



THE HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS continued with Saint John the Evangelist's Day two days following Christmas. Each year on this day, the Freemasons held a fabulous dinner and paraded down the streets of Fredericksburg. William accompanied Richard Henry Lee and his wife, Anne, to the festivities, as Richard was quite involved in Fredericksburg lodge. Upon their arrival, Mr. Lee introduced William to another of the lodge's important members, Mr. George Washington.

Mr. Washington cut an imposing figure, towering over William. His once red hair was streaked with silver and was tied back to reveal a square-jawed face. The man's frame, over six feet in height, was well muscled—easily making him the most impressive celebrant in the hall. Although he was a well-known and respected citizen, he was a quiet man, almost shy. Richard Henry engaged his fellow planter and legislator in conversation.

"I'd like to present Master William Robinson newly arrived from London. He's a resident of Stratford and is quite the quick study. This youth is becoming indispensable to my brother."

"I'm most honored to make your acquaintance, Sir, at such a fine holiday celebration." William stammered and gawked at the giant who towered over a foot above his head.

"Indeed, it is a fine celebration, and it is fine to have such an industrious young man in the colony. Welcome to Virginia, William." Mr. Washington placed his hand on the boy's shoulder as he greeted him.

Washington and Lee began to discuss the situation in the Massachusetts colony, and William tuned out the now familiar dialogue. His eyes scanned the lodge and its merry throng. A familiar young man approached and exuberantly joined in the debate.

"Mr. Washington, Cousin, William, it's a pleasure to see such a cunning liaison!" The young man showed none of William's reticence.

"It is always a delight to see you also, Harry. Wonderful to have you home from your studies. Have you kept your hand with the horses?"

“As always, Mr. Washington. I am training a goodly number at Leesylvania; you must stop by in short order. That invitation is open to you as well, William. You must stop by at your leisure. Once planting begins at Stratford, you will forget the meaning of the word ‘leisure’”, Harry chuckled at his witticism.

“You would suppose that this lad was born on a horse. I can recall him riding as a mite of three! What does your future hold, will you be continuing your education abroad?” Mr. Washington asked fondly.

“I am accepted at Middle Temple, but I shan’t leave the colonies with war on the horizon. I shall concentrate my efforts with the horses and train the animals for service in the inevitable battle ahead.” Harry was nothing if not directed.

“Let us hope it will not come to that. I should hate to fight against my old friends and fellow officers. Nonetheless, I fear that you may be prudent in your preparations, lad. Perhaps Mr. Patrick Henry has a word on the subject.” Mr. Washington and the others greeted their fellow legislator as he approached the group.

“I should think that I would have a word on most any subject, Mr. Washington, I’ve never been at a loss for words! If you speak of the trouble in our sister colony, I have heard news from Mr. Samuel Adams just this day. There is most serious business regarding a revolt against the tea tax. Several of the group calling itself the Sons of Liberty dumped three hundred and forty-two crates of tea into the Boston Harbor.” Mr. Henry continued his revelation in hushed tones. “Three East India Company ships had been detained for several weeks. The citizens would not allow the ships to unload the taxed cargo, and Royal Governor Thomas Hutchinson would not allow the ships to return to England until the duty on the tea had been paid. Some of the men dressed as Indians, but I am rather certain that their veiled attempt at disguise was unsuccessful.”

William listened to the grave tidings brought by the well-respected lawyer. He was surprised at the simple dress and easy country manner portrayed by the man. Although he was tall, his slouched, relaxed posture gave him the appearance of a more average height. As Mr. Henry fin-

ished his report, he took notice of the boy on the outskirts of the assemblage.

“I must inquire as to the identity of that young man, our tales must not be carried from this company. The work of the Committee of Correspondence must be kept in the strictest of confidence or lives could be lost,” his tone conveyed the extreme gravity of the situation.

“Forgive me, Mr. Henry, I’ve been amiss in my etiquette,” Richard Henry spoke up. “May I introduce you to Master William Robinson newly arrived from London. He is living at Stratford Hall and has become indispensable to my brother these past few months. You need not fear that William will report our activities to any authority.”

“It is a pleasure to meet you, young man. I’m certain that you realize the gravity of this situation, I apologize if I have been indelicate.”

“That is quite all right, Mr. Henry, I’ve been made fully aware of the situation in Boston. I am honored to make your acquaintance.” William continued to stare at the fiery rebel, transfixed by his intense blue eyes.

Harry chuckled, “I can see why you might fear the lad, we are involved in trying times. But if you will pleasure us with a song on your fiddle, Mr. Henry, I am quite certain that I can find a young lady to distract this infiltrator from any thought of doing evil!”

“Harry, I just so happen to have my fiddle at hand, but a song will have to wait until after our meal. It appears that the hostess wishes us to be seated. We shall have to chat at length about your plans, William; the Virginia colony shall require young men of your caliber in the months ahead.”

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