a blurb which Weems was not slow in featuring on the title-page. "I have perused it with singular satisfaction"; wrote the sage of Mount Vernon, "and hesitate not to say that it is, in my opinion at least, an invaluable compilation. I cannot but hope that a book whose contents do so much credit to its title will meet a very generous patronage."

It was during these first years of his marriage that Weems conceived a more wholesale method of selling his books than vending them from door to door. In pursuit of this he ingeniously petitioned the state legislature of Virginia to permit him to assist in building substantial bridges over two streams at places where traffic had increased and crossing was dangerous. "Your petitioner," wrote Weems, "has on hand a considerable quantity of most

valuable books, the circulation of which he conceives will greatly redound to the public benefit." If the House of Burgesses would authorize him to start a lottery, he would give the books as prizes "at the Philadelphia retail prices," and would give one thousand dollars of the profits toward the erection, over the dangerous run, of "two strong and sufficient bridges, of seasoned oak, frames well tarred and secured from the inclemencies of the weather." This sporting offer the law-makers callously rejected.

Though married, and with a home in Dumfries, Weems continued his "peddling way of life." For a brief period, at least, he continued to move about on the hoof, for four months after Weems's marriage, the Rev. Duke, evidently aware of the changed circumstances of his friend, wrote, "I wonder at Weems to travel afoot." However, this humble mode of getting about soon gave way to the covered "Jersey

waggon," with the neat, portable bookcase, in which he became such a familiar figure on the highways between Philadelphia and Savannah for the next quarter of a century.

Before long, his thoughts turned to authorship and he began work on the first of his considerable series of lively moral pamphlets which proved to be such fine literary properties.

His venture was of a political cast, a protest against the party spirit which had burst forth so furiously when Washington retired from the Presidency. It was entitled "The Philanthropist: or a Good Twenty-Five Cents Worth of Political Love Powder for Honest Adamsites and Jeffersonites." The aristocratic tendencies of John Adams's administration were causing considerable unrest among the underlying population, and Weems set himself to soothe this by pleading that every good citizen should be content in the station to which God had as-

signed him. Society, like the human body, had its head and its humble feet; some were "made to direct; others to obey." Therefore the poor should pay their taxes cheerfully, as the rich were paying much more than they.

Under our constitution, which nearly resembles the human body (that most perfect of all God's works), every guinea or sharpshin that is taken up by absorbents, the sheriffs, is carried strait to the treasury, whence in a very few pulsations, it is distributed among the servants of the public, those wise and brave men who you yourselves have chosen to superintend your laws, or to fight for you.

After eulogizing political place-holders as men compelled to lead lives of "brain-racking, spirit-wasting, hard, flesh-consuming study," Weems turned to the nation's fighting men and evoked the first of his series of battle pictures with which he stirred the patriotic bosom in many a pamphlet. This maiden effort dealt with a naval conflict!

All hands to quarters—fore and aft a clear ship —up hammocks—light the matches and stand by to make up the thunder—now may hearts be stout and bold. The flag of Columbia waves over their heads, the heroes eye the beloved stripes. The smile of joy is on their countenances, and the fire of valor flashes from their eyes. They demand the fight. The tall black ship of the enemy is now close alongside; her tremendous artillery stares them in the face yawning for destruction. The dreadful fray begins, the air is rent with their horrid thunder. Old ocean trembles and lowers all her waves. The ships are wrapped in flaming fire while storms of iron bullets dash everything to pieces. The decks are covered with mangled corpses, and the scuppers run torrents of blood.

Incidentally, in the pamphlet, Weems gave an epic glimpse of the battle of Eutaw Springs, in which Peter Francisco, the strong man of Virginia, who could lift a 1500-pound cannon, took part. "Peter, being an officer, had no better weapon than a heavy cutlass, with which,

however, he got a blow a piece at 4 grenadiers. Every blow was ready money to old Charon."

Washington's indorsement of this pamphlet of such timely and unimpeachable political sentiments was more spontaneous than his appreciation of "The Immortal Mentor." "Much indeed is it to be wished," he wrote Weems in August, 1799, "that the Sentiments contained in your pamphlets, and the doctrine it endeavors to inculcate, were more prevalent—Happy would it be for this Country at least, if they were so."

This was the last boost Weems was to receive from that pen. Four months later Washington lay dead at Mount Vernon. Doubtless Weems, in company with Colonel Ewall or Dr. Craik, went there to look for the last time upon that grave and serene countenance, with the mouth slightly twisted because of the mail-order teeth, imported from England, which could never be made to fit. Even as he gazed

reverently, Weems probably was conceiving in his mind the Washington which he was to create, if not in his own image, at least in the image of his sentimental morality, the Washington that has endured to our day and outlived the creations of more sober and less imaginative historians and biographers.

V

THE GREAT WORK

WEEMS, in common with every other clergyman in the land, preached a sermon on the death of Washington. His effort was the only one of historical significance. Probably on this unusual occasion he had the advantage of occupying the pulpit of Pohick Church, in Truro Parish, about seven miles from Mount Vernon, where Washington was wont to attend before the Revolution. When Weems was at home in Dumfries during these years, he occasionally rode over from Dumfries of a Sunday and held services at Pohick. From the Revolution to the end of the century, the parish had no regular rector, and Pohick, along with the other churches and chapels in the parish, was neg-

G. WASHINGTON.

FRONTISPIECE FROM THE "LIFE OF WASHINGTON"

lected, though apparently Washington's name saved it from acts of vandalism.

Washington had served as vestryman in Truro Parish, and as churchwarden. He owned one of the two front pews at Pohick Church, for which he paid sixteen pounds when a larger structure replaced the old church in 1774. Washington, in fact, selected the new site. The vestrymen, led by George Mason, who later became the father of the Bill of Rights, had decided for sentimental reasons to rebuild on the old situation, when Washington appeared at the meeting, and, in his methodical manner, produced an accurate survey of the parish, showing that the shift of population made a new site desirable.

The church building was a brick structure 66 by 56½ feet, and 28 feet high. The twelve center front pews, all five by seven, were owned by the quality—the Washingtons, Masons, Fairfaxes, etc. Two pews on either side of the

chancel were reserved for vestrymen, merchants, magistrates, and strangers. Eighteen rear pews were occupied by "the most respectable inhabitants and householders," and the common folk sat on side benches in the rear, the men along the south wall, the women on the north, for etiquette in those days separated the sexes among the vulgar on all formal occasions. The high pulpit towered on a side aisle, midway between the chancel and the entrance. There was no steeple; the church-bell hung on a tree in the yard.

Weems was not slow in seeing the value of identifying his name with this church, even though Washington no longer worshiped there, and we may be sure that he would choose the pulpit of Pohick for his eulogy of the national hero. The sermon itself was carefully combed over and expanded, and in a short time his literary wares were enriched by an eighty-page pamphlet entitled: "A History of

the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General George Washington; dedicated to Mrs. Washington, by the Rev. M. L. Weems of Dumfries." This modest biographical effort proved to have a ready sale, and a second edition quickly followed, to the title of which the reverend author, probably stirred by some skeptical critic, added the line: "Faithfully taken from authentic documents." During the next few years, Weems's "Washington" continued to be bought largely by people of all conditions. Respectable Philadelphians had Weems's "Washington" on their mahogany library tables, and the Southern cracker of the pine-barrens scraped his pennies together to make perhaps the only literary purchase of his life when the parson book-agent rode past his door.

Weems was not unresponsive to the laws of supply and demand. When the fifth edition appeared, in 1806, the eighty pages had ex-

panded into a quarto volume of over 250 pages, of the liveliest content. The "authentic documents" had vanished from the title, which now read: "The Life of George Washington, with curious anecdotes equally honorable to himself and exemplary to his young countrymen." The author, moreover, described himself on the title-page as "former rector of Mt. Vernon Parish."

This title was a pleasing invention; not the most ardent of Weems's biographical admirers can offer any ethical excuse for it. There was no Mt. Vernon Parish in Virginia, but Weems, with his instinct for salesmanship, doubtless saw in the name a better advertisement than the name Truro, which would hardly suggest to the average outlying buyer any connection with the immortal Washington. In his later publications he more specifically described himself as "former rector of General Washington's parish." There is no shred of record to au-

thenticate his claim. The Rev. William Meade, who was a contemporary of Weems and later became bishop of the diocese of Virginia, ridicules the idea, though we must admit that the good bishop regarded Weems uncharitably, referring to him as "one of nature's oddities." In his "Churches, Ministers and Families of old Virginia," Bishop Meade declares primly that "to suppose him (Weems) to have been a kind of private chaplain to such a man as Washington . . . is the greatest of incongruities." Weems's dedication to Martha Washington gives ground for indorsing the bishop's skepticism. If Weems had been rector of Truro, it would hardly have been necessary for him to sign himself, for Washington's widow, as "your unknown friend." It is extremely unlikely that he ever preached to Washington, and, in fact, his only connection with the great man consisted of a few casual visits at Mount Vernon with Dr. Craik and his occasional min-

istrations at Pohick after the Father of his Country had ceased to attend there.

The enlarged biography was a spacious effort. The original pamphlet dealt meagerly with Washington's early years; in fact, it carried the hero into the French and Indian War on the very first page. The new narrative bubbled with intimate anecdotes of Washington's boyhood, the authenticity of which is as doubtful as Weems's assumed rectorship. For the first time he gave the story of the cherry-tree, the most famous bit of folk-lore in American history, and other personalia of an even more questionable character, most of them now firmly embedded in our Washingtonian heritage.

Weems stated that the story of the cherry-tree came to him from the lips of "an aged lady" connected with the household of the elder Washington, who has always remained

anonymous. Here is the yarn, as spun on the original Weemsian loom:

"When George," said she, "was about six years old he was made the wealthy master of a hatchet! of which, like most little boys, he was immoderately fond, and was constantly going about chopping everything that came in his way. One day, in the garden, where he often amused himself hacking his mother's pea sticks, he unluckily tried the edge of his hatchet on the body of a beautiful young English cherry tree, which he barked so terribly that I don't believe the tree ever got the better of it. The next morning the old gentleman, finding out what had befallen his tree, which, by the way, was a great favorite, came into the house, and with much warmth asked for the mischievous author, declaring at the same time that he would not have taken five guineas for his tree. Nobody could tell him anything about it. Presently George and his hatchet made their appearance. 'George,' said his father, 'do you know who killed that beautiful little cherry tree yonder in the garden?' That was

a tough question and George staggered under it for a moment; but quickly recovered himself; and looking at his father with the sweet face of youth brightened with the inexpressible charm of all-conquering truth, he bravely cried out: 'I can't tell a lie, Pa; you know I can't tell a lie. I did cut it with my hatchet.'—'Run to my arms, you dearest boy,' cried his father in transports, 'run to my arms; glad am I, George, that you killed my tree; for you have paid me for it a thousand-fold. Such an act of heroism in my son is worth more than a thousand trees, though blossomed with silver and their fruits of purest gold!' "

In a somewhat inurbane reference to Weems in a magazine article on "Historical Liars," Professor Albert Bushnell Hart gives one of Weems's grandchildren as authority for the story that not long after Washington's death Weems's own son cut down a favorite rose-bush in the garden at Dumfries. The child confessed the deed—and was soundly whipped by Weems. This is a titillating anecdote, but,

unfortunately, present members of the Weems family declare it strictly apocryphal. Whether true or not, it offers no point of criticism of the authenticity of the cherry-tree story. However, Weems's "aged lady" did not stop with the cherry-tree. In Weems's pages she caps it with a second highly moral incident concerning an attempt by Washington's father to "startle George into a lively sense of his Maker." He secretly traced George's name in the earth in his garden-patch and planted it with cabbage seed. In a fortnight the boy beheld the miracle of the name "George Washington" standing forth in green shoots. He ran to his father for an explanation, whereupon the old gentleman made his little trick a pretext for a mighty sermon on the workings of Omniscience. This anecdote, however, was not original with Weems. Not Washington's father, but a solid English squire, had invented this bit of paternal mumbo-jumbo, and it is extremely un-

likely that George's simple parent had ever heard of it.

However, in an artistic sense, it fitted in well with young George's character as Weems developed it. The boy's habit of veracity persisted with an almost terrifying relentlessness. After he went to school, if the teacher wished to learn the facts about any escapade or breach of the rules, he would call on George. If the boys got entangled among themselves in any dispute in matters of fact, they would invariably summon George to sit in judgment as a supreme court and would accept his decision without question. He was first in manly games, the fastest runner, the best jumper, and could throw farthest. In fact, this young Admirable Crichton was the hero of a literary artist who knew the commercial value of laying on virtue with the heavy trowel. In these and other fables of a similar character scattered through the book, Weems created a Washington that all

the study and research of the scholars have been unable to erase. It is the Weemsian Washington that persists in the school readers and in the popular imagination, a figure of truly terrifying piosities and incredible perfections, and, as Mr. Albert J. Beveridge remarks in his life of John Marshall, "an impossible and intolerable prig."

Witness Weems's anecdote of war-clouds among the young idea in George's school. George, as the parson represents him, was not only too proud to fight himself; he took upon himself to forbid the other boys such exercise. Here is his speech to his schoolmates, as quoted by Weems:

You shall never, boys, have my consent to a practice so shocking! shocking even in slaves and dogs; then how utterly scandalous in little boys at school, who ought to look on one another as brothers. And what must be the feelings of our tender parents, when, instead of seeing us come

home smiling and lovely, as the joy of their hearts, they see us creeping in like young blackguards, with our heads bound up, black eyes and bloody clothes!

As boy or man, there was no humor in this indefatigable patriot of the Weemsian pen, no human frailty, no stepping from his celestial plane. On one of his martial expeditions an Indian chief shot at him seventeen times at close range, but could not hit him. "He is not born to be killed by a bullet," muttered the noble red man, after some "invisible hand" had turned aside his missiles. In his journey to the French forts on the Ohio, in 1753, to protest against the erection of military posts on that river, Weems's hero, amid almost incredible hardships and difficulty, never forgot for an instant his high moral purpose:

Drenching rains and drowning floods and snow-covered mountains opposed his course, but opposed in vain. The generous ambition to serve his country,

and to distinguish himself, carried him through all; and, even at the most trying times, touched his heart with a joy unknown to the vain and trifling.

Yet in spite of its pious mendacities, its cloying moral lessons, the book had life and color and a broad imaginative sweep that might put many a more scholarly biographer to shame. In some passages it took on an almost epic quality, as when Weems described how the bodeful tidings of renewed French activities along the Ohio and of fresh Indian forays swept across the Atlantic to the British Court:

Swift as the broad-winged packets could fly across the deep, the news was brought to England. Its effect there was like that of a stone rudely hurled against a nest of hornets. Instantly, from center to circumference, all is rage and bustle. The hive resounds with the maddening insects. Dark tumbling from their cells, they spread the hasty wing, and shrill whizzing through the air, they

rush to find the foe. Just so in the sea-ruling island, from queen's house to ale-house, from king to cockney, all were fierce for fight. Even the red-nosed porters, where they met, bending under their burdens, would stop in the streets, to talk of England's wrong; and as they talked, their fiery snouts were seen to grow more fiery still, and more deformed. . . .

The news was brought to Britain's king just as he had dispatched his pudding; and sat, right royally, amusing himself with a slice of Gloucester and a nip of ale. From the lips of the king down fell the luckless cheese, alas! not grac'd to comfort the stomach of the Lord's anointed; while, crowned with snowy foam, his nut-brown ale stood untasted beside his plate. Suddenly as he heard the news the monarch darkened in his place; and answering darkness shrouded all his court. In silence he rolled his eyes of fire on the floor, and twirled his terrible thumbs. . . . Starting at length, as from a trance, he swallowed his ale; then clenching his fist, he gave the table a tremendous knock and cursed the wooden-shoed nation by his God!

Swift as he cursed, the dogs of war bounded from their kennels, keen for the chase.

There is also interest of a different sort in his spirited account of the uprising of the farmers at Lexington:

Never before had the bosoms of the swains experienced such a tumult of heroic passions. Then throwing aside the implements of husbandry, and leaving their teams in the half-finished furrows, they flew to their houses, snatched up their arms; and bursting from their wild shrieking wives and children, hastened to the glorious field, where LIBERTY, heaven-born goddess, was to be bought for blood. Pouring in now from every quarter, were seen crowds of sturdy peasants, with flushed cheeks and flaming eyes, eager for battle! Even age itself forgot its wonted infirmities: and hands, long palsied with years, threw aside the cushioned crutch, and grasped the deadly firelock. Fast as they came up, their ready muskets began to pour the long red streams of fiery vengeance.

Finally, with an outburst of hardy imagination, Weems carried his hero clear up to heaven and pictured his reception there:

Swift on angels' wings the brightening Saint ascended; while voices more than human were warbling through the happy region and hymning the great procession towards the gates of heaven. His glorious coming was seen from afar off; and myriads of mighty angels hastened forth, with golden harps, to welcome the honoured stranger. High in front of the shouting hosts, were seen the beauteous forms of Franklin, Warren, Mercer, Scammel, and of him who fell at Quebec, with all the virtuous patriots, on the side of Columbia, who toiled or bled for liberty and truth. . . . In joyous throngs they pour around him, they devour him with their eyes of love—they embrace him in transports of tenderness unutterable; while from their roseate cheeks, tears of joy, such as angels weep, roll down.

With this climax, surely, Weems ventured as far as any biographer would dare.

The enlarged volume proved a literary pot of gold. It had the field to itself, with no competitors in sight. David Ramsay's life of the national hero did not appear until 1807, and the first dull and monumental volume of John Marshall's biographical failure was not finished until after that, while Washington Irving's senescent effort was not published until over half a century later. Six editions of Weems's work were exhausted in five years, and during the remainder of the author's lifetime, a dozen more were required. It is estimated that in the century since his death about fifty authorized editions have been published, and there is still a demand. No other biographical work in the history of American letters can compare with this record of popularity. The obscure Virginia parson had turned out a masterpiece of vitality which many a literary go-getter of our day may view with envy.

VI

KNIGHT OF THE ROADS

In view of his striking biographical success, Weems could undoubtedly have settled down under his own vine and fig-tree and enjoyed a quiet literary life; but that was not in his nature. He continued his wanderings on the roads, preaching, crusading against the common vices, writing, fiddling, and inexorably selling his own and other books to all and sundry.

As he jogged along the roads in his wagon he spent much time in memorizing the Bible, along with the Hymnal and the Book of Prayer, so that it became always possible for him to conduct an impromptu service without a book. He would do this, when the spirit moved him, on a village square, on the porch of a country.

store, wherever a crowd gathered. He kept a note-book wherein he jotted down unusual or striking incidents and stories, which he subsequently used in his tracts and sermons. As time went on he became a focus of interest wherever he went, for with his humor, his wide acquaintance with the notables of his time, his eccentricities, and his lively flow of anecdote, he was a rare source of entertainment. Moreover, he was a thoroughly lovable person. He was hail-fellow-well-met with negroes and poor whites as well as with the great folk in the manor-houses.

As he drove about the country he never missed an opportunity for a plunge in a lake or stream, not only in the summer, but early and late in the season. This was a real eccentricity in a population that was exceedingly frugal about its ablutions at any time. Once in his later years, when traveling from Leesburg to Dumfries, just after a snow and a big thaw

in the early spring, Weems came to a ford on a stream that was badly swollen, and he immediately cast off his clothes and waded across to ascertain whether his wagon could take the ford without wetting his precious books.

Usually he acted as agent for Mathew Carey's books, but the two had their differences, and sometimes for considerable periods they agreed to disagree and the prince of book-agents served other publishers. Carey appreciated the parson's effectiveness as a book salesman, but he was an established citizen and Weems's radical methods and his indefatigable zeal sometimes annoyed him. Sometimes his notes to Weems show extreme exacerbation. "For Heaven sake," he wrote at one time to the clerical go-getter, "do not encourage every man who has written a Book, whether good or bad, to apply to us. You worry us to death. We have full as much on our hands as we can manage."

The parson book-agent carried a varied line of literary provender, in which his own books and pamphlets were certainly not the least readable items. Always he kept well stocked with volumes of hymns and sermons, which were literary staples of his time. Rippon, Watts, and Newton were stand-bys among the hymnists, while Davies, Massillon, and Whitefield were dependables among the makers of sermons. His stock included many books of a less formal religious character, such as Baxter's "Saints' Everlasting Rest" and the works of Fuller. Bibles he sold in plenty. At one time he persuaded Carey to issue a particularly handsome Bible bound in red morocco. Carey was apprehensive about such an ambitious venture, but the enterprising Weems sold three thousand of them in one year. School text-books formed another profitable line. Education was a parochial and catch-as-catch-can affair in those days and the local

boards were doubtless glad to make purchases direct from Weems at near-Philadelphia prices.

The stock of poetry included such solid offerings as Johnson's Poets ("bound in handsome garb") Milton's "Paradise Lost," Thomson's "Seasons," and Young's "Night Thoughts." Among less serious offerings were "Robinson Crusoe," and "The Vicar of Wakefield."

Novels of the time he sold, as he once expressed it, "by the cart-load," and most important among them was Mrs. Rowson's "Charlotte Temple," that best of all American best sellers, which has appeared in well over a hundred editions and is still read extensively by simple souls who enjoy a highly moral tale of seduction. Carey alone disposed of fifty thousand copies of this book in twenty years, an almost miraculous sale in a country of five million people among whom literacy was by no means a common virtue. Weems sent in

orders of two or three hundred at a time. The story dealt with the fate of a young English gentlewoman who was seduced by a British officer in London and was induced to sail with him on a transport for New York where he was called upon to help subdue the rebellious colonists. Once in New York, the officer reneged on his promises of marriage and, installing poor Charlotte in a lodging in Greenwich Village—which incident marks the beginning of the legendary Bohemianism of that section,—he gave himself up to riot and dissipation and finally married the daughter of a wealthy Tory, at about the time that Charlotte was being turned out of doors in a blizzard with her unborn child. The story was said to be founded on fact, and the real Charlotte Temple is reputed to be buried in Trinity Churchyard. The tale was compounded of exactly the proper proportions of pornography and piety, and its steady sale doubtless assisted

Parson Weems in caring for what contemporaries describe as his well-educated and pious family at Dumfries.

On one occasion, on a court day in Fairfax County, when the good parson was publicly displaying his wares, the Rev. William Meade, later the bishop, was horrified to notice Tom Paine's "Age of Reason" among the volumes. "Is it possible that you can sell such a book?" asked the Rev. Meade in amazement. Immediately Parson Weems picked from his stall the Bishop of Llandaff's answer to Paine, saying: "Behold the antidote. The bane and the antidote are both before you."

The reverend censor, however, was not appeased. In his reminiscences, written years later, he says:

He [Weems] carried this spurious charity into his own sermons. In my own pulpit, in my absence, it being my Sunday in Winchester, he extolled Tom Paine and one or more infidels in America,

A

HISTORY

OF

THE LIFE AND DEATH,

VIRTUES AND EXPLOITS,

OF

General George Washington.

FAITHFULLY TAKEN

FROM

AUTHENTIC DOCUMENTS,

AND, NOW, IN

A THIRD EDITION IMPROVED,

RESPECTFULLY OFFERED TO THE PERUSAL OF HIS COUNTRYMEN; AS ALSO, OF ALL OTHERS WHO WISH TO SEE HUMAN NATURE IN ITS MOST FINISHED FORM.

Price, 37½ Cents.

A life, how glorious, to his country led!
Belov'd while living, as rever'd now dead.
May his example, virtuous deeds inspire!
Let future ages read it, and admire!

BY THE REV. M. L. WEEMS,
OF LODGE NO. 50—DUMFRIES.

Philadelphia:
RE-PRINTED BY JOHN BIOREN, NO. 83 CHESNUT STREET,
FOR THE AUTHOR.

TITLE PAGE FROM THE "LIFE OF WASHINGTON"

and said if their ghosts could return to the earth, they would be shocked to hear the falsehoods which were told of them. I was present the following day, when my mother charged him with what she had heard of his sermon, and well remember that even he was confused and speechless.

Some of Mr. Weems' pamphlets about gambling and drunkenness would be most admirable in effects [added the bishop primly], but for the fact that you knew not what to believe of the narrative.

Indeed, the bishop deals so harshly with his reverend brother that one suspects that this otherwise amiable prelate must have suffered from jealousy. He records that at private houses where Weems was staying it was his custom to assemble the servants in the evening and recite to them passages from the Scriptures—he had memorized a good portion of the Holy Book—and then make some personal application to them of the passage recited. "It

was in such a way as only to produce merriment," laments the bishop. He also speaks severely of Weems's habit of preaching in alien pulpits. "Though calling himself an Episcopal minister, he knew no distinction of churches. He preached in every pulpit to which he could gain access, and where he could recommend his books." Finally, Bishop Meade is at pains to point out that Mathew Carey, whose books Weems vended, was a Roman Catholic!

Thus we have Weems as seen through the eyes of a pillar of orthodoxy. A more enthusiastic portrait of him is given by John Davis, the volatile English traveler, who spent some time near Pohick in the early days of the century. Davis records riding to Pohick to hear Weems preach on Sunday, and notes that the parson was "cheerful in his mien, that he might win men to religion." He found the churchyard "more like a race-ground than a

sepulchral ground," with a great confusion of horses and vehicles, "the rattling of carriage wheels, the cracking of whips, and the vociferations of the gentlemen to the negroes who accompanied them.

"The discourse of Parson Weems calmed every perturbation," continued the Englishman, "for he preached the great doctrines of salvation as one who had experienced their power. It was easy to discover that he might have applied to himself the words of the psalmist, 'My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day, for I know not the numbers thereof.' "

After the service, Davis complimented the preacher on his effort. "A sermon to pull down the proud and humble the haughty," he said. "Sir, you spoke home to sinners. You knocked at the door of their hearts."

To this Weems shook his head. "I doubt whether the hearts of many were not bolted

and barred against me," he replied. From this imputation of inhospitality, however, he gladly exempted the negroes, who formed fully half of the congregation. Of them he said: "Oh, it is sweet preaching when people are desirous of hearing. Sweet feeding the flock of Christ when they have so good an appetite."

It is only fair to say that Davis's lavish praise of Weems, like Bishop Meade's strictures against him, must be accepted with reservations. At that time Davis was contemplating the publication of a book of poems in America, and perhaps his fine words for the prince of book-agents were not wholly without a motive of self-interest. Shortly after the interview recorded, he moved away from the Pohick neighborhood, complaining that the young women thereabouts were lacking in pulchritude, and Weems appeared no more in his pages.

For some unaccountable reason, some of

Weems's descendants have tried to spread the belief that the parson never took his fiddle on his journeys, but kept it at home and only drew his bow discreetly in the bosom of his family. So many stories of the clerical violin have come down to us, however, that there seems little doubt that Weems used it for solace and entertainment, and perhaps now and then to tune up a bit of trade, on his long journeys.

The most persistent of the tales is that relating to the puppet-showman, whose violinist succumbed to drink at Columbia, South Carolina, and was unable to play. The mountebank, despairing of giving his show as advertised without a fiddler, appealed to Weems, who happened to be staying at the same tavern, to be his accompanist, pointing out that he had a sick wife and three children to support. After some reluctance, Weems consented to play, making the condition that he should be

placed behind a screen, out of sight of the audience. The show opened, and all went well until the parson-fiddler, in his zeal, upset the screen, and the audience suddenly beheld as the orchestra the reverend bookseller who had preached in the local pulpit on the previous day. According to the story, the parson immediately launched into a telling lecture on the evil effects of strong drink, and concluded with an effective plea for a generous offering for the poor showman's family.

Sometimes his irrepressible spirits got him into difficulties with the strait-laced gentry. An instance of this is the anecdote related by William Gilmore Simms about Weems's first visit to an aristocratic community on the Ashley River in Carolina. The big-wigs of the district, all starched and ruffled, gathered in one of the stately abodes to meet the distinguished biographer of Washington. Presently they heard the merry music of a violin.

Suddenly, [records Simms] the door was flung open and in danced the fiddler, a white-haired, venerable man in night-gown and slippers, with a cheerful, bright, mercurial eye and of a laughing, sunshiny countenance, the expression of which was merry, like that of boyhood. This was Weems. The shock was terrible. The big-wigs never recovered from the surprise. You might have brained them with a feather. You may be sure he fell—fell immeasurably in their esteem.

In at least one instance his fiddle served him in better case. In one of his pamphlets he described a murder in the Edgefield district in South Carolina and scourged the people of the district for their lack of education and their violent ways. Some of the people thereabouts were stung to a fury by Weems's use of the section to point a moral, and there were threats that if he was ever caught in Edgefield, he would never write another pamphlet. In one of his journeys Weems had to traverse the dis-

trict in his spring-wagon, and as he was hurrying through, his heavily laden vehicle became mired in the swampy road and he was unable to budge it. Night was coming on. After struggling with his vehicle he unhitched his horse and started to play his violin. The strains drew from the underbrush two dour-looking backwoodsmen, who lifted his wheels out of the muck. Weems rewarded them with music. Naturally, they were curious about the identity of the fiddler. They plied him with questions. The more they questioned him, the more loudly he played, drowning out their words and his replies, and finally he was able to drive off, leaving them none the wiser.

In all his travels he never failed to make chance events serve the purpose of pushing his wares before the public. If he was ready for a fair or a church service, he was equally ready to make a drunkard on the street or a broken gamester the theme of a homily that

would lead to the sale of one of his ever-ready pamphlets. When the famous Chancellor Wythe, of Virginia, died Weems was in Charleston, and immediately he penned for the "News and Courier" a sketch of the great man's life with "personal reminiscences" which were skeptically regarded by Wythe's personal friends. Among the stories that he attached to Wythe was one about his throwing up a case because he believed his client not morally justified. This perennial legend, that later attached itself to Lincoln, seems to have a solid origin in the person of the Rev. Lee Massey, the last regular rector in Truro Parish before Weems became an occasional incumbent of the pulpit at Pohick. Massey, a man of meticulous conscience, gave up the law for the church when he discovered that his moral standards kept him from accepting certain cases which were good enough, in law, and Weems seems to have pinned the Rev. Mas-

sey's conscience on Chancellor Wythe, thus giving a fine ethical twist to a lively narrative.

To the conclusion of his biographical sketch he added:

Mason Locke Weems is still with his friend Dr. Moses. He has still a few red Morocco Family Bibles with Cuts; Hymen's Recruiting Sergeant for the Poor Bachelors; the great Algernon Sidney for Politicians; and Montague on the Fates and Fortunes of all the ancient Republics, a very valuable and interesting book, just reprinted and beautifully bound, price One Dollar.

As soon as Weems's Washington sprang to fame, the author began to receive occasional invitations to speak before state legislatures in the course of his travels. For this purpose he composed a lively spread-eagle address that roused the patriots in every state capital where he delivered it. This forensic effort was first made before the governor and the legislature of

New Jersey at the State-House at Trenton in January, 1802. It was duly printed under the title, "The True Patriot, an Oration on the Beauties and Beatitudes of a Republic and the Abominations and Desolations of Despotism. With an Affectionate Persuasive to the American People, to Fear God, and to Honor Their Rulers; to Love One Another, and to Beware of Discord."

In an elaborate dedication to General Joseph Bloomfield, then governor of New Jersey, Weems craved his patronage, and straightway launched into a eulogy of the heroes of the Revolution "who went forth in conquering steel, and saved their trembling country." He concludes:

In front of this immortal band General Bloomfield acted an early and distinguished part. The doves of liberty should coo with peculiar pleasure in the ear of him whose sword so gallantly defended their sacred olive; and to him, the dedication of

this Patriotic Oration, is at once the duty and delight of his Excellency's Affectionate Countryman and Masonic Brother, M. L. WEEMS.

After an eloquent introduction in praise of law and order, Weems proceeded to set forth in separate chapters the eight excellences of a republic. These were:

1. It is the Government of Reason.
2. It is the best Government for safety—the only barrier against the encroachments of ambitious men.
3. It is the best Government for WEALTH.
4. It is the only Government of Fair Play; I mean of EQUAL LAWS and TAXES.
5. It is the best Government for PEACE.
6. It is the best Government for MORALS.
7. It is the only Government for PATRIOTISM.
8. It is the best Government for POPULATION.

The oration was really a grand lyric of the provocative republicanism which every re-

spectable European Government of that day looked upon as dangerous and subversive propaganda.

Here is a sample of the parson flaunting his red flag at the king business:

Kings can very well afford to send out their Joabs and Uriahs, and mighty men of war, while they themselves stay behind to mind the stuff, and to comfort the lovely Bathshebas. And when the news is brought that two or three thousand of their men are knocked on the head, 'tis good to hear how philosophically they chant on the occasion: "Well, never mind, never mind; the sword devoureth one as well as another: march on two or three thousand more!" . . .

Besides, under the iron reign of arbitrary power, the people are so shamefully taxed and choused out of their money, that they have no encouragement to make or save property. Hence they are often brought to their trumps for a dinner, and rather than starve outright, they are glad to take a taudry suit of regimentals and a cockade, with

a little *bounty* to get drunk, and away to the wars for the king at sixpence a day!!! . . . 'Tis in this way, by reducing their subjects to such poverty, desperation and bitterness of soul as exactly fit them for butchering, that kings have ever been the great peace breakers of the world, which they have constantly kept in hot water.

But thanks be to God, under our republic, and 'tis much the same with all pure republics, the case is quite different. Here the sweet fruits of our labours are happily secured to us; and every allurement that heart could desire is held out to industry. Here's work, bread and money for every industrious man who wants them.

And again, further on:

. . . Tyrants spread more havoc among mankind than all the lions and tygers, famines, plagues and earthquakes, that ever cursed a guilty world. Lions and tygers, it is true, have picked up their hundreds; earthquakes have swallowed their thousands; and famines and fevers have swept away their tens of thousands; but all these are mere flea bites in comparison of that abomination of desola-

tion brought upon the earth by tyrants. Take for example, our *own country*, and "the things which we have seen with our eyes and our fathers have declared unto us." From 1774 to 1783, Britain and her happy American colonists lost

By wild beasts—not a man,
By plagues and pestilence—not a man,
By earthquakes—not a man,
By famines—not a man,
But—By Lords Bute and North—200,000 men!!

"Thanks be to God," concludes the parson, "the Mammoth has failed in our land; and unknown among us are the bloody footsteps of kings," especially, he specifies, such "fanatic and unfeeling tyrants" as George of England and Louis of France.

Naturally, the oration never failed (if one may use a phrase from the show business) to pack them in.

VII

CHIEF-JUSTICE MARSHALL'S WHITE ELEPHANT

LATE in 1802, Weems severed for a time his connection with Carey and hitched his spring-wagon to the publishing star of Caleb P. Wayne, of Philadelphia, who had optimistically engaged to publish Chief-Justice John Marshall's projected life of Washington. This effort was to appear in five volumes at the ambitious price of four dollars per volume. Wayne hoped that the venture would make his fortune; Marshall desired that it might restore his. Weems, stimulated by his own success in portraying Washington, enthusiastically set about the task of getting advance subscriptions for this monumental work. He received ten per cent commission on sales, a frugal, but

not inadequate, allowance of one dollar per day for traveling expenses, and a small percentage of volumes on those sold, to place where they would do the most good. The task of drumming up these volumes occupied most of his energies for the next five years, and from his letters to Wayne, preserved in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, we can recast his mode of life during this period, follow his plodding journeys over great stretches of territory, and catch something of his spirit and temper.

Wayne at first had hoped to raise subscribers by utilizing the twelve hundred postmasters as agents on a commission basis; but this plan proved a failure. At a time when party politics were more caloric than they are to-day, Jefferson and Marshall stood at opposite political poles. Jefferson was President, he was overlord of the postmasters, and not without reason he assumed that Marshall's

work would serve as a vehicle for Federalist propaganda. Hence the postmasters were reluctant to hazard their jobs by going after Wayne's commissions.

Wayne's plan was to concentrate his selling campaign in the towns, utilizing special local agents and having Weems make flying visits to attack legislative meetings, court sessions, conventions, camp-meetings and the like, while he left the country districts to such postmasters as had the temerity to push his wares. Weems thought this plan sorely one-sided, and in his first letters to Wayne he mingled pleas for a vigorous campaign in the rural regions with shrewd complaints about his own compensation:

The mass of Riches and of Population in America lie in the Country [he wrote on Dec. 10, 1802]. There is the wealthy yeomanry; and there the ready thousands who would instantly second you were they but duly stimulated. But this is to

be done, not by poor Devils of Post Masters scattered about at cross roads and dirty villages, but by your driving majors and Colonels, your sturdy Knights of wealth so rare and Daughters fair that they can do what they please in their neighborhoods, so that the young Fellows rather than refuse them a subscription would ram their own heads into a brick-kiln. Such are the men who are to be brought into action, and such, travelling as I do through the Earth, I easily could bring into action, but not, as you well know, on the allowance as per present establishment. I am not content with my allowance, nor can be, because 'tis much less than what you give to all others. . . . A fat Bookseller who sweats over his beefsteak, or sleeps on his counter, and barely takes the names of those who chance to call on him, should not surely get the literal allowance of him who leaves Father and Mother, Wife and Children to subscription it thro' the world.

However, this gloomy picture did not abate his enthusiasm for the project. Before long he

reported from Baltimore that he was averaging twelve subscriptions a day, for which he piously thanked God, and he rapidly improved on this pace. "If the work be done handsomely, you will sell at least 20,000," he declared. He was quick, however, to scent the danger of popular distrust about the work, as fostered by the zealous Jeffersonians, and he sent to Wayne a warning against permitting too much propaganda to creep into it.

For Heaven's sake drop now and then a cautionary hint to John Marshall Esq." [he wrote]. "Your all is at stake with respect to this work. If it be done in a generally accepted manner you will make your fortune. Otherwise the Work will fall an abortion from the press. I have repeatedly told you, that duly encouraged by a different system of Remuneration, I could greatly aid you in this extensive Washington.

Between December 8 and 16, he sent in three hundred subscriptions. The subscribers apparently paid a dollar down, the balance to

be paid on delivery. On December 17, after a visit to Washington, he added fifty subscriptions, including in his list the names of Albert Gallatin, James Madison, and John Mason. On the twenty-second he wrote from Annapolis:

I instantly determined, the House still being in Session, to congregate them. Next morning I threw a note to the chair, soliciting the honor of uttering before them a *Patriotic Oration.* They came together—they were pleased, and have begun to subscribe. . . . Patriotic Orations—Gazetter Puffs—Washingtonian Anecdotes, Sentimental, Moral, Military and Wonderful—All sh'd be tried, and every exertion made to push into every family, into every hand so very interesting and highly moralizing a work as yours, but alas! I am not able to do it on my present allowance.

After this outburst he hastened home to Dumfries to spend Christmas with his family. The winter was perforce in those days a season of hibernation. Road travel was too ardu-

ous even for Weems, and March was well along before he ventured to take the field again. On the twenty-fifth he sent fifty subscriptions from Alexandria, Virginia, with a characteristic note:

Ere you can have received this, I shall, God willing, be dashing away among the Winchester Bucks. The God of Washington prosper me!!!

A bit later, from Fredericksburg, where he noted that Wayne's local agent had got no subscriptions, he wrote with naïve pride:

My little exertions, have, thank God, been rewarded with 23 names, and the bag not shaken neither, I hope.

Give old Washington fair play, and all will be well. Let but the *Interior* of the Work be Liberal, and the *Exterior* Elegant, and a Town House and a Country House, a Coach and Sideboards and Massy Plate will be thine. Yet I sicken when I think how much may be marred. I tremble too when I think of the *Paper Makers*. On *two* instances al-

ready they have been like the hoar frost on all my full-blossomed hopes. God, I pray him, that this work may bring moral blessings on our Country and honor and wealth on C. P. W. and M. L. W.

Moving up into Pennsylvania, he sent word from Carlisle, "a nest of Anti-Washingtonian Hornets" that he, "dashed in among them and Thank God have already got 17 good names." From York he wrote:

I have reason to thank God for my success at Harrisburg. Mr. Wyeth advertised for you, but got not a name. I got 19. At the little Dutch village of Middletown, my success was still more brilliant; in one hour I got $10. I reach'd York last afternoon. Sixteen have already scattered their dollars on the tomb of Washington.

In August, back in Dumfries, he confided to Wayne that he had signed a contract with Carey for one year to run his Family Bible with the subscriptions for the "Life of Wash-

ington." He explained that he was in debt to Carey for nine hundred dollars, and this was the only way of working off the obligation. In return, Carey engaged to pay him a salary of $1250, for the year, and had furnished "a light stage and I have attached thereto a pair of as light-footed light horses, so that I can and do travel with considerable dispatch." Apparently Wayne made no objection to this side-line. With his new equipage Weems started South shortly after the New Year of 1804, to venture into new territory which he had not hitherto visited.

The Southland proved a golden field. Charleston, South Carolina, was the banner city, with some 950 subscriptions. In eleven weeks, ending April 12, he sent twenty-three hundred dollars to his employer. Yet there were serious disadvantages. Communications with Philadelphia were slow and uncertain. Sending money was a precarious hazard, for

FRONTISPIECE FROM "THE DRUNKARD'S LOOKINGGLASS"

no adequate national system of exchange had yet been developed, and the mails were frequently looted. Money was commonly sent, so to speak, in the raw, but no citizen would risk any considerable sum with the posts. The peccable character of this system of transmission is illustrated in one of Wayne's circulars in which he urges subscribers who wish to send their dollars to him direct to tear them in half and mail the two halves in separate envelops.

When subscribers paid Weems in South Carolina bank-notes, he was compelled to change them, doubtless at some loss, into Federal currency, for the South Carolina notes were not accepted in Philadelphia. His safest way to transmit to Wayne was through a draft negotiated by some Southern business-man on a house with which he had relations in Philadelphia, and this was not always to be procured. Thus Weems was frequently compelled to accumulate upon his person much more

money belonging to Wayne than he felt comfortable about carrying. There were times when he drove through a remote and lawless territory in that country of provincial distances with upward of a thousand dollars, an amazing fortune for that time and place, disposed about his clothes. There was no record that he was ever robbed; but after a period of worry, he secured a driver to accompany him through the Southen hinterland, and on his second venture into that territory his wife's youngest brother went as his companion.

"I've sent you in three weeks from Charleston alone near $1000," wrote Weems on his first tour, "and yet I can't get a letter from you!! Must I send you half the money in the State to persuade you to write to M. L. Weems?" To this he added: "As I am a Nice Boy of yours . . . if I should take a bad note or a bad dollar, I shall look to your majesty to make it good." In the middle of May he wrote

from Columbia: "I have more money for you, but am afraid to send it. . . . The villainous spoliations so frequently made on the mails keep me perpetually on thorns. . . . I mean to push on like Fury through the Interior of North and South Carolina."

During May, Weems delivered his Patriotic Oration, with excellent results in the selling line, at three camp-meetings in South Carolina and Georgia, and at the first commencement of the Georgia College.

However, as the end of May approached in that humid territory, he obviously began to grow homesick for the fresh airs of a more livable climate, and he suggested the advisability of confining his Southern activities to the winter months.

In summer [he wrote], the Gentry of this country are scattered abroad like sheep without a Shepherd, wandering in quest of Health and healthy situations. And besides, were you to light upon them at

that time, you would find them as lean as so many rabbits in the Dog days, without a dollar to lay down even for "The Life of Washington." But in winter they are all in their towns, thick as Bees and merry as Crickets, with every man his pocket full of dollars, from the sale of his cotton bags and rice barrels.

From Charleston, early in June, he continued his seasonal complaint:

Happy indeed could I have set off five days ago, but what with mosquitoes singing and gallinippers stinging—roads horrid and suns torrid—we were all, man and horse, so wearied and jaded when I arrived here last week, that I was under the painful necessity of resting till now.

Not long afterward the wheels of his light wagon were rolling northward.

Weems had been gathering in subscriptions for over a year and a half, but as yet the confiding subscribers had not a single printed

chapter to show for their dollars. It had been late in 1803, more than three years after Marshall announced that he would undertake the enterprise, before he delivered to Wayne the manuscript of his first ponderous volume. The bulk of the product appalled Wayne, for it would run to over six hundred printed pages. Cutting was necessary, and with a stiff-necked chief-justice as author, the process was difficult and slow. Some idea of the formidable biographical conceptions of Marshall may be gathered from the fact that the reader had to wade through a hundred thousand words of tedious historical perspective before he reached the birth of Washington.

Naturally, the more articulate subscribers raised a swelling chorus of complaint, and though the first volume began to trickle from the press in the summer of 1804, the flow was not sufficient to allay the irritation. Wayne began to grow frightened at the cool reception

accorded the volume by the critics, and the magnitude of the undertaking he had been let in for. He began to economize by arranging for a cheaper paper and binding for the succeeding volumes, and he finally suggested that Weems accept a cut of about two per cent in his commissions.

Weems fought the change in quality bitterly. With his fine commercial instincts, he realized that, since the book was dull, there was all the more reason to dress it handsomely. An imposing front, aided by the prestige of Marshall's name, would yet carry it through, Preparing to descend again upon Charleston, in February, 1804, he begged for "regiments upon regiments in red and gold to flash around me." "The *name*—the *noise*—the Eclat is EVERYTHING," he added. "Great God! Why will not young men learn of the old. Oh when shall we see old Heads upon young shoulders? Never—never—never." When the subscrib-

ers began to express their irritation at the poor binding, he wrote warningly:

Citizen Wayne, you are now deep in play. Great is the Stake. Washington is to you a fine hand in trumps. Play well, and fame and fortune are all your own. I'm your Hoyle, but you *don't know it.* I cautioned you against this variegated binding—you despised my counsel—see now what a purgatory has resulted.

As for the proposal to cut his commissions, that roused the veteran moralist to a high pitch of righteous indignation.

'Tisn't the 1½ or 2 per cent that I mind [he declared], but the principle; the injustice; the immorality and above all the unlovingness of the thing. Heavens! would I muzzle the generous steed that toils for me? No! rather let my pen forget her honesty.

Wayne hastily dropped the argument.

However, this was the beginning of a period

of misunderstanding and bickering which eventually led to the breaking of the partnership. During the ensuing summer it was necessary for Weems to stay in the South. The climate terrified him and the monetary returns were disappointing. It is interesting to note that during his stay he had fifty dollars sent to his wife every month, a sum which, in those Elysian days, enabled her to carry on the household and provide for the half-dozen children in great comfort.

Weems frequently reminded his employer that he was "cut off from the loveliest Wife and fondest Children on earth." He complained repeatedly of the hazards of his journeyings, the dearth of communications and the difficulty of transmitting money through reliable channels. "That Louisburg," he wrote in unclerical language, "is a Devil of a place." From Charleston in mid-July he sent a dolorous message:

To-morrow I leave for Savannah. My prospects, as to Comfort, Health, Life etc. are gloomy and unpromising. Even the Natives are afraid to travel through the sultry, infected air of this boggy, dreadful country. Should anything happen to me, I hope that you will do justice to my Poor Widow and Children. You owe me money.

It was apparent by this time that Marshall's Washington was something of a white elephant and was unlikely to make the fortunes of Wayne and Weems. Weems continued to push it, but obviously with less enthusiasm, and there was a growing ill-feeling between him and his employer. Gradually the shrewd parson took on other interests, as his ardor cooled, and at last he turned his energies wholly to the selling of readier literary staples.

VIII

MARION LIVES IN HISTORY

WEEMS's second biographical work was a life of General Francis Marion, the guerrilla leader who kept the revolutionary struggle alive in South Carolina and Georgia amid an indifferent population after more formal military proceedings had been abandoned by the patriotic leaders of that territory in the face of the superior British organization. Marion, with his little band of sharpshooting backwoodsmen and adventurous yokels, harassed the British and their Tory partizans, turning up at unexpected places and vanishing with uncanny celerity, and he managed to escape capture and carry on until Washington was able finally to move down in force and give Cornwallis the coup de grâce. Marion was a man of

middle age at this period, of conspicuously slight physique among his raw-boned followers, of a pious habit, and, all things considered, of singularly humane feelings. He had served in some of the Indian wars, in which the colonists vied with the natives in barbaric ruthlessness, and he seems to have deplored the cruelty and the wanton devastation which it was thought necessary to employ in those struggles. In the Revolution, when colonial resistance collapsed in his section, he abandoned a life of comfort and some affluence, gathered a handful of followers about him, and launched upon his fugitive struggle to liberate a people who on the whole were quite willing to make their peace with the soldiers of King George and had little sympathy with Marion's patriotic ardor for flaunting established law and order.

Marion had always been one of Weems's heroes, and his second child was named Francis

Marion Weems. The opportunity to immortalize the hero came about by chance.

Peter Horry, Marion's lieutenant and trusted friend, was growing old at Georgetown, South Carolina, among his memories of the great days when he had been a leader of the free company of the American Robin Hood. He had gathered letters and documents bearing on the story of his dead idol, and his great object in life was to set forth an authentic story of the brave adventure, so that the name of Marion might not be lost to posterity. Alas, however, the aged warrior discovered that the pen was a weapon infinitely more difficult than the sword! Etymology, syntax, and prosody ambushed him at every turn and put him to rout. In his dilemma, some of his friends suggested that the famous biographer of Washington was just the man to whip his material into shape.

Horry communicated with Weems, and in

the course of his travels the parson stopped at Georgetown and agreed to undertake the work. Before they parted, sitting together on the court-house steps where Weems was displaying his wares, the veteran charged his collaborator that the sense or meaning of his narrative must not be changed, though it could be embellished grammatically. Weems assured him that he need have no apprehensions about the matter, and eventually the parson drove off with the material tucked away in his buggy.

Having digested the manuscripts, Weems wrote to Horry on August 3, 1808:

I beg you to indulge no fears that Marion will ever die, while I can say or write anything to immortalize him. . . . I hope in three weeks to have it all chiselled out in the rough cast. It will then take me another three weeks to polish and color it in a style that will, I hope, sometimes excite a smile and sometimes call forth the tear.

The times, he added, were not particularly propitious for publishing, on account of the embargo, but he expressed his confidence in getting the book printed "very handsomely."

Weeks elapsed, and Horry, nervous about the "polishing and coloring," went to Dumfries to see how the work was getting on. Weems was away, but his wife received the veteran hospitably, and little Fannie Weems, then about nine years old, completely captivated the visitor. He secured no glimpse of the manuscript, and, in fact, he was never to see it. After a long interval, under date of February 5, 1809, he got a reassuring bulletin. "In a few weeks," wrote Weems, "I shall put Marion to press. Many persons, and some of them, perhaps, pretty good judges, have been pleased to commend various pages that have been read to them."

Ten months of silence followed, then on December 13, Weems wrote:

It gives me great pleasure to inform you, by our mutual friend Dr. Blythe, that your ever honored and beloved Marion lives in History. In other words, the history of the great Marion, from the documents you were so good as to give me, is finished. . . . You have no doubt constantly kept in mind that I told you I must write it in my own way, and knowing the passion of the times for novels, I have endeavored to throw your ideas and facts about General Marion into the garb and dress of a military romance. I trust that the figure which you make on the great stage of war, and by the side of your illustrious friend, will not at all displease your delicacy nor lessen your well-founded claims to the gratitude and affections of the country which you so immensely served.

In spite of its soothing syrup, this missive threw Horry into a panic. His carefully documented historic narrative perverted into a vulgar novel! The idea was monstrous, unbelievable. Apparently the arrival of the book itself, after months of delay, confirmed his worst

fears. To his mind, there was almost nothing of Horry in it, everything of Weems, and he found page after page decked out with appropriate and dramatic moral anecdotes which were entirely alien to the facts as he had laboriously gathered them together. Moreover, he noted that the real author had modestly effaced himself, making Horry responsible for these scandalous liberties with sober truth. The narrative had been put in the first person, as if it fell from the lips of Marion's former comrade.

One can imagine the dismay of the old warrior as he turned the pages of the preface, signed with his name, and stared at his self-deprecations, prepared in the best Weemsian manner:

What I! a man here under the frozen zone and grand climacteric of my days, with one foot in the grave and the other hard by, to quit my *prayer-book* and *crutches* (an old man's *best companions*)

GOD'S

REVENGE AGAINST MURDER;

OR

THE DROWN'D WIFE,

A TRAGEDY,

LATELY PERFORMED, WITH UNBOUNDED APPLAUSE,

(OF THE DEVIL AND HIS COURT)

BY NED FINDLEY, ESQUIRE,

ONE OF THE

GRAND COMPANY OF TRAGEDIANS

IN THE SERVICE OF THE

BLACK PRINCE,

Who was so highly gratified with *Ned's* performance, that he instantly provided him Rooms in one of his own *Palaces*; created him a Knight of the most ignoble order of the Halter, clapped bracelets on his wrists, and an ornament round his neck; and in a few days promoted him to the ridge pole of the gallows, at Edgefield Court-House, South-Carolina.

BY M. L. WEEMS,

OF LODGE No. 50, DUMFRIES.

FOURTH EDITION—PRICE, 25 CENTS.

O Reader dear, I give you here
A book to look upon,
That you may pray, both night and day,
Nor go, where N: D has gone.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

BY JOHN ADAMS.

1808.

TITLE PAGE FROM "GOD'S REVENGE AGAINST MURDER"

and drawing my shard, flourish and fight over again the battles of my youth. The Lord forbid me such madness! But what can one do when one's friends are eternally teasing him, as they are me, and calling out at every whipstitch and corner of the street: Well, but, sir, where's Marion, where's the history of Marion, that we have so long been looking for?

That was indeed the last straw. Horry wrote an angry protest against the whole work, to which Weems replied with urbane astonishment. How was it possible that the general could be displeased with a book which placed both himself and Marion in so exalted a light? How could he object to a volume for which Weems had orders for ninety copies in a single county in Georgia, which had resulted in the authorities of Wilkinson County changing the county name to Marion, a book that was selling better even than the famous life of Washington? "My daughter Fanny," added Weems,

slyly, "desired me to give her love to you. She says she fears that you are fickle."

Poor Horry, however, was past consoling with such pretty conceits. Sick with chagrin and disappointment, he took to his bed, and from that vantage-point, with a certain afflicted dignity, he belabored his collaborator with reproaches.

I repeatedly mentioned to you not to alter the sense or meaning of my work [he wrote], lest when it came out I might not know it, and, perverted, it might convey a very different meaning from the truth. . . . I gave you leave to embellish the work, but entertained not the least idea of what has happened—though several of my friends were under such apprehensions, which caused my being urgent on you not to alter as above mentioned. . . . Can you suppose that I can be pleased with reading particulars (though ever so elevated, by you) of Marion and myself, when I know such never existed. . . .

Nor have the public received the real history of

General Marion. You have carved and mutilated it with so many erroneous statements, that your embellishments, observations and remarks must necessarily be erroneous as proceeding from false grounds. Most certainly 'tis not my history, but your romance.

Apparently, Weems did not continue this unprofitable correspondence. He could not understand Horry's chagrin, and the veteran could not understand that once the parson's artistic imagination had come to grips with his Marion, no power on earth could keep it from having its will with him. For good or ill, the thing was an accomplished fact, and Weems went on his way selling his lively narrative to eager thousands at court-house and fair-grounds and along the roads.

Indeed, if Weems took appalling liberties with Horry's text, he took no liberties with the spirit of the times he sought to portray. He knew, as few others were capable of knowing,

the country and the people, and on his pages he reproduced the Marion epic with happy fidelity. The tremendous moral impulsion which at times came close to making his Washington ridiculous did not press his pen when he dealt with the lesser hero. As he got into the swing of his story, his piosities were decently suppressed and the tale gained correspondingly in resilience and human feeling. Weems, like many another excellent Christian, loved to write of fighting, and in this book he had plenty of opportunity. Battles and slaughter rolled zestfully from his pen, as Marion's exploits marshalled before him. The book is his liveliest and most readable work, and one can understand how Horry's perturbed state of mind was inexplicable to the author.

In his second chapter, dealing with the birth of Marion and his boyhood, the good parson drew his long bow and made a shot that in our

humble opinion far overtopped Washington's cherry-tree.

Among the Mohawks of Sparta [he began], it was the constant practice on the birth of a male infant, to set a military granny to examine him, as a butcher would a veal for the market, and if he were found any ways puny, he was presently thrown into a horse pond with as little ceremony as a blind puppy. Had such been the order of the day in 1732, Carolina would never have boasted a Marion; for I have it from good authority that this great soldier, at his birth, was not larger than a New England lobster, and might easily enough have been put into a quart pot. This puny appearance continued with him until the age of twelve, when it was removed by the following extraordinary providence.

At that tender age, Weems records, Marion was sent to the West Indies for his health in a little schooner run by four men. When a few days out, the vessel was attacked by a whale,

which hit it such a furious blow with his flipper that the ship presently sank. The captain, the mate, the two seamen, and young Marion thereupon took to the jolly-boat. In that cockle-shell they drifted for upward of a week, with no drinking-water, and nothing to eat except the ship's dog. On the tenth day the captain and the mate jumped overboard in delirium and were never seen again. The next morning the two seamen lay down quietly on the bottom of the boat and gave up the ghost. A few hours later a ship appeared and Marion was rescued and revived "by means of chocolate and turtle broth, sparingly given him at first." From that time his constitution seemed renewed and he grew normally.

Of course, one may or may not believe this amazing story. At worst it represents no inconsiderable triumph of an artistic imagination. It would be unfair, however, to give the impression that the whole book was cast on this ex-

travagant scale of wonder. The story of Marion's war-time exploits is credible enough, as one reads it to-day, even though Peter Horry knew that many of the incidents were invented.

When Gates came blithely down from the North to capture Cornwallis, Marion, with a few men, was sent to the Santee River to destroy the boats of the Tory rice-planters which carried grain to the British at Charleston. While he was in the midst of this work he learned by chance that Gates's army had been destroyed, the commander had vanished, and the Tories of the neighborhood were assembling to surround and capture Marion and his men. With his thirty followers, Marion took refuge in a swamp, and there, with about four rounds of powder and a ball apiece for their assorted flintlocks, and with "no sword worthy of the name" in their whole company, they swore a solemn oath to continue the war.

Shortly afterward, their scouts reported that

a troop of ninety British soldiers with two hundred American captives was passing on the road. Marion resolved to follow. He surprised his quarry at a tavern in the early hours of the morning and they surrendered before they realized the slenderness and lack of resources of the attacking force. Thus he gained his start with arms, munitions, and horses; but he secured no recruits, as the released militiamen declared to a man that the war was over as far as they were concerned and they were going home.

His next exploit was no less intrepid. A band of several score Tory partizans had gathered in an encampment to devise ways and means to capture Marion, when he unexpectedly descended upon them. They had been feasting, dancing, and playing cards, with no thought that the fox was watching from the covert. In short, the surprise was complete,

and the fight was virtually ended with the first deadly volley.

Even their fiddles and fiddle bows, and playing cards, were all left strewed around their fires [wrote Weems]. One of the gamblers (it is a serious truth) though shot dead, still held the cards hard griped in his hands. Led by curiosity to inspect this sight, a dead gambler, we found that the cards which he held were ace, deuce and jack. Clubs were trumps. Holding, high, low, jack and the game in his own hand, he seemed in a fair way to do well; but Marion came down on him with a trump that spoiled his sport, and non-suited him forever.

This is a good story, and there is reason to believe that Weems fully appreciated it. At least he used it in another volume and in another connection. In similar fashion he transplanted into the biography his story of the half-dozen blades of the Continental Army who got

so inflamed with drink that they charged clear into Georgetown to whip the whole British Army, but eventually managed to get away clear from their mad escapade. However, this frugal habit of using his own old clothes was not common to Weems, and surely no critic can accuse him of lack of inventiveness. He was not the first or the last author to borrow from himself, and in an artistic sense his peccadillo was justified. Horry had treated him rather skimpily in the matter of anecdote, so he was not without excuse when he dug into the treasure-chest of his own reserve supply.

IX

BLASTING THE DEMON RUM

If Weems never neglected his rôle of book-agent, he was equally zealous as a moral crusader, and he made the one part fit in with the other. He wrote tracts dealing with drunkenness, gambling, dueling, murder, adultery, cruelty to husbands, and in praise of matrimony and the raising of large families, and he sold them by the thousands. He preached consistently against these seven deadly sins (including old-bachelordom), and his sermons promoted his book-vending business. His pamphlets sold by the thousands because he combined with the fervor of the crusader the arts of the dramatist. He embellished his theses with such an imposing embroidery of wonderful and terrifying living narrative that the

crowd devoured his literary output and clamored for more. If, as Bishop Meade suggests, many of his stories were made of whole cloth to fit his moral premise, such amiable deceptions were not out of character in a crusader. For the moralist, his premise is the well-spring of all truth, and he shapes the facts of life relentlessly to square them with his premise. Indeed, because his purpose endows him with a sort of divine right, he can be wholly unscrupulous about matters of fact and still keep his conscience clear. One with God is a majority, and the moralist is always sure of God. It is sometimes difficult for the common mortal to appreciate this alliance, especially when he is being made to serve the part of a horrible example.

Weems's natural enthusiasm led him to take the view that the particular vice he was attacking at the moment was the most awful of all

vices. In his pamphlet on drunkenness he wrote, "If there be a sin under Heaven that tends to petrify the heart, to banish love and to render man tenfold more a child of Hell than any other sin, it is drunkenness." Again in his tract against gambling, he said, "It is not easy to conceive any vice more hateful to God than Gambling, because none can be conceived more diametrically opposite to the very end of our creation."

Of all the dragons of vice against which Weems shivered a pen, that of drunkenness was the most prevalent. He never lost an opportunity to combat this evil, and even carried the fight into the stronghold of the enemy. When the book-peddling business was slack, he would not infrequently enter a grog-shop, give a lively imitation of a toper in successive stages of drunkenness, and wind up by selling his tract to the astonished and amused on-

lookers, possibly supplementing the written word with a brief admonition toward the temperate life.

In those crude days, indeed, the demon rum was a rampageous beast. The excessive consumption of ethyl alcohol was common in all classes of society. An observant physician of Charleston, South Carolina, described hard drinking as an endemic vice in his section, and the phrase might have applied to the country generally. C. Janson, a somewhat condescending English visitor, in his "Stranger in America," written in 1807, describes the South as populated largely by "slingers and eleveners," a slinger being a person who craved a sling of ardent spirits (hard liquor with mint and sugar) on awakening, and an elevener being one who began his boozing on or before eleven A. M. Sometimes, Janson asserted, both characters were horribly combined in the same person. The lower order of inhabitants in the

rural parts he describes as barbarians frequently sodden with drink and given to "gouging, chewing off of ears and butting."

New York City, a little town of forty thousand inhabitants, supported two thousand places where hard liquor was sold over the counter, and other centers of population offered facilities in a somewhat similar proportion. Weems estimated that there were one hundred thousand habitual drunkards among the American population of six million, and there is no reason to believe this an excessive statement. Intoxication was not particularly a matter for reproach. During the sessions of the Continental Congress, John Adams severely recorded in his diary that a number of his colleagues not infrequently drank themselves into a tipsy condition after the close of the day's sessions. On one occasion, in the early days of the last century, the Supreme Court of the United States courteously post-

poned an important case when it was discovered that one of the attorneys, Luther Martin, the leader of the Maryland bar, had appeared before that august body too drunk to make his argument.

Though Parson Weems was an uncompromising foe of strong drink, he was too human to be a fanatic on the subject, and the hard-shell prohibitionist of our day could find little comfort in his pages. While he advocated cutting down the number of grog-shops by putting a heavy tax on the traffic, the idea of wiping out King Alcohol entirely by a prohibitory law apparently never occurred to him. Indeed, he took the view that a greater use of fermented liquors, as opposed to distilled spirits, would greatly promote temperance. He extolled Franklin's advice to a neighbor who wished to find some method of preserving against the depredations of thirsty callers a fresh brew of beer which he had made in his cellar. "Clap a

pipe of good wine beside it," was the advice of the jovial doctor. The first of Weems's "Golden Recipes Against Drunkenness" read: "Drink no longer water, but use a *little* wine for thy stomach's sake. Also cyder, ale, beer, etc." He also advocated as Golden Recipes, abstention from dueling, a happy marriage, and avoidance of getting into debt. The last two might be called counsels of perfection. He also added: "Hot coffee in the morning is a good cure for *dram*-craving. And a civic crown to him who will set the fashion of *coffee* at dinner."

Weems, after the fashion of his time, affected formidable title-pages for his little pamphlets. The full title of his tract on drunkenness ran as follows:

The
Drunkard's Looking Glass,
Reflecting a faithful

Likeness of the Drunkard,
in
Sundry Very interesting attitudes,
with
Lively representations of the many strange Capers which he cuts at different Stages of his Disease;
as first
When he has only "a drop in his eye";
second,
When he is "half-shaved";
third,
When he is getting "a little on the staggers or so";
and fourth and fifth, and so on,
till he is "quite capsized";
or
"Snug under the table with the dogs."
and
Can "stick to the floor w'out holding on."

The essay was written in the vernacular, for Weems was an adept at the common speech. Probably, in human language, there are more synonyms for drunkenness than for

any other state of being. Weems used over a score of them, some of which have survived to our day. His list, in addition to those used on the title-page, included the terms boozy, groggy, blue, damp, tipsy, fuddled, haily gaily, how came you so, swipy, cut, has got his wet sheet aboard, cut in the craw, high up picking cotton.

Every feature tells a tale [he wrote in describing the tipsy reveler], every grin and stare betrays him. Only look at his *eyes,* see how they twinkle! —his *cheeks,* how they swell and redden!—and, Oh! that eternal chatterbox, his *tongue!*—His head, his legs, his feet are all on the tantrums; he can't sit still, but must be upon the floor, cutting his capers; he throws out his arms; snaps his fingers; and striking into a shuffle round and round the room, he goes singing and sailing with his head upon his shoulder, nodding and leering all the while, with a most disgusting simper on his face. Presently up he runs, seizes you by the hand, jerks you out upon the floor, and striking up some jig

tune, sets into dancing as hard as he can, grinning all the time, and staring you in the eyes most odiously sweet. You are now in a bad box; for if you take no notice of him at all, he is sure to turn mad and give you a confounded knock on the head. And if, on the other hand, you return his loathsome compliments, he becomes tenfold loathsomer still. He seizes you round the waist, and like the drunken Ape, gives you such a hug as though he would hug the very breath out of your body, and while he is poisoning you to death with his stinking breath he . . . swears by his Maker, that "he loves you like h–ll."

About fifty horrible examples of drunkenness were served up by the parson in his pamphlet. Every one of his drinkers came to a tragic end, and the moral of each case could be lost only on an extremely dull-witted or highly skeptical reader.

Typical is his story of the two drunken brothers who prepared to sleep off a debauch in their barn, set it on fire, and perished in the

flames. Their families, unable to help them, witnessed their fate through the barn door.

They distinctly beheld these wretched brothers lying dead drunk and helpless on the floor [recorded the faithful narrator], and the fire rapidly seizing on everything around them. . . . Owing to the rarefying effects of the violent heat, their stomachs, being filled with rum and fixed air, were seen suddenly to rise to an enormous size, then burst with a noise as loud as a musket.

Another tale dealt with a drunken army-captain who fell asleep in the gutter. A murderer took the captain's sword and killed a man, thereupon returning the weapon to the captain's side. The captain was tried and executed. In another story, a money-forger purchased three horses from a drunken farmer at a fair. The next day, making some purchases in town, the farmer was arrested for issuing bad money, "and being unable to prove of whom he got it, he was executed."

Justice, in those days, was apparently naïve. In the following lively Weemsian yarn it was also lacking in perspicacity:

"Here my good friend, hold my horse until I cut a twig from yonder copse," said Bryan, the famous horse thief to a drunken fellow on the road, giving him at the same time the reins of a jaded horse which he had stolen. Scarcely was Bryan snug in the copse before the owners of the horse came up, challenging their beast, and supposing the fellow's drunkenness to be nothing but a *sham*, took him along with them and had him committed to jail. The next day, when sober and come to his senses, the fellow swore like a Turk that he knew nothing of the matter; but it availed him nothing, for at the following assizes he was *tried, condemned and hung.*

These are fair samples of Weems's grotesque panorama of men reducing their families to ruin, women leaving their babies to starve in hollow trees, young blades dashing

out their brains in a drunken frolic, all graphically illustrated, for Weems had a strong journalistic sense of the value of pictures. The fearsome cases were all tabulated by name and place. They included the young man who in a drunken frolic killed the family cow that had once yielded him a kindlier beverage, the drunken sailor-lads on a privateer who upset a candle in the gunpowder and sailed skyward in small pieces, the youthful drunkard who violated a woman eighty-one years old, the intoxicated farmer who fell into a hog-pen and was eaten by his own hogs, and "Sarah Nelson, Lincoln County," who, "lying dead drunk on the floor, took fire and was burned to death, and like Jezebel was devoured by her own dogs."

A more amiable incident was Weems's tale of the tippling colonel who was accustomed to leave his home and spend the whole day in a tavern, squandering as much as six dollars, in

his wastrel fashion, on liquor and food. Weems gave a sample of the colonel's tavern bill for April 1, 1812, which may be of no little interest to tipplers and students of comparative economics in our own day. The Colonel's slate ran:

Colonel A—B April 1, 1812	Tavern Bill
3 mint slings before breakfast	$ .75
1 breakfast	.50
9 tumblers of grog before dinner	1.12½
3 glasses wine and bitters	.37½
Dinner and club	1.25
2 ticklers of French brandy	.50
Segars	.25
Supper and Wine	1.25
Total	$6.00

"And for this waste of their substance," appended the parson, "the brave Colonel carries

home to his wife and children nothing but a *red* nose."

Weems was seldom bitter in his writings; but in his tract on drunkenness, there was a passage of angry invective when he referred to the hypocrites who are dry in word and wet in deed.

There are many *arch hypocrites* in these our days who will preach up sobriety like double sanctified saints and yet twig the whiskey bottle like distillers' swine. Pretty swill tubs of the devil! who will make nothing of half a dozen strong mint slings or sugared slugs of a morning, before breakfast, and then borrowing an hour or two before meridian, will turn in, *heavy upon grog*, drinking by bed time as much of that nauseous beverage as would scald a hog, or drown a litter of blind puppies; and yet after all will swear they were never drunk in all their lives! *never saw the day they could not walk a seam.*

One can forgive him the smarting invective when one considers the object.

The horrendous incidents in the little book were relieved by bits of doggerel which came naturally to Weems's lips or pen when he was in good spirits. He interspersed them in his sermons and talks, in his writings and even in his business correspondence. In "The Drunkard's Looking Glass," his moral was summed up in a quatrain:

The lips that do with brandy burn
Shall never prosper long;
God's righteous vengeance shall consume
The whiskey-loving tongue.

X

THE FATHER OF THE SOB SISTER

WEEMS'S moral pamphlets were the fruit of his mature years, and most of them were written during the last fifteen years of his life. The blast against the Demon Rum, issued in 1812, was by no means the initial effort. His first attack was directed against the crime of murder. It consisted simply of the story of how Mary Findley was drowned by her brutal husband and his subsequent punishment and death, with appropriate observations on the wickedness of such conduct. The most elaborate part was the title, which ran as follows:

God's Revenge against Murder or The Drowned Wife. A tragedy, as lately performed, with unbounded applause (of the Devil and his Court) by

Ned Findley, Esquire, one of the grand company of tragedians in the service of the Black Prince, who was so highly gratified with Ned's performance, that he instantly provided him with rooms in one of his own Palaces, created him a Knight of the most ignoble order of the Halter, clapped bracelets on his wrist and an ornament round his neck, and in a few days promoted him to the ridgepole of the Gallows, at Edgefield Court House, S. C. By M. L. Weems of Lodge No. 50, Dumfries.

The obverse of this tale, written ten years later, was:

The Bad Wife's Looking Glass, or God's Revenge against Cruelty to Husbands—exemplified in the awful history of the beautiful but depraved Mrs. Rebecca Cotton, who most inhumanly murdered her husband John Cotton, Esq., for which horrid act God permitted her, in the prime of life and bloom of beauty, to be cut off by her brother, Stephen Kennady, May 5, 1907, with a number of incidents and anecdotes most extraordinary and instructive.

Having finished this sanguinary morsel of uplift, the writer despatched it from Charleston to Carey in Philadelphia with a note of urgent instruction:

I beg you to put it *instantly* in the hands of some Artist good *at design,* who would give us at once the likeness of a very beautiful woman distorted or convulsed with Diabolical passion in the act of murdering, with uplifted axe, her husband in sleep.

During the time that had elapsed since he wrote the story of Ned Findley's crime, Weems's art had matured. He painted with a heavier brush, plastering his tale with sentimentalism and piousness without stint or limit. He knew what his public wanted and he gave it with all the fervor and prodigality of a sob specialist in the yellowest of yellow news factories. The opening paragraphs of his "Bad Wife" give a fair sample of his literary habit:

As the same luxuriant soil often sustains the vital

cauliflower and the deadly hen bane, so the same patriotic state, (South Carolina) which nursed a Serena Williams (the all-accomplished granddaughter of my noble friend Col. James Chestnut of Camden) nursed also a Rebecca Kennady. Had it been true what certain Physiognomists have stated of the fair, that their minds always correspond with their faces, never would have the charge of murder have been laid at the door of our Heroine, for, according to report, she was one of the prettiest nymphs that ever stole away from the preacher the eyes of the Swains, causing those to sigh who came to pray. But although beauty, like a robe of light, encircled her person, yet "*her soul was dark.*" No pains had been taken to polish the gem, her mind; hence . . . she was rude and unlovely as the precious marble in the slab. . . .

After having played off, without effect, all her light artillery aforesaid, such as *new gowns* and ribbons etc., until she had gotten on the shady side of twenty, she was courted by a Mr. Cotton, a young rustic of the neighborhood; a suitor exactly to her own vulgar taste, pretty, illiterate and vain. This unfortunate young man, though born in

"*Christian land,*" had been brought up with as little regard to his soul as if he had been only an Ooran-ootan or a monkey. His father had never instructed him in the correct truths of the Christian philosophy summed up in two words: HUMILITY and LOVE.

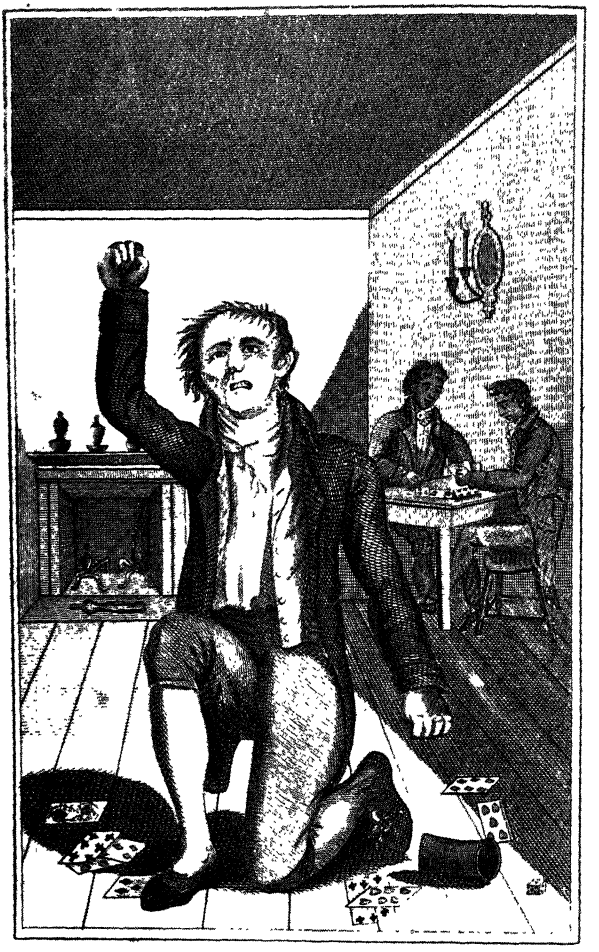
Rebecca, having lopped off her husband's head, escaped the consequences of her crime by vamping one of the jurors whom she subsequently married and swindled out of his money. Her brother, whom she had used as a tool in some of her plots, finally turned against her, and his pistol finished her career and gave the parson his moral ending.

Weems appreciated the literary value of contrasts, and in his pamphlet he set off the wickedness of Rebecca by a neat little anecdote of wifely virtue. The tale concerned three wealthy blades of New York, who, in the course of lingering in a tavern up to the unholy hour of one A. M., got into a dispute over the amia-

bility of their respective wives. They decided to test the matter by going together to each of their homes and yielding the palm to the lady that gave them the most cheerful reception.

The first two wives visited refused to receive the delegation. The third "threw on a wrapper" and bade the visitors welcome, and when her husband asked for something in the way of a supper, she called the maid and soon produced a hot venison pastry with cold ham and cheese and decanters of wine, "all served with that *sweet shine* on the face and that *assiduous affectionateness* that seasons the supper of conjugal friendship better than any sauce in Mrs. Glasses cookry book."

When his friends had gone, the gentleman asked his wife why "she treated him so much better than most men's wives do their husbands."



FRONTISPIECE FROM "GOD'S REVENGE AGAINST GAMBLING"

"Well, my dear," replied she with a sigh and a look interestingly melancholy, "you call yourself *a poor sinner* and me *a devout Christian.* Now, if I be so indeed, must I not feel the tenderest pity for you the father of my children! and thinking as I do that unless you come *to love God* before you die you cannot go to *him* hereafter, how can I ever do enough to make you happy in this world since you are not to be happy *in any other.*"

One of the most pretentious of Weems's tracts was his pamphlet on gambling. Both the gaming-table and the dueling-field were places sanctified in the code of honor of Weems's day, and the person who shunned either was scarcely regarded as a gentleman, but the parson did not hesitate to attack both in full force. Indeed, the solemn preamble and the depth of feeling displayed in the text of the blast against gambling make it clear that here was a vice that touched Weems very deeply.

Weems's dedication, to "Master Jesse Ewall Weems," written in Augusta in 1811, reads as follows:

I am now distant many hundreds of miles from my son; and many are the dangerous deaths that lurk between him and me. Perhaps he will see my face no more, nor ever again hear my voice talking to him about the happiness of BEING GOOD. Well, then, I will send him this little book.

He began by pointing out that the country had been afflicted by "floods and storms, plagues of caterpillars, the pestilence of yellow fever." "Thus of late," he added, "have traveled the judgments of God through our land." Did not these portents, he asked, signify that it was "high time for us to take stock and mend our ways"? From this he proceeded to recount "the miserable lives and untimely deaths of a number of persons of both sexes who had sacrificed their health, wealth and honor at gam-

ing tables." His conspicuous examples of downfall included "Maria Antoniette, Queen of France, who, for gambling, was brought to the guillotine." Weems related an interesting and not unfamiliar story of the queen's gambling habits, if such a term could be applied to games of chance in which Her Majesty's opponents paid in cash and she in signed counters redeemable at the holder's risk, but he failed to attach this trifling recreation to the lady's ignominious end in which "her dead body thrown naked into a ditch and covered with quicklime, was presently dissolved in a loathsome jelly."

His other anecdotes, however, were apposite enough, as well as entertaining, and of course they all sturdily, perhaps even brusquely, pointed his morals. Gamblers usually came to a tragic end. At the best, they were sure to die in poverty, for even their winnings were accursed.

There was the young man who, having gambled himself into a state of irresponsibility, "sought pleasure in a harlot's lap" and found "disease and death." Another who wasted his substance, "took down his gun, placed it against his forehead, and, touching the trigger with his toe, scattered his brains over the ceiling and fell by the side of his child half drowned in his father's blood." Still another, at the end, "took a halter from one of his horses and went and hung himself." "Poor Miss Braddock," who played for stakes, finally "dressed herself in her richest suit as if for her wedding night, and with a silken girdle she very deliberately hung herself over the door of her chamber," and when found by her maid was discovered "to have bitten off half of her tongue in her deadly agony."

As his climax, the worthy parson contrasted with these hard-bitten wretches of gamblers, the gentlemen on the other side of the shield,

those who kept away from the sport and, like good citizens, stuck to their business or profession.

I can tell of honorable merchants [he wrote], who, thirty years back, opened shop with hardly more than pedlars' packs, and now drink as good wine as the great emperor; and parry, with a shrug only, the loss of 50,000 dollars, on a cotton speculation.

Obviously, it never occurred to the worthy reformer that a speculation in cotton was not essentially different from a speculation on the turn of a card or on a number on a twirling wheel.

In "God's Revenge against Adultery," there is a departure from the ordinary Weemsian routine. In the other tracts the poor mortals sin and suffer apparently because of defective up-bringing and lack of education. Here they have no such excuse. Indeed, in the

pamphlet on adultery there is more than a hint of that philosophy so dear to the heart of the yokel, that "book larnin' " is a snare before the feet of the ungodly.

There was, for instance, the case of Mr. James O'Neale, who was married to "an elegant woman," but he was not "pure in heart," so he seduced "the beautiful but frail Miss L'Estrange."

This young lady [wrote Weems, giving the gaping public a generous dose of what it wanted] was just in the full, ripe state of youthful bloom and beauty, about 18 years of age; tall and florid; with a countenance open and inviting; and manners uncommonly gay.

The wanton eye of Mr. O'Neale had often wandered over her fine form with ideas of the grossest sensuality; and he had often assailed her virtue by every artifice that could be employed without alarming her suspicions or exciting her disgust. Under the cloak of friendship and color of gallantry he had exerted the keen lust kindling glance;

the sly double entendre; the deep impassioned sigh . . . but her sense of natural modesty, strengthened by education, enabled Miss L'Estrange either not to notice or to repel such approaches.

Miss L'Estrange, however, in due time contracted religion at a revival, and in her condition of emotional uplift, fell a prey to the wily O'Neale.

With sorrow unutterable [records the parson], we are constrained to say that Miss L'Estrange, the amiable, the beautiful, the accomplished Miss L'Estrange was ruined! she was ruined by a villain under the guise of religion.

In conclusion, the author dealt out tragedy with an Elizabethan generosity. O'Neale was shot dead by the brother of Matilda, who subsequently died of remorse and grief. Her father and mother were both brought to the grave with broken hearts, and her sister did not long survive them.

Weems's other morality in this pamphlet is noteworthy because in it he turned on his old friend Tom Paine, whose "Age of Reason" had brought him in many an honest penny. The story concerned Dr. Theron Wilson, son of a Presbyterian clergyman. The gentleman is described as "a finished scholar—a graduated physician—remarkable for the beauty of his person and the splendour of his talents." Though married to a lovely lady, he "was infected with that most shameful and uneasy of all diseases, an incurable lust or itching after strange women," and the immediate object of his attack was the comely wife of a neighboring innkeeper.

According to his friend and kinsman Governor Hall [wrote Weems], this elegant young man owed his early downfall to reading "Paine's Age of Reason." He was in the full vigor of 25 when he first heard of this libertine publication. By his boundless ardour for animal pleasures he was already

prepared to give Mr. Paine rather more than fair play and swallow with delight his bold slanders of the bible, and his still bolder conclusions that all revelation was but a trick of self-seeking priests. On gaining this point he was to be happy. He might then riot and revel in the sties of brutal pleasures and nevermore dread the gospel trumpet.

This curious perversion of Paine's deistic reasoning sounds rather odd from the pen of such a liberal moralist as Weems. One can in some degree explain the matter by a long guess that he was trying to placate Bishop Meade and others who had criticized him for selling Paine's book. At any rate, whatever his motive, he did a very thorough job. At the end, when his Lothario is shot by the melancholy innkeeper, Weems makes the wounded man repent on his death-bed and order the wicked book burned so that it can do no more mischief.

Weems also devoted some attention in his pamphlet to wives who were inclined to wan-

der from the straight and narrow path, but for the weaker vessels he did not serve up any frightful examples, confining himself to moral abjurations.

No woman can love two men . . . Wrapped up in him [the husband] she remains happily indifferent to others. "Has not your husband a very bad breath?" said an admirer to a lady of this excellent sort. "Indeed," replied the lady very innocently, "I don't know. I never smelled any other gentleman's breath but my dear husband's."

The pamphlet concludes with this pious quatrain:

How blest the maid who firmly treads
In Honour's blissful ways,
Nor ever from the sacred paths
Of Virtue's dictates strays.

Not all of Weems's tracts, however, were in this horrendous vein. With equal enthusiasm,

he could turn to the benevolent mood, and, a very *Old Wardle* in spirit, sing the praises of a naïve and happy society in which right-minded young folks were virtuously wedding and begetting large families for the greater glory of their country. His plea for matrimony, "Hymen's Recruiting Sergeant, or the New Matrimonial Tattoo for Old Bachelors," was a jovial outburst, fully as spirited as his lugubrious tales of adulterers, duelists, gamblers, drunkards, and homicides plunging to destruction.

"If you are for *pleasure*—marry!" cried the good parson, perhaps not without a twitch of his left eyelid.

If you prize *rosy health*—marry! and even if *money* be your *object*—marry! Let the pelf-scraping Bachelor drive on alone towards Heaven in his solitary sulky; the Lord help the poor man and send him good speed! But that's not my way of travelling. No! give me a sociable chaise, with a dear good angel by my side, the thrilling touch of

whose sweetly folding arm may flush my spirits into rapture, and inspire a devotion suited to the place, that best devotion—gratitude and love.

The parson's most emphatic argument for wedded bliss, however, was of a patriotic rather than a sentimental character. He preached large families as a measure of military preparedness a century before the late Theodore Roosevelt thumped the same doctrine from the rostrum; for indeed, there is nothing new under the sun.

I am very clear [wrote Weems, in his preface to the "Recruiting Sergeant"], that our *Yankee heroes* are made of, at least, as good stuff as any the best of the beef or frog-eating gentry on t'other side of the water. But neither this, nor all our fine speeches to our President, nor all his fine speeches to us again, will ever save us from the British gripe or the Carmagnole hug, while they can outnumber us *ten to one!* No, my friends, 'tis population, *'tis population alone,* can save our bacon.

Here we may take our leave of Weems the pamphleteer. In this arid literary field, so horribly infested with moral martinets and mere hymnists of hate, his lively imagination and brisk style, coupled with his unfailing human sympathy, and his flair for sentiment and vulgarity, won him a huge audience. Perhaps as a tractarian he gained his greatest success. He lived in a period when newspapers were scarce and enjoyed neither the space nor the technique for the exploitation of social scandals, as this function has developed in the organs of information of our higher civilization. The sob sisters and the editorial Grundies who bang the moralities over the latest example of murder, infidelity, perversion, or other abnormality good for circulation, were unknown in that crude time. Instead, the underlying population gulped its morality raw, so to speak, from specially prepared pamphlet-packages. Of all the purveyors of such topical piousness, none cer-

tainly wielded a livelier pen than Weems. He combined most of the virtues and talents distributed in our day among such diverse evangelical artists as the Rev. Billy Sunday, Dr. Frank Crane, the late Dr. Bryan, and the chief counsel of the Anti-Saloon League.

XI

EVENTIDE OF A PROPHET

WEEMS'S later pamphlets and his last two biographies carry him into the period of life when most men are content to sit by the fire and rest. Well beyond his first half-century, however, he continued active and eager, an indefatigable wanderer, a salesman without a peer, an ardent preacher of the Word wherever men cared to listen. He became a distinct character of his time, known far and wide by men of all conditions, and many lively tales and legends were woven about him who had been himself the originator of so much American folk-lore.

Though his literary flair remained with him into his declining years, his two later biog-

raphies, those of Franklin and William Penn, did not command popular attention like his Washington and Marion. The Franklin, in fact, is not much more than a collection of attenuated moral conversations. His "Life of William Penn," one of his last literary efforts, displays more animation. Weems was so catholic in his sympathies that the character of Penn, the Quaker pacifist, could appeal to him as deeply as that of Marion the warrior. It is natural, therefore, to find "The Life of William Penn" one of his tenderest studies. He had a soft spot in his heart for the Quaker brethren generally, and one of the favorite anecdotes of his later years was the story of a placid old Quaker merchant. This gentleman, the story runs, was faced with ruin when news came to him that the vessels which carried all his shipments had been lost in a storm. Some of his friends, who came to condole with him, were

FRONTISPIECE FROM "GOD'S REVENGE AGAINST ADULTERY"

astonished to find him sitting at his desk, apparently undisturbed:

"Hast thee not lost all?" they cried.

"My friends," he replied, "I am still rich—very rich."

"We were told that thee had lost all."

"True, I have lost all."

"Thee hast lost all, and yet art rich?"

"I have not lost God, and in possessing *Him* do I possess all things."

Typical of Weems's spirit in this period is the following passage from "William Penn."

William Penn, I say, seeing no end to these cruel persecutions of himself and his innocent followers, very naturally turned his thoughts to North America, whither the Roman Catholic Christians, and the Presbyterian Christians had just before been flying, by thousands, from the fury of the Church of England Christians! (O glory to God that there is yet one government left on earth where

the demagogues of one church are not permitted to persecute and plunder the rest.)

Indeed, there was no bigotry in Weems, and a minimum of dogma, in an age when gentlemen of his cloth lived principally by these commodities. Parson Weems, of course, was more fortunate than most of his fellow-clergymen in that he possessed lucrative side-lines. He was independent of clerical censure, and he did not have to cut his cloth to the unlovely lines of the current ecclesiastical style. In any case, however, he was too humane and tolerant to go about preaching hell and damnation to all those who differed from his credo. In fact, he not infrequently shocked his more rigorous hearers by his liberalism. Young Mr. Edward Hooker, twenty-two years old, fresh from Harvard Law School, while on a visit to Columbia, South Carolina, at the close of 1807, recorded in his diary that he went to hear Weems

preach at the Representative Chamber "an eloquent sermon on Love to neighbors, etc." Mr. Hooker, obviously a superior and intelligent young man, accustomed to hearing fine doctrinal subtleties hurled from the New England pulpit, was thoroughly perturbed at Weems's simple discourse. "He seemed to think love the sum and essense of Christianity," wrote the horrified young man. "It is said he always preaches in the same strain."

Weems's favorite text, in fact, was "God is Love," and during the last few years of his life, it is said that he preached on this almost to the exclusion of everything else.

In his later writings he not infrequently voiced his abhorrence of dogma and intolerance. Writing of Wesley preaching to drunken coal-miners in England on the love of God, he said:

Could millions of *wrangling* sermons on INFANT

BAPTISM or ADULT BAPTISM or FREE WILL or ELECTION have produced the good of this one: "Repentance and Faith working by Love."

Again, taking a side-swipe at the infant-damnationists, he wrote:

The man who believes that there are millions of sweet little babes, *not a span long,* broiling and screaming in hell flames, and there to continue to broil and scream through all eternity for *God's glory,* can hardly see God's judgments in the right light.

At a time when the great stand-bys of the American pulpit were Endless Punishment and Original Sin, and the sadistic echoes of Jonathan Edwards's favorite forensic effort, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," were still crashing over the pews, it probably took no little courage for Weems to venture forth as the protagonist of a gentle and kindly Deity. The point of view bordered dangerously on

heresy. Indeed, it seems odd that some ecclesiastical Grand Goblin of the period did not have him stripped of his clerical robes and stoned in the market-place for an unbeliever.

The marked benevolent trend of Weems's later years did not make him oblivious to the main chance. The selling of books was his business, and he never neglected to forward that by all honorable means. He was a zealous searcher after patrons of high station for his literary and publishing ventures, and some of his letters to James Madison, President of the United States, illustrate his method in snaring big game for this purpose.

He made the acquaintance of Madison, I understand, in the course of his work of rousing interest in Marshall's ill-fated "Life of Washington." Apparently the parson appealed to Madison's imagination, for they occasionally exchanged letters over a period of years. During the War of 1812, in an outburst of pa-

triotic emotion, Weems addressed a formal letter to Madison, who was then President, denouncing British "atrocities" quite in the best hundred-per-cent manner. The "Vandal foe," Weems declared (that, rather than Hun, being then the fashionable term for the enemy), was actually using "rockets, bombs, red-hot shot and mines," so Weems, "as a Hearty Friend, Patriot and Philanthropist," urged that the American soldiers should do likewise. His pet plan was to fill a canvas hose with gunpowder, bury it at intervals across the roads where British columns were to pass, and discreetly blow the enemy into eternity. "God Almighty forbid," he concluded, "that during your Administration those Fair Cities, Baltimore, Norfolk and Richmond, with all their tender Females and princely Treasure, should be the sport and spoil of a Ruffian British Soldiery."

There is no record to indicate that Weems's scheme was adopted, but at any rate it did

credit to his imagination, if not exactly to his Christian avocation.

Most of his letters to Madison, or to Dolly Madison, however, were strictly business requests for literary favors. To the lady, who was not without vanity, he did not hesitate to exercise his talent for epistolary treacle. In requesting from the First Lady a blurb for his projected publication of "Hunter's Sacred Biography, or a Delineation of Some of the Most Distinguished Characters Recorded in the Holy Scriptures," he wrote:

A recommendation of it, Honored Madam, from your pen, would insure it a wide circulation among your Fair Countrywomen, and mingled as it would be by Maternal Love, with the milk of a thousand nurseries it would contribute to raise up myriads of Angelic Characters to adorn and bless the rising Generation. Knowing how very dear such a result would be to you—to you, Honored Madam, who have been nurtured in the bosom of a Society re-

markable for their Christian Philanthropy, I can not but assure myself that you will with pleasure give me the powerful aid of your Recommendation to this highly moralizing work. Hundreds of the clergy are ready to give me their recommendations, but . . . I had rather have a few lines from Mrs. Madison than from a whole Bench of Bishops.

This was in 1813. Six years later he was still writing for patronage for his literary wares. One letter in 1819 requests Madison to recommend "Marion," described as "making much noise in the country," as a text-book for schools. "My life of Washington, written for that purpose, is now in the twenty-first edition," stated the forehanded parson, "and from the demand for Marion I have reason to believe he will not lag far behind. . . . Wishing you both many happy and useful years yet before you are called to your Celestial Patrimony. . . ."

In his later years it is clear that Weems must

have accumulated a tidy bit of savings. He was a man of mark and substance. He had friends in every town from Savannah to New York and was generally beloved. His books had won the broadest audience. His pamphlets enjoyed relatively the circulation of an enterprising tabloid newspaper of to-day, and they won a somewhat similar class of readers.

Curiously enough his wife and several of his children had gone over to the Methodist brethren, and soon after his death one son was to join the ranks of the Methodist clergy. Apparently the old gentleman was not greatly troubled by this defection, which must have caused much wagging of tongues among the neighbors. He was wont to remark, with one of his quaint metaphors, "They have not left the fold, only gone over the fence to browse in another pasture."

In politics he inclined to the Federalist cause, and in his political pamphlets he directs

several sly raps at the Jeffersonites and at persons who desired what he considered "too much liberty" or were disrespectful about the prerogatives of property. He never permitted his political opinions to interfere with business, however, and he was most discreet in expressing them. His speeches were carefully non-partizan. The "Maryland Gazette" cites one occasion when he was apparently the central figure of a Federalist meeting, though it was hardly a partizan occasion. On January 15, 1814, the Federalists had a grand celebration over the fall of Napoleon. They staged a parade, in which Weems was one of the leaders, and then they gathered at Queen Anne's Church, where he "addressed the Throne of Grace in an appropriate manner," in which address, we may be sure, tyrants were properly lambasted.

. . . . . .

There is an element of mystery, as far as

this chronicler is concerned, about the last five years of Weems's life. In his biographical sketch of Weems in "The Library of Southern Literature," Dr. Robert K. Massie writes: "In 1820 he went to live in Beaufort, S. C., and there he died May 23, 1825. His body was brought back to his wife's home in Virginia for interment."

Dr. Massie stands on this extraordinary departure from wife and family. Descendants of Parson Weems deny that he severed his home ties, though they admit that he spent a good part of his last few years in Beaufort. The records of Prince William County attest that Weems was occasionally at Bel Air, at least long enough to sign several business papers, during these years, and they show that he preserved a lively interest in the place.

Beaufort, South Carolina, is a little town on Port Royal Island, in the estuary of the Broad River, north of Savannah. Its present popula-

tion is twenty-five hundred. Some French colonists, Protestant refugees, settled there in 1562. Two years later Spanish invaders put the French to the sword and held the place for a period, until they in turn were driven out by the English. In Weems's day it was apparently something of a port, a place of fine and stately mansions, with an exotic flavor from the earlier occupations. The climate was excellent; indeed, some years ago, an effort was made to popularize the place as a health resort.

Perhaps fading health attracted Weems to Beaufort. His last five years were unproductive in a literary sense, and this might indicate that the hard-driven human machine was at last running down. Or it may have been that the shrewd parson, attracted by the charms of the place, as well as its seeming commercial possibilities, had made certain real-estate or other investments there which subsequently

demanded his personal supervision. These are mere speculations in lieu of fact. They would only imperfectly account for an extended absence from his distant home, where his social connections were of the best and his surroundings were comfortable. Most of his eight children were well grown by 1820, for he had then been married twenty-five years. There is every evidence that he was exceedingly fond of them. It should be added that no record has come down of any marital infelicity, and he was surely past the age when a man is likely to go off seeking romantic adventure.

However this may be, Bel Air saw little of him in those last years, and Beaufort saw much of him. There he died, in 1825. He had been 36 years on the road.

Yes, Weems died in 1825. There is no doubt of that. Yet, curiously enough, ten years later, his phantom appeared on the roads again, in

new surroundings, and the sound of his fiddle was reported, and he is recorded as vending his moral pamphlets.

This strange resurrection is recorded in the third part of the "Autobiography of David Crockett, entitled "Colonel Crockett's Exploits and Adventures in Texas." Davy, the mighty hunter, was defeated in 1831 for reelection to Congress, where he had served two terms. After cogitating morosely for a long period on the ingratitude of republics, he decided to resume his life of adventure by starting out "to give the Texians a helping hand on the high road to freedom." It is apparent from his phraseology that Davy took a more naïve view of Uncle Sam's land-grabbing adventure of that time than did Congressman Abraham Lincoln and other harsh contemporary critics of the Mexican War.

Be that as it may, the intrepid huntsman set out from his home in Weakly County, Ten-

nessee, July 8, 1835, and, traveling west into Arkansas, moved slowly down to the scene of the Mexican imbroglio, where he was captured by Santa Anna and shot to death. The third part of his autobiography, reputed to have been found after his death, purports to describe his wanderings and adventures almost up to the final tragedy.

Weems, though not mentioned by name, comes into the story at Little Rock, in the early stages of the trip. Arriving at that city, Crockett went to a tavern, according to the narrative, where he found a puppet-showman being menaced by a crowd. The showman's fiddler having become drunk, he was unable to give his performance, and the disappointed audience was about to wreak vengeance on the exhibitor and on *Punch* and *Judy* too, when the Weemsian figure appeared on the scene.

An old Gentleman [says the "Autobiography"],

drove up to the tavern in a sulky, with a box of books and pamphlets of his own composition (for he was an author, like myself), thus being able to vouch for the moral tendency of every page he disposed of. His linen and flannels, which he had washed in the brooks by the wayside, were hanging over the back of his crazy vehicle to dry, while his own snuffy countenance had long bid defiance to sun, wind and water to bleach it. . . . I learned that he was educated for the church, but not being able to obtain a living, he looked upon the whole earth as his altar and Mankind as his flock. His life was literally that of a pilgrim. He was an isolated being though his heart overflowed with the milk of human kindness. . . .

The landlord now made his appearance and gave a hearty welcome to the reverend traveller, and shaking him by the hand added that he never came more opportunely in all his life. . . .

"The lame fiddler is fond of the bottle and is now snoring in the hayloft."

"Degrading vice," exclaimed the old man, and taking "God's Revenge against Drunkenness"

from the trunk, and standing erect in the sulky, he commenced reading to his astonished audience.

The landlord interrupted and asked him to play for the showman, who, it appeared, had a sick wife and five children.

"I!" exclaimed the parson. "I fiddle for a puppet show!"

"Not for the puppet show, but for the sick wife and five hungry children."

A tear started into the eyes of the old man, as he added in an undertone "If I could be concealed from the audience."

According to the narrative a screen was set up, and behind this the parson fiddled, until, in the midst of the performance, the screen fell and revealed him. However, "in no ways disconcerted, he got up, delivered a moral lecture on charity and took up a collection for the showman."

The autobiographer further records that two days later, while crossing the Washita

River, he heard the sound of fiddling. This came from the parson, who had missed the crossing in his sulky and was stuck in the stream. He sat in his vehicle playing "Hail Columbia" and "Over the Water to Charlie," and, when rescued, he said he had been playing for an hour.

He remarked that nothing in universal nature was so calculated to draw people together as the sound of a fiddle, and he knew that he might bawl himself hoarse for assistance, and no one would stir a peg, but they would no sooner hear the scrapping of his catgut than they would quit all other business and came to the spot in flocks.

Here we have indeed a curious reincarnation. The two incidents given are familiar parts of the Weemsian legend, but the narrative need not lead one to suppose either that Parson Weems did not really die in Beaufort in 1825, or that, on the other hand, his kindly ghost

was wandering about the Western country ten years after his death. The fact is that the last section of the Crockett biography is of doubtful origin. The valiant Davy went into Texas and met his death. Some time later it was announced that his manuscript of his final adventures had been recovered and was prepared for the press. It is now established, however, that this manuscript was a literary hoax. A hack writer of the period, more ingenious than scrupulous, saw a chance to make the pot boil more merrily by fabricating a final instalment of the Crockett memoirs. He enlivened the narrative by putting in whatever incidents came to his mind. The anecdotes about Parson Weems had gained such currency that it was not unnatural for the hack to make use of some of them.

The incident gives an appropriate finale to the Weemsian tale. The indefatigable creator of American folk-lore had himself already be-

come a figure of legend. At the hands of a lesser fabulist, he was raised from his final resting-place to provide pious entertainment for a lively story.