

THE AMERICANISM OF WASHINGTON

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The Americanism of Washington by Henry van Dyke

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HENRY VAN DYKE

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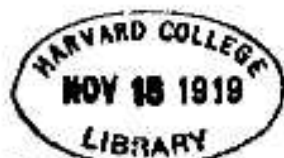
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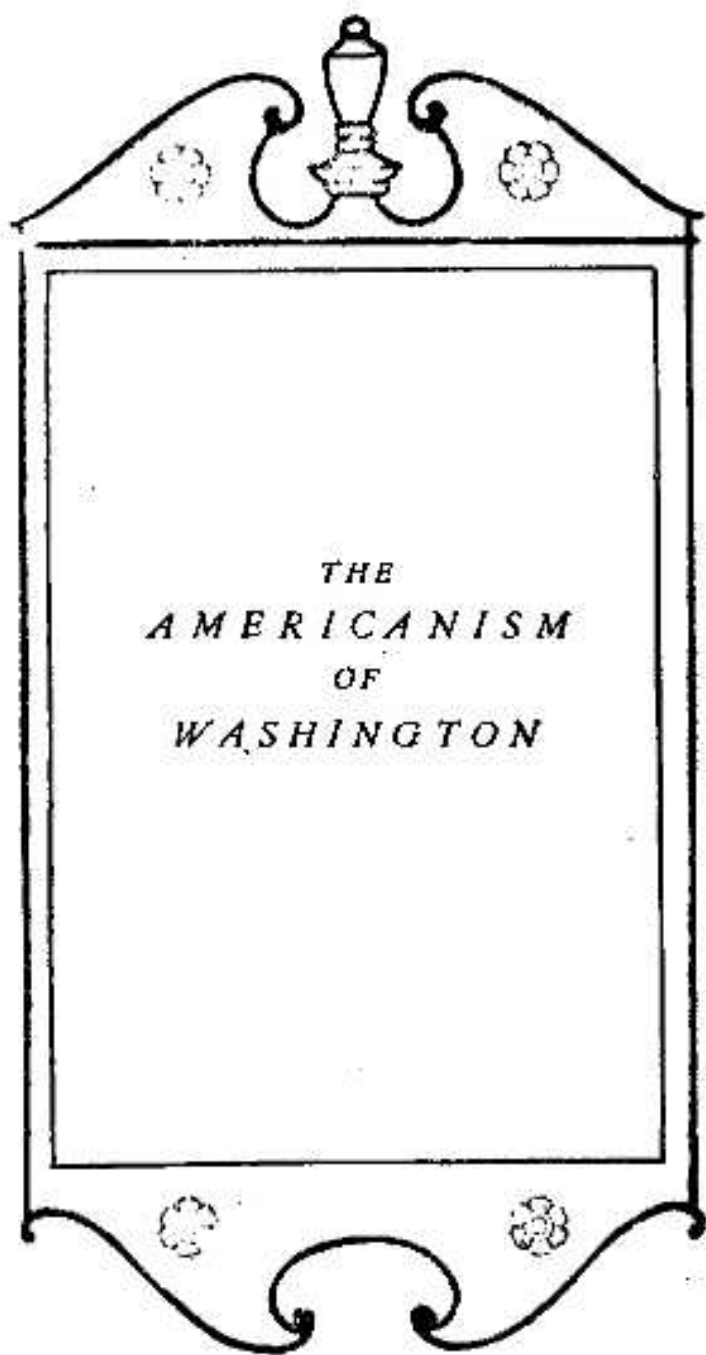


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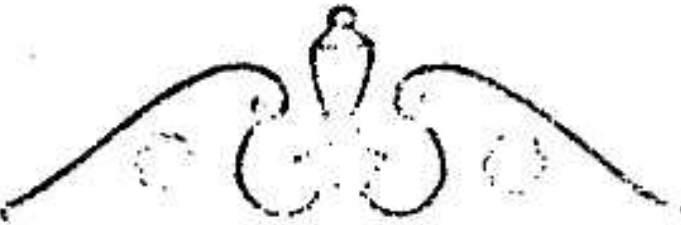
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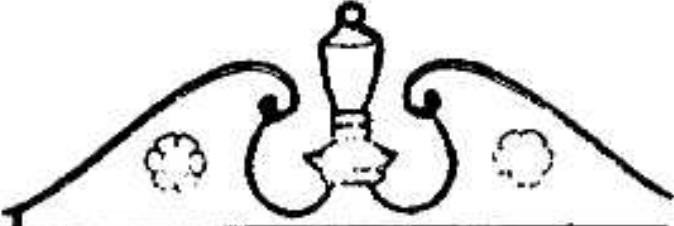


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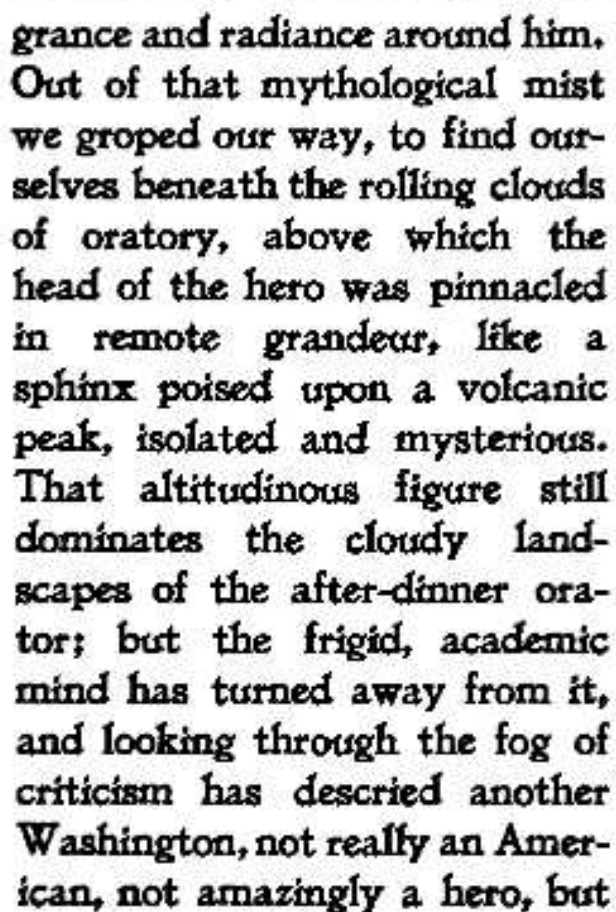


The Americanism of Washington

HARD is the task of the man who at this late day attempts to say anything new about Washington. But perhaps it may be possible to un-say some of the things which have been said, and which, though they were at one time new, have never at any time been strictly true.



The character of Washington, emerging splendid from the dust and tumult of those great conflicts in which he played the leading part, has passed successively into three media of obscurity, from each of which his figure, like the sun shining through vapors, has received some disguise of shape and color. First came the mist of mythology, in which we discerned the new St. George, serene, impeccable, moving through an orchard of ever-blooming cherry-trees, gracefully vanquishing dragons with a touch, and shedding fra-



grance and radiance around him. Out of that mythological mist we groped our way, to find ourselves beneath the rolling clouds of oratory, above which the head of the hero was pinnacled in remote grandeur, like a sphinx poised upon a volcanic peak, isolated and mysterious. That altitudinous figure still dominates the cloudy landscapes of the after-dinner orator; but the frigid, academic mind has turned away from it, and looking through the fog of criticism has descried another Washington, not really an American, not amazingly a hero, but