



"Quis est pater officii, diligens pater,
"Unwersit by p. rage, to live like Brothers."

From Johnson's Memoirs.
PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE OF
GENERAL GREENE.

Continued.

The first effort of the party on their return home, was to secure the independence of the country of their choice, as the only means of future security, or justifiable retaliation.

The Massachusetts Bay colony laid claim to a jurisdiction over the whole of that country as far as the limits of New-York, or to the Pacific. But they had repeatedly attacked and harassed the Indians; had sold them into slavery, set a price upon their heads, and recently had nearly extirpated the Pequots, killing the men, shipping off the boys to Bermuda, and distributing the women and female children among the colonists. The Narragansets, therefore, feared and hated them; and Gorton's party, availing themselves of this state of things, secretly prevailed upon their chiefs, to execute a deed of transfer of soil and sovereignty to the King of England. The grant is still preserved, and embraces the whole country within the limits of Rhode Island. Whether their rights were co-extensive with their cession is not to be ascertained. Generally the limits of Indian territory are but ill defined, and various nations will lay claim to the same hunting grounds.

Furnished with this important document, one of Gorton's followers was immediately dispatched to England. The grant was accepted, and the charter, which created the State, so soon followed, that it was unquestionably the result of this cession from the Narragansets.

These events are all commemorated by Gorton in a publication under the quaint title of "Simplicity's defence against seven headed tyranny," a rare, amusing, and obviously authentic narrative.

In these occurrences, Green must have been a principal sufferer; that he lost his wife about this time is recorded in the family annals, from which circumstance it is probable she was one of those who perished in the snow. And that he was soon after in England, where he married another wife, is equally well established; from which the inference is a very reasonable one, that he was the bearer of the Narragansets' deed of cession, and a principal negotiator for the independence of that nation, and of the State of Rhode-Island.

The family, ever since its establishment, have clung to their little Ithaca with a singular pertinacity. They are now much ramified, very numerous, and very respectable. They are mostly substantial farmers, industrious, and judicious in the culture of a soil which possesses few natural advantages; but live in great comfort and singular harmony. Several of them have filled the highest offices in the State.

The family of Gen. Greene were originally from Salisbury in England. His father, Nathanael, was the third in descent from the original emigrant. Nathanael, the subject of these memoirs, his second son by Mary Mott, was born May 27, 1742. The father had been previously married, and had two sons, so that Nathanael was the fourth of eight whom he raised to manhood.

Very early in life they were deprived by death of the cares of their mother; and with the aid of a motherly house-keeper, the eight boys were brought up together under the eye of the father. And although nothing was further from the intention of his sire than preparing him for a military life, he literally received a Spartan education. The old gentleman was a highly respectable Quaker preacher, and for nearly forty years was in the habit of delivering himself in the meeting at East Greenwich, with a force and eloquence, it is said, which would have done honour to any pulpit. As his family increased, he regularly attended, his place of worship, followed by his train of boys, all habited in the simplest costume of their sect. Temperate, frugal and laborious himself, his habits were inculcated on his children, not less by his own example, than by the impressive lessons of a rod and a vigorous arm. Passive and prompt obedience were among his favorite doctrines; and the least undutiful hesitation was followed by a frown of authority, and a look of command that admitted of no delay.— Yet he was kind and affectionate, and acted rather from dictates of duty, and a sense of propriety, than imperiousness of character. His forge, his mill, and his farm, divided his attention; and regularly, as his children attained to a proper age, they were assigned to the plough, and gradually passed through their degrees, until honoured with a station at the anvil. Eight fine athletic boys, to a man thus circumstanced, were not only a boon from heaven, but a real accession of fortune.

His own limited education, the fanaticism of the times, and something perhaps of the peculiar opinions of his sect, had impressed him with an opinion, that the Bible was the only book worthy the study of an intellectual being. Mere human learning he held in very low estimation, and never encouraged the acquirement of it in his children beyond the simplest ru-

ments of education. To their moral and religious conduct, he paid the most undivided attention. Nor did he fail to inspire them with the most elevated principles of moral conduct, or to form them for the conscientious discharge of those duties, which constitute the good man and the useful citizen.

The father of biography has seldom introduced a great man to his readers without relating the concomitant omens at his birth, or some early prognostic of his future greatness. Justly as these superstitions are derided, it is probable that where the tales of these early prognostics had reached the ears of their imputed object, they have had, not unfrequently, some effect in giving a direction to his views, and a stimulus to his exertions. It is a tolerated opinion, that prophecies have preceded and probably aided to produce the conquest of kingdoms. Such are very gravely related by historians, both of Mexico before the invasion of Cortez, and of Egypt before the French invasion. Whether these observations were verified or not in the instance of Greene, it is very certain, that from the time of his birth a vague expectation prevailed, not only in his family, but in his neighborhood, that he was one day to become an eminent personage. It is even asserted, that the church to which he belonged, looked forward to his becoming the great champion of their faith; but his family, or at least some of them, gave another direction to their ambitious hopes, and maintained that he was to become a military leader. In so many ways did this tradition reach the ears of the writer of these pages, that he could not forbear inquiring into the particulars from men of the greatest gravity and soundest understanding. And the tale will serve to illustrate the origin of many other similar prophecies.

To the humiliation of human pretensions, it is well known that judicial astrology once reigned over the world, even under the sanction of the rulers of nations. And the folios which still exist to elucidate its principles, attest that the world was in earnest in their belief in its reality as a science. A large proportion of the East still persist in this melancholy proof, that man may be made to believe any thing.

It is not then to be wondered at, if in the year 1742, in the vicinity of two States in which prosecutions for witchcraft had been once pursued with zeal and vigour, a remnant of judicial astrology should be found in a remote corner of the State of Rhode-Island.

Among man midwives of that day, a Dr. Spencer stood foremost in eminence. But, whatever skill or success the Doctor may have exhibited in an obstetrical case, he would hardly have been thought to have earned his fee, had he not *cast a nativity*, or uttered some grave prognostic relative to the new accession to the family. Yet, it is probable, that in the present instance the Doctor, observing the correct form, healthy aspect, vigorous limbs and sonorous pipes of little Greene, meant no more than to foretell his future excellence in bodily strength—when he predicted "that he would one day become a mighty man in Israel." But the omen was greedily caught at by servants and nurses until it became a favorite gossiping tale. Certain it is that the prediction got abroad: so that, when he afterwards attained to eminence, there were many of the elderly people who would gravely declare, "It was what we always knew would happen."

But much more satisfactory prognostics appeared a few years afterwards. His agility, bodily strength, quickness of apprehension, emulation and resolution, were always above his years. It is a well attested fact, that at the age of seventeen, he exhibited proofs of bodily strength, which we cannot venture to relate. And in wrestling, running, skating, and other athletic and rural amusements, he was never satisfied as long as there was any one who excelled him.

These were the early objects of his emulation. No others had yet been presented to his mind; and even when mischief was the proposed pursuit of his companions, as is too often the case with such minds, his genius impelled him to take the lead. Children are generally very sagacious discoverers and candid acknowledgers of each others talents; and the deference paid to his genius and prowess, among the companions even of his earliest years, was a subject of general remark. Even his stern father was observed to yield to his opinions and wishes an attention which no other of the family could ever command.

Such is the ascendancy of mind; and fortune it is for society, when a judicious direction is given to the early efforts of aspiring genius. In the present instance, the sole points of excellence presented to the view of our hero, were, to become a neat ploughman or skilful mechanic; employments safe, useful, and reputable in themselves; but, to which a mind like his could only be confined by keeping from his view those which are calculated to afford more intellectual enjoyment, and a wider range to genius and ambition.

Until his fourteenth year, he had been brought up almost in a state of ignorance. In the long and severe winters of that climate, when the waters are bound in ice, and the labours of the field and of the fur-

nace suspended, an erratic teacher had been employed to instruct the boys to read. But as yet he knew not that the bounds of human knowledge had ever reached beyond the spelling book and the bible. Contented in his ignorance, he enjoyed all that eminence which promptness in school, and activity and enterprise out of it, could impart, and never sent forth or ever felt a wish after other objects.

An accidental acquaintance formed about this time was destined to open his eyes to his own ignorance. A lad of the name of Giles happened to be on a visit at East Greenwich during the vacation of the university of Rhode Island, in which he was a student. With him, in one of his winter rambles, Greene formed an acquaintance, and to him he was indebted for the information that there were other things to be learned in the world besides reading and writing.

From this time his tranquillity fled, and a few odd volumes of the most ordinary books, picked up on the shelves of his few acquaintances, so irritated his appetite for reading, that he was literally never without a book in his hand, whilst he could obtain one, except when engaged in the most laborious occupations; and when his little stock was exhausted, and he could borrow no more, there was no toil or privation that he would not submit to in order to procure the means of acquiring them by purchase. Neither the mill nor the plough presented any facilities for making a penny on his own account; but by the rapid acquirement of the trade of a smith, which his father then carried on at the mills in several branches, he was soon enabled to attain his wished for object. It was but little, very little, that he could thus acquire, and only in intervals of respite from his father's business; but it was all devoted to the purchase of books. No childish toy, nor article of decoration, no idle amusement ever withdrew a penny of his earnings from the object that wholly engrossed him.

But all he could thus acquire was soon devoured. A shelf in one corner of the shop received his treasure as soon as it was brought home, and neither diversion nor sleep could withdraw him from it. It was read and re-read whenever his care could be withdrawn from the massy anvil, until every page became familiar to him.

There are no means of existing by which it is any longer possible to trace the course of his reading; nor can it be at all material to pursue it, since his resources were so scanty, that with the ravenous appetite that impelled him, it cannot be expected that he was fastidious in the choice of books. Nothing ever came amiss; while ever books could be commanded they were read. And his whole thoughts were then devoted to the means of acquiring more. His father's business alone could withhold him from his darling occupation; for, whether from a sense of duty, early habit, or strict discipline, that alone he would not neglect. Yet, when it came to his course to attend the mill, he uniformly seated himself beside the hopper with his book in his hand; nor were his eyes always withdrawn from it, until long after the ebbing grain had vanished from between the mill stones. His usual seat is still shewn, and the sight of it is well calculated to call forth from the beholder, this most useful of all inquiries, "How have I appropriated my time?"

It will no doubt be to many, a subject of amazement, that such a disposition should not have been encouraged by a parent. But it must be recollected, that to his only parent all this appeared but little less than idleness, or perhaps worse than idleness, a dangerous appropriation of time. Reared, himself, in a very retired part of the country, his intercourse had been almost exclusively with a sect who habitually and conscientiously dreaded whatever could withdraw the mind from religious contemplation, or create a rivalry in the heart between this world and the next. By the sole advantage of a strong mind, he had reared himself from indigence to independence, and from obscurity to a kind of distinction, which in his view was preferable to all others, that of "the chief seat in the synagogue." It is not then to be wondered at, if, never having himself tasted the delights of mental improvement, he could not form a correct idea of its fascinating influence; or, if, from his long habit of preaching to others the infinite superiority of divine, when compared with human knowledge, it was with apprehension, rather than pleasure, he contemplated this fondness of his son for miscellaneous reading. Yet he did not check him; his assiduous discharge of his full share of the duties of the mill, the forge and plantation, left the father no grounds to charge him with idleness or neglect of duty; and by a mutual understanding, working and reading went on together without jostling against each other. Nay, at the expiration of a year or two the beseeching looks, some times entreaties, but more than all, dutiful behaviour and industrious habits of a son in whom he could not conceal his pride, induced him to look out for a master for the approaching winter, who possessed acquirements much superior to those of the teachers previously employed.

Fortunately his choice fell upon a Mr. Maxwell, the father of several respecta-

ble men of that name now living, and to him Greene was indebted for the little Latin he ever acquired. But a study which brought into exercise nothing but memory was not to his taste; and after three months diligent application, the Latin books were laid aside and never afterwards resumed. New objects had opened on his mind, the nature and uses of the exact sciences had been explained to him by Mr. Maxwell, and the anvil rung until he had made himself master of an Euclid.

This was a store for a long feast; and although the master was of course dismissed for the summer, yet Euclid was not dismissed with him. With surprising facility and rapidity, he made himself master of geometry and its application to surveying and navigation. The pursuit of truth, unclouded by a doubt, and conducting him to usefulness, and perhaps, eminence, had charms for our hero, which threw altogether in the shade, the mere amusement of books.

In the school of Euclid it was that he acquired those clear distinct conceptions, which, it will be seen, distinguished his pen. Nature had given him the weapons, but geometry taught him to use them with skill and effect. And the exercise to which his mind was now subjected, prepared it to master with facility, several other studies, to which his attention was soon after directed.

It was not until his 16th or 17th year, that he possessed the advantage of an acquaintance with one, competent to direct his studies or inform his judgment in the selection of books. His good fortune about this time introduced him to two men, who afterwards acquired some eminence in the literary world. These were President Stiles, of Yale College, and Lindley Murray, well known as the author of Murray's Grammar, and several other popular works.

Stiles was, at this time, established minister to one of the churches in Newport. There was a shaloupe attached to the Potowome Mills, in which the anchors were transported to Newport for sale. In this boat Greene had worked his passage to Newport, to lay out his earnings in the purchase of a book. It happened, that Stiles was in the bookstore when Greene entered, and informed the bookseller, he wished to purchase a book. "What book?" asked the merchant. The long pause that ensued, caused Stiles to turn about, and discover a Quaker boy, in the plainest costume of his sect, with a hat and coat, bearing unequivocal marks of the mill and the forge, but a fine florid ingenuous countenance, suffused with the deepest blush. His ignorance and inability to choose, with a consciousness of his very limited capacity to gratify a choice, rushed so forcibly upon his recollection when the question "What book?" was proposed to him, that his embarrassment was extreme. Stiles saw it, and benevolently resolved to relieve him. He knew human nature, and gradually insinuated himself into the confidence of the abashed boy, until he drew from him sufficient information to direct his choice.— This was the commencement of a mutual confidence and esteem, which lasted thro' life. Greene was invited to his house, and ever after venerated him as a father. Stiles saw and encouraged his avidity for knowledge, and gave a direction to his taste and application, which relieved him from all future embarrassment on similar occasions. These are the services, which make the most indelible impressions on an ingenuous heart. Unexpected and gratuitous, they are hailed as boons from Heaven. And depraved as the human heart may be, it is seldom that man forgets his early benefactor. The young, with a proper degree of modesty and merit, are ever grateful for the countenance and support of the grave and aged. The transit from the privacy of a parent's roof, to the bustle and vicissitude of actual life, is attended by a degree of apprehension and anxiety, that solicits the patronage of the veterans of society. And little, very little encouragement is often of infinite importance in facilitating the entrance of modest merit into life. The young feel that their claim is a moderate and just one; to refuse it, disgusts and dispirits them; whilst their warm and ingenuous feelings magnify the obligation, where it is cordially and spontaneously bestowed. In acknowledging obligations conferred at this period, men refer to it as the time "when they had no friend."

It was a real acquisition to Greene to have made a friend of Dr. Stiles. He was no longer at a loss where to look for information, or to whom to submit his early crude conceptions. And a visit to Newport became now a very interesting object. The means he made use of for this purpose, were perfectly in character. He soon made himself a skilful boatman, and got preferred to the captaincy of the shaloupe. This gave him frequent opportunities of conversing with his friend, and of poring over the books that crowded the shelves of the bookseller. Yet it was never unattended with a sigh, drawn from the inquiry, "Shall I ever command all these?"

But labour had hitherto supplied him with the scanty reading he had enjoyed; labour might acquire wealth, and wealth would command the treasure before him.

These reflections stimulated his exertions, and rendered him indefatigably laborious. It is a fact, that he has been known to grind off the calosity from his hands at the grindstone, to render them more pliant, when small work was to be done; and such were his efforts at the heavy work of the forge, as to produce the lameness which attended him through life.— The position of the right foot of the anchor-smith at the forge, is precisely that in which his right foot became permanently fixed, from no other cause than his persevering efforts at this laborious business. Yet, at this very time, he was studying Watts' Logic, Locke on the Human Understanding, and Ferguson on Civil Society; and was even attentive to, what is most shamefully neglected in most of our learned institutions, writing a good hand, and acquiring a critical knowledge of Arithmetic and Orthography. The completion of a load of anchors (to take to Newport, was always to Greene a joyful event, and it was on one of these visits, that he casually met with Lindley Murray.

Murray was of a respectable Quaker family in the city of New-York. His father was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, and becoming sensible of the disadvantages their sect laboured under from want of members possessing education, he had liberally afforded his son every opportunity of instruction. Young Murray was now on an excursion to the eastward, on a visiting tour to the settlement of Friends, in that quarter of the country. Greene seized with avidity the opportunity of taking him with him to his father's; and Murray was so delighted to find a congenial soul in the young miller, that an intimacy ensued, and a mutual esteem was created that never subsided.

From Murray's funds of knowledge it may well be supposed, that Greene did not fail to draw largely. The following winter, he prevailed on his father to permit him to visit Murray in New-York; and on that occasion, gave another specimen of that decisive turn of mind, which, in after life, became so conspicuous. It is well known how much the small-pox was dreaded at that time. Injudicious treatment had made it a most formidable disease; and passing through it, was considered a crisis in human life.— Greene saw the importance of passing that crisis; he felt that he was not destined to spend his life in the obscurity of Potowome, and as the small-pox was then in New-York, he availed himself of that opportunity to be inoculated for it.— The blemish in one eye was the result of contracting that disease.

Thus passed the days of our hero until he reached his twentieth year. It must not be supposed, notwithstanding his extraordinary application, that he partook not in common with the companions of his youth, of the sports and amusements adapted to his time of life. Before he became absorbed in study, his eminence in the sports and exercises of the country proved that he partook of them largely. And nothing of moroseness, or indifference to join in, or contribute to the enjoyment of others, followed upon the change given to the direction of his thoughts. He was of a cheerful turn of mind, and even the sprightly dance would have been a favorite amusement with him, but for the utter abhorrence entertained by his stern father for this carnal indulgence. Yet, as it led to female society, of which he was passionately fond, his sense of duty, and dread of an athletic arm, were not altogether sufficient to resist the influence of this allurements. A descent from the eves of the house was found practicable, and scandal says, that Nathanael Greene could be gay among the gayest.— When the long winter evening gathered the village youth around the social hearth, and when the sprightly viola was expected to enliven the social group, he would seldom fail to risk his neck to partake of the amusement. He was too much the favorite among the village lasses, not to receive regular and authentic intelligence on these subjects.— Yet the vigilance of the argus who watched over his morals, and who fondly looked forward to him as a successor on the floor of the meeting-house, could not always sleep. Actual detection soon followed suspicions, and nothing but the timely and military interposition of a rearguard, promptly thrust up his clothes under cover of night, could have protected his back from the pain of severe castigation, inflicted by an angry father.

The mind of man, even in his earliest years, revolts at unnatural and unnecessary privation. Children well know when they are justly treated; and in pursuit of the indulgences adapted to their years, exhibit a perseverance and ingenuity under opposition, which are too apt to lead to habits of obstinacy, disobedience, and deception.

In time, the Spartan discipline of the father prevailed; and aided by his own strong moral sense, and the resources for amusement which he found in books, his habits became perfectly subdued and regular.— Nay, very early in life, in imitation of the frugal habits of Laocedemon, he adopted the most abstemious regimen: a single cup of tea or coffee was his breakfast, and for the rest of the day one solid meal sufficed. This was altogether spontaneous.

Nor was he less a disciplinarian than his father. By common consent, notwithstanding he had senior brothers, he was generally viewed as second in command. And when the old gentleman was absent, which he sometimes was, on a circular visit to the Quaker establishments, the younger boys found it no time of respite from labor. It was a common cause, and every associate must do