

Some Historic Landmarks of Virginia and Maryland
described in A Hand-book

For The Tourist over the Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Electric Railway
by W.H. Snowden, 1904

GREENWAY COURT.

WHERE LORD THOMAS FAIRFAX LIVED.

Not far from the little village of Milwood, in the Shenandoah Valley, there stood a few years ago an ancient mansion of peculiar interest. It was plainly a relic of the remote past—quaint in style, and suggestive to the beholder of strange circumstances and histories. Tall locusts of a century's growth surrounded it, and waved their spreading branches over its steep roof and windows.



THOMAS SIXTH LORD FAIRFAX.

From a painting in the Masonic Lodge Room, Alexandria.

known, and needed the assistance, which Lord Fairfax afforded.

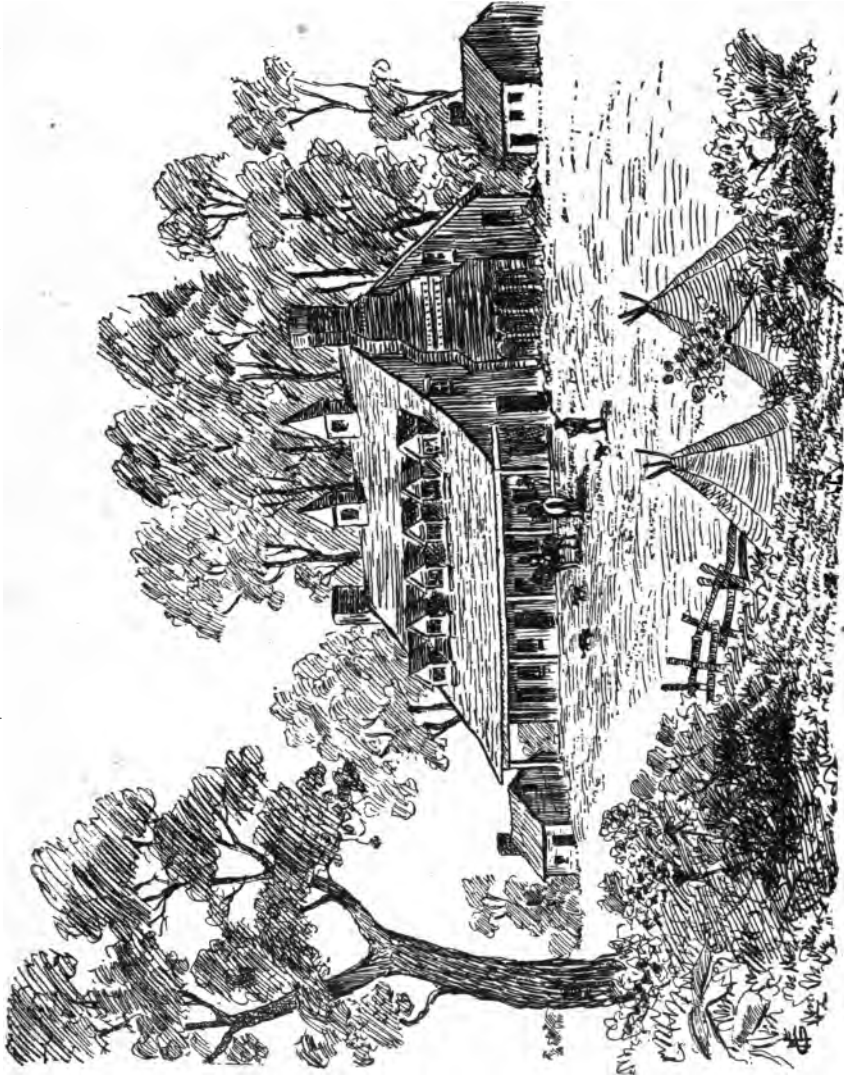
Any account of the youth of Washington must involve no small reference to the old fox-hunting Baron who took an especial fancy for him when he was a boy of sixteen, and greatly aided in developing his capabilities and character. Fairfax not only thus shaped by his counsels the unfolding mind of the young man, but placed the future leader of the American Revolution in that course of training which hardened his muscles, toughened his manhood, taught him self-reliance, and gave him that military re-

This ancient mansion was once the home of an English nobleman, who only chanced to live in Virginia, and did not directly influence to any considerable measure the events of the period in which he was an actor. And what, it may be asked, had Thomas, Lord Fairfax, Baron of Cameron, the sixth of the name, of Greenway Court, in the Shenandoah Valley, to do with the history of this era? What did he perform, and why is a place demanded for him in our annals? The answer is not difficult. With this notable person who has passed to his long rest, and lies nearly forgotten in the old church at Winchester is connected a name which will never be forgotten. His was the high mission to shape in no small measure the immense strength of George Washington. His hand pointed attention to the rising planet of this great life, and opened its career toward the zenith—the planet which shines now, the polar star of our liberties, set in the stormy skies of the Revolution. The brilliance of that star no man can now increase nor obscure, as no cloud can dim it, yet, once it was un-

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pute in the public eye, which secured for him at a comparatively early age the appointment of commander-in-chief of the Continental armies over all competitors. First and last, Fairfax was the fast and continuing friend of Washington, and not even the struggle for independence in which they espoused opposite sides, operated to weaken this regard. In imagination let us look at this old house in which Lord Thomas passed about thirty years of his bachelor life. It stands before us on a green knoll—solitary, almost, in the great wilderness, and all its surroundings impress us with ideas of pioneer life and habits. It is a long, low building, constructed of the limestone of the region.



GREENWAY COURT.

The home of Thomas, Lord Fairfax, in the Shenandoah Valley.

A row of dormer windows stands prominently out from its steep over-hanging roof, and massive chimneys of stone appear outside of its gables which are studded with coops around which swarm swallows and martins. From the ridge of the roof rise two belfries or lookouts, constructed probably by the original owner to give the alarm in case of an invasion by the savages. Not many paces from the old mansion was a small log house in which the eccentric proprietor slept, surrounded by his dogs, of which he was passionately fond; the large edifice having been assigned to his steward. A small

cabin of stone near the north end of the house was his office; and in this he transacted all the business of his vast possessions, giving quit-rents, signing deeds, and holding audiences to adjust claims and boundary lines. Scattered over the knoll were the quarters for his many servants. And here in the midst of dogs and horses, backwoodsmen, Indians, half-breeds, and squatters, who feasted daily at his plentiful board, the fine gentleman of Pall Mall, the friend of Joseph Addison, passed more than a quarter of a century. He lived in this frontier locality the life of a reclusé. He had brought with him an ample library of books, and these were welcome companionship for him in his solitary hours. Ten thousand acres of land around his unpretentious lodge he had allotted for a manorial estate, with the design at some time of erecting upon it a castle for a residence. This design he never executed.

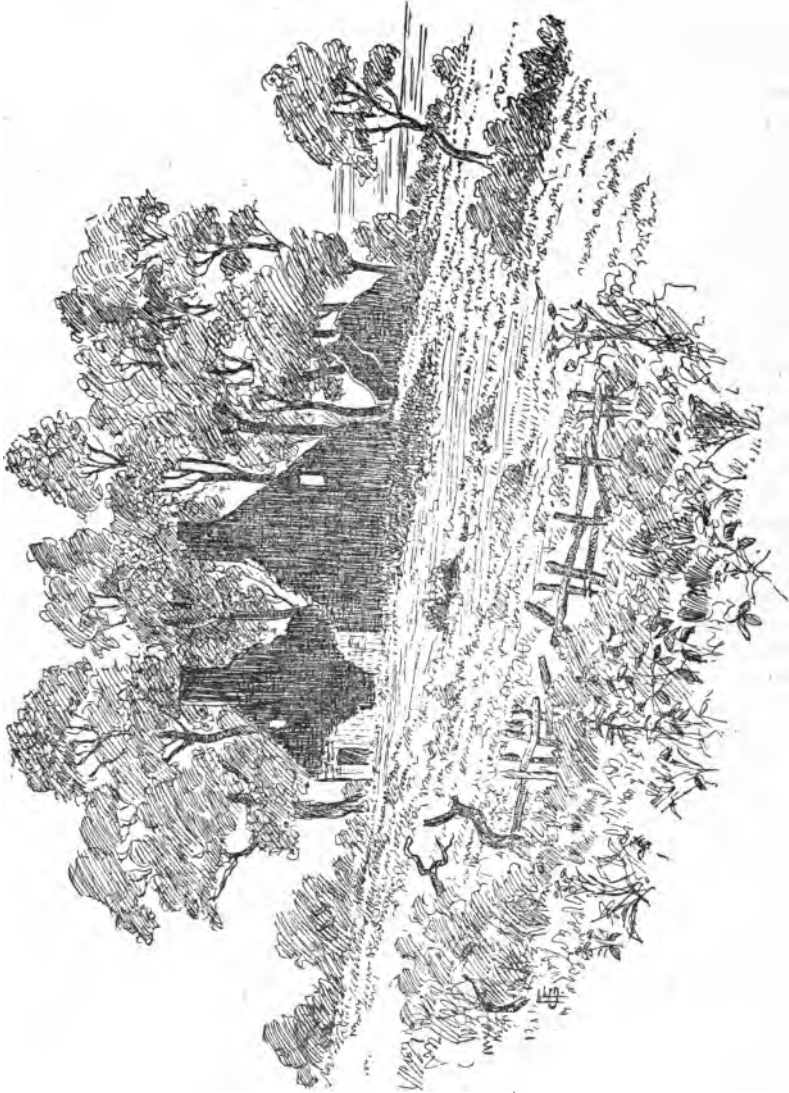
At the age of twenty-five, Lord Fairfax was one of the gayest of the young men of London society. He went the rounds of dissipation with the fondest enjoyment, and was considered one of the finest beaux of his day. He was well received by all classes. Young noblemen, dissipating rapidly their patrimonial substance, found in him a congenial companion in their intrigues and revels. Countesses permitted him to kiss their jewelled hands; and when he made his bow in their drawing-rooms, received him with their most patronizing smiles. But our young lord after a time found himself arrested in his gay round of pleasures in the haunts of silk stockings and hooped petticoats. He had revolved like a gaily-colored moth about many beautiful luminaries without singeing his wings, but his hour of fate came. One of the beauties of the time transfixed him. He circled in closer and closer gyrations. His pinions were caught in the blaze, and he was a hopeless captive. My Lord Fairfax no longer engaged in revels or the rounds of dissipation, but like a sensible lover accepted the new conditions, and sought only to make everything ready for a life of real happiness in the nuptials of two loving and confiding hearts. He turned resolutely from the frivolous past and looked only to the promising future, which he saw as if unfolding something higher and more substantial for his achievement and enjoyment. Then the real sweetness and depth of his truer nature revealed themselves from beneath the wrappings of dissipation and vice. He gave up everything which had pleased him for this woman; and all that he now asked was permission to take his affianced away from the dangerous atmosphere of the court, and to live with her peacefully as a good nobleman of the provinces. He loved her passionately, and wished to discard all who threatened to interfere with the exclusive enjoyment of her society. All his resources were taxed to supply the most splendid marriage gifts; and absorbed in this delightful dream of love, his happiness was raised to the empyrean. But he was destined to have a sudden awakening from his dream, a terrible, almost fatal fall from his cloudland. He had expended the wealth of his deep and earnest nature on a coquette—his goddess was a woman simply—and a very shallow one. She threw Fairfax carelessly overboard, and married a nobleman who won her by the superior attractions of a ducal coronet. Thus struck doubly in his pride and his love, Fairfax looked around him in despair for some retreat to which he might fly and forget in a measure his sorrows. London was hateful to him, the country no less distasteful. He could not again plunge into the mad whirl of the one, nor rust away in the dull routine of the other. His griefs demanded action to dissipate them—adventure, new scenes—another land was needed. This process of reflection turned the young man's thoughts to the lands in far away Virginia which he held in right, of his mother, the daughter of Lord Culpeper, to whom they had originally been granted; and finally he bade adieu to England and came over the seas. Such were the events in the early life of this gentleman which brought him to Virginia.

The house of Belvoir to which Lord Fairfax came was the residence, as has already been stated, of William Fairfax his cousin, to whom he had intrusted the management of his Virginia lands. Lawrence Washington, the eldest brother of George had married a daughter of William; and now commences the connection of the already aged proprietor and the boy of sixteen who was to lead the armies of the Revolution. Washington was a frequent inmate of the Belvoir home, and the boy was the chosen companion of the old Lord in his hunting expeditions. In the reckless sports of the

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field the proprietor seemed to find the chief solace for his love-lorn griefs. Time slowly dissipated his despairing recollections, however, and now, as he approached the middle of that century, the dawn of which had witnessed so much of his misery, the softer traits of his character returned, and he was to those for whom he felt regard a most delightful and instructive companion. Almost every trace of personal attraction, though, had left him. Upwards of six feet in stature, gaunt, raw-boned, near-sighted, with light grey eyes, and a sharp aquiline nose, he was scarcely recognizable as the ele-



THE END OF GREENWAY COURT.

gant young nobleman of the days of Queen Anne. But time and reflection had mellowed his mind, and when he pleased, the old gentleman could enchain his hearers with brilliant conversation, of which his early training and experience had given him very great command. He had seen all the great characters of the period of his youth, had watched the unfolding of events and studied their causes. All the social history, the scandalous chronicles, the private details of celebrated personages had been famil-

iar to him, and his conversation thus presented a glowing picture of the past. Something of cynical wit still clung to him, and the fireside of Belvoir was the scene of much satiric comment between the old nobleman and his cousin William. But Fairfax preserved great fondness for youth, and took especial pleasure in the society of our George of Mount Vernon. He not only took him as a companion in his hunts, but liked to have the boy with him when he walked out; and it may be easily understood that the talks of the exile had a deep effect upon young Washington.

The import of Lord Fairfax's connection with the future commander-in-chief lies chiefly in the commission which he intrusted to Geo. Wm. Fairfax, his cousin, and Washington, the boy of seventeen, that of surveying and laying out his vast possessions in the Shenandoah Valley. Providence here as everywhere seemed to have directed the movements of man to work out His own special ends. This employment as surveyor on the wilderness frontiers was the turning-point in the young man's life, and the results of the expedition of three years in its influences on his habits and character, the information and self-reliance it gave him, and the hardships it taught him to endure are now the property of history.

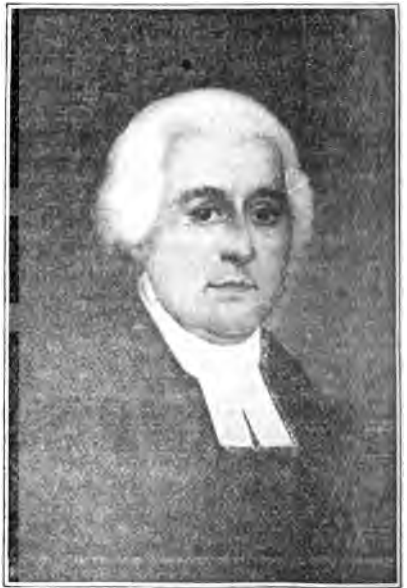
*It is not a part of our design to follow the young surveyor in his expedition which led him from Greenway Court to the headwaters of the Potomac where Cumberland now stands, and thence into the wilderness of the "Great South Branch," a country as wholly unknown as it was fertile and magnificent. He returned to Mount Vernon a new being, and the broad foundation of his character was laid.

The first act of his eventful life had been played—the early lessons of training and endurance thoroughly learned—the ground work of his subsequent exertions fixed; and the prudence, courage, coolness, and determination which he displayed on this arena, made him general-in-chief when the crisis came, of the forces of the Revolutionary struggle—Lord Fairfax had given him the impetus. From him he had received the direction of his genius, and to the attentive student of these early events the conviction becomes more and more absolute that Lord Fairfax was the great "influence" of his life. And the interest attaching to the career of this noble patron consists chiefly in his connection with the life of the rising hero. Having formed as we have seen in no small measure the character of the boy of seventeen, he lived to receive the tidings that this boy had overthrown forever the dominion of Great Britain in America on the field of Yorktown. So had Providence decreed; and the gray haired baron doubtless felt that he was only the humble servant in that all powerful Hand.

After Yorktown—after the supreme defeat of the proud English general by the lad whom he had trained, it was, as he said, "time for him to die."

His death took place in 1781, at the age of ninety-two, and his body lies buried in the old Episcopal churchyard at Winchester, Va. His barony and its prerogatives according to English law descended in the absence of a son to his eldest brother Robert, who thus became seventh Lord Fairfax. The latter died in Leed's Castle, England, 1791, without a son. The baronial title then fell to Rev. Bryan Fairfax, son of William Fairfax then dead, and brother-in-law of Lawrence Washington.

His main and last residence in Virginia was



Right Hon. Rev. Bryan, Eighth Lord Fairfax.
Courtesy of Miss F. M. Burke.

*See "Story of Young Surveyors" by author

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Mount Eagle on a high eminence near Great Hunting Creek, Fairfax county. But he had another homestead known as "Towlstou Hall," a few miles above Alexandria, destroyed by fire just before the Revolution. He became the Eighth Lord in descent, and died at Mount Eagle in 1802. He was probably buried in Ivy Hill Cemetery near Alexandria. On a tablet in this burial place erected by his granddaughter is the following inscription:

IN MEMORIAM.

RIGHT HON. REV. BRYAN, LORD FAIRFAX, BARON OF CAMERON
AND RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, FAIRFAX PARISH.
DIED AT MOUNT EAGLE, AUG. 7, 1802, AGED 78.

THE LORD FORSAKETH NOT THE SAINTS. THEY ARE PRESERVED FOREVER.

The last living heir to the title of Lord, in line of descent is Mr. Albert Fairfax of New York City. He has become by the recent death of his father, John Contee Fairfax of Maryland, the twelfth Baron.

The great landed estates of Lord Thomas Fairfax with their entails were in effect confiscated by the success of the American Revolution; and the legislature of Virginia in 1785 passed an act in relation to the Northern Neck, declaring that the landholders within said domain "should be forever after exonerated and discharged from all compositions and quit rents for the same." This was the end of the millions of acres of the royal Culpeper patent.

A daughter of Bryan Fairfax, "Sally," a favorite young friend of Washington, died in early womanhood. A son, Thomas, lived beyond the age of eighty and died at Vacluse near Seminary Hill, Va. in 1846, a zealous convert to the doctrines of Swedenborg. He was a man of broad and liberal views of human duties. He liberated all the slaves belonging to his patrimonial estate and was the originator of the African colonization society.

DESCENT OF THE FAIRFAX TITLE.

The Fairfaxes have been prominent personages during a thousand years of English and American history. Coming down through that history we find mention of Sir Thomas Fairfax of Denton near Otley on the banks of the river Wharfe in Yorkshire. His eldest son Thomas was knighted for distinguished service before the city of Rouen in 1594 and in 1625 was created by Charles I, Lord Fairfax, Baron of Cameron, in the Scottish peerage. His son Ferdinando became second Lord Fairfax and was commander-in-chief of the parliamentary forces at the battle of Marston Moor in 1644. His son Thomas became third Lord Fairfax and was generalissimo of the armies of parliament under Oliver Cromwell in the war against the forces of Charles I. His name was on the list of judges to try the King, but he was not present at the trial. He died in 1671 and was succeeded in the title by his cousin Henry, fourth Lord Fairfax, of the cavalier branch of the family. This nobleman's eldest son Thomas, fifth Baron Fairfax, was married to Catherine, daughter of Lord Culpeper, and his son Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax, became proprietor of the "Northern Neck" in Virginia. He came to Virginia just previous to 1740 and lived the rest of his life, chiefly at Greenway Court in the Shenandoah Valley. His cousin Robert in England became seventh Lord, Bryan Fairfax son of William of Belvoir became eighth Lord. His son Thomas who died at an advanced age in 1846, succeeded to the title as ninth Lord. He was succeeded by his grandson Charles Snowden Fairfax, as tenth Lord. The title after his death fell to his brother, John Contee Fairfax as eleventh Lord. The last of the line is his son Albert Kirby Fairfax, of New York City as twelfth Lord.

WASHINGTON'S LAST VISIT TO HIS MOTHER.
HIS MIDNIGHT RIDE.

He speeds at night when the world is still,
Over lonely plain and meadow and hill;
His way is rugged and lonely and dim;
But a friendly beacon is shining for him—

A beacon bright as the guiding Star
The Eastern Magi sought afar—
He sees the light of a mother's eyes
Ever before his pathway rise!

Early on an April day of 1789 a wearied messenger arrived in haste at the gates of Mount Vernon. He had ridden from the city of New York, a distance of over two hundred and fifty miles, partly in lumbering stage coaches and partly on horseback over a highway abounding in ferries and fording places and much of it very rugged and difficult of passage.

The messenger was the venerable Charles Thompson, secretary of the Continental Congress, and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He had been commissioned by the new Congress under the Federal constitution to announce to Gen-