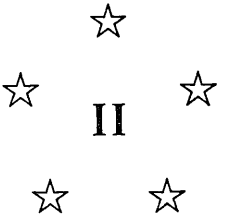

II

End of an Era

"In this life of Uniontown, I saw what you might call the end of an era because it was a very simple life and a very charming life and it had a long history behind it."

WHAT sort of boy was he? What promise did he show? These are questions no biographer can answer with any assurance. The records are always scant and the temptation all but irresistible to find the lineaments of greatness already prefigured in the child. For Marshall, the records—that is, contemporary testimony—are almost wholly missing. Almost all that can be reported of the boy is what the man at the age of seventy-six recalled and chose to reveal.

This then is a chapter of memories.

He remembered summer, a whole boyhood of summers with only an occasional winter to accommodate Christmas, some sliding down snowy hills, and of course school when its impress was too painful to be forgotten. It seemed to him that it was in summer that he first saw the world. He was very small. Following behind Stuart, who was six years older, he ran one day into the stable east of the house where for a few years his father kept a horse and cow. Stuart clambered up a ladder into the haymow. George followed, but slowly and frightened, until he came abreast of an

opening in the wall and looked out through the rungs of the ladder. For the first time he was tall enough to look down on his world and see it whole. He saw the winding stream and at some distance some brightly colored ducks, a dog along the bank and some chickens strutting about. That was all, but seventy years later he recalled the scene as revelation. "It seemed a whole world exposed in an instant to my eye." [1]

And the stream that bounded and washed it was the center of the boy's interest, "the jewel of the production" he called it later. That summer or one near it, he and his chum Andy excavated a canal along the creek, some two inches wide, and built a fleet of naval vessels with matchstick masts which they called "the Great White Fleet," in honor of that other fleet with which America in the 1880s was beginning its rise to first rank among naval powers. The Coal Lick Run navy drew "most of the other boys of the town" to watch and play.

Another later exploit on the stream drew mostly the girls. It was some time later, for Mr. Marshall had got rid of the horse and cow; the stable was torn down and the lumber from it neatly stacked. George and Andy tried to use some of it to make a raft but the timbers were heavy, their carpentry clumsy. (Marshall, though he would never confess himself mechanically helpless, had no facility with his hands.) A friend came to their rescue. The brother of the man who owned the town's toy store built a flat-bottomed boat for them that would float, and the boys pressed it at once into service as a ferry. Since the stream was hardly wider than the boat, the ferry was scarcely more than a steppingstone, but it was more or less mobile (Andy as engineer poled it), and it was fitted out with imagination. George was its conductor, partly because he had recently received a toy typewriter for Christmas and printed up some tickets and partly because he evidently liked the position of authority. With his cap turned backward, he solemnly sold the tickets for pennies and pins and punched them for fares with his mother's Five Hundred punch. The passengers were mostly girls from school who traveled back and forth as long as pennies and pins lasted. Then one day the girls rebelled. They boarded the ferry but refused to surrender their tickets.

"I was terribly humiliated," the General recalled, "and what made it worse, my chum Andy began laughing at me. And there I was—the girls in the flatboat all jeering at me and my engineer and boon companion laughing at me and I was stuck. Just then my eye fastened on a cork in the floor of the boat which was utilized in draining it. With the inspiration of the moment, I pulled the cork and under the pressure of the weight of the passengers, a stream of water shot up in the air. All the girls screamed and I sank the boat in the middle of the stream. They all had to wade ashore. I never forgot that because I had to do something and I had to think quickly. What I did set me up again as the temporary master of the situation."

He always hated to be laughed at. It was one of the things that made school hard for him. A poor student for many years, he shrank from recitations in which his inadequacies were publicly exposed. He had a bad start. When he was a baby, his mother's aunt, Eliza Stuart, then in her eighties, came to live with the Marshalls. A woman of keen intelligence and insatiable hunger for learning, who could read the New Testament in French and the Old Testament in Hebrew, Eliza Stuart began educating George when he was five. With more zeal than understanding, she kept him by her chair repeating his lessons on Saturday mornings when outside he could see his friends at play. "She so soured me on study and teaching that I liked never to have recovered from it."

From Eliza Stuart's tutelage, he passed at six to Miss Alcinda Thompson's school on Church Street—one of those genteel private schools by which gentlewomen in the nineteenth century strove for a respectable livelihood and a sense of being useful. Having learned from his great aunt to hate studying, George was pleased to find at Miss Thompson's that it was apparently unnecessary. So he drifted until at nine or ten he was transferred to public school and found to his chagrin so many better prepared than he. He had, he recalled, "a very painful time," not only because in some things (mathematics in particular) he found himself comparatively ignorant, but because he was ashamed to admit that ignorance in front of those who could feel superior and might laugh.

He remembered being particularly awkward at the age he went first to public school. He was rather tall and slender, snub-nosed, with a mop of sandy hair parted, as the fashion was, squarely in the middle.[2] He remembered having big feet, though in fact his feet were not large. He was quiet, shy, and perhaps unusually serious. He remembered that people "made fun of me a great deal." Though he knew everybody and ran happily with the gang, he was apparently even then learning the reserve for which he was afterward noted.

Throughout his boyhood, Andy Thompson, handsome, self-possessed, imaginative, remained his fast and special friend. But there were others, who gathered for games or for that endless talking and hanging around which is part of every boy's growing up. They had a number of clubs. One was Kramer's store just up the street near the White Swan Inn, where there was the usual "open barrel of oyster crackers and tight barrel of dill pickles." They were "allowed to loaf in there, I guess to Mr. Kramer's irritation, though he suppressed it. His clerk was very nice to us." In the course of loafing they might spend a penny, no more. The local men's club was the barbershop, run by a Negro man "who was quite a friend of mine." On the whole they were not welcome there where the men came in regularly to be shaved in the era before safety razors. Yet George lingered on occasion, fascinated by the row of shaving mugs painted "in very fanciful letters, so you could see the names of the patrons." The third and perhaps favorite hangout was Gadd's blacksmith shop. "If one of us would pull the bellows, the rest of us could sit there and talk and listen to the others talk."

They were pretty much a cross-section of Uniontown, these companions of Marshall's boyhood: Andy Thompson and his brother John; Jim Conrad, whose father worked at the railroad ticket office; Billy Ewing, who owned a dogcart and was the son of a judge; Herbert Bowman, later to become a noted athlete at Yale; Bill Wood, whose father ran the harness shop; J. T. ("Jap") Shepler and Alex Mead, cousins of the Thompsons; Ed McCullough, O'Neil Kennedy, and Ed Hustead. Among the girls, not club members, of course, but schoolmates and occasional after-school companions, were the daughters of Marshall's partner,

Adele and Florence Bliss; Helen Houston, a close neighbor; Lida Nichols, another cousin of the Thompsons, who later became the Princess of Thurn and Taxis; Mary Kate O'Bryon, who, though younger than the others, was distinguished by having a father who ran a locomotive; and the Lindsays, Catherine and Nannie, daughters of a judge. Catherine was, in later recollection, "the pretty girl I was devoted to though she didn't pay any attention to me." Because of her he even tried to learn to spell in order to stand beside her where she normally stood, at the head of the spelling-bee line. One day he got there briefly, then missed a word and went disconsolately to the bottom. Love had its limits. He recalled that he "never tried again." Of his many young acquaintances the General would speak with special warmth of Bill Wood, a boy of a "philosophic frame of mind" who, when he grew up, stayed on in Uniontown and opened a shop where he made and sold stogies.

George Marshall's need for that sort of companionship and his ability to respond to it were to lead him in his early teens into a close and adult friendship with the young pastor of the Episcopal church which the Marshall family attended,[3] John R. Wightman. Wightman is a hazy figure in the records, and the General, while recalling him as an important influence, said little about him. Apparently the young minister was not readily accepted by the conservative parish of St. Peter's Church and "had a very difficult time." He was lonely because all the men in town worked all day and there was no men's club and little entertaining at night. "So, particularly during the vacations, Mr. Wightman and I used to take long walks, and he seemed glad of the association with me because I was literally the only person that he had to go around with at that hour of the day. I came to know him intimately and was very much impressed by him." But just how and why, the General never made clear. One can only speculate that the boy found in the minister one of the rare adults to whom he could freely talk and that he was perhaps enabled in this way to reach out intellectually along paths not opened by his father or by his schoolteachers.

One subject he liked in school—and liked still better out of school—was history. In reporting that he was consistently a poor

student, Marshall always added, "except in something like history. If it was history, that was all right; I could star in history."

History in Uniontown lay all around him—the liveliest sort to stir a boy's imagination. He was deeply conscious of living directly on the National Road over which the commerce and the great men of the new West had passed. Lafayette, whose wooden statue might still be seen in the courthouse,[4] and Andrew Jackson, had come this way. So, according to tradition, had Henry Clay, whose carriage was reported once to have hit a pile of limestone and spilled him in Uniontown, causing him to remark that the "clay of Kentucky mixes with the limestone of Pennsylvania." Two or three houses from Andy's was the White Swan, built in 1805, twelve years before the National Road was completed. The inn flourished as a stopping place for travelers who made the long journey over the mountains between Cumberland and Brownsville on the Monongahela River.[5]

More exciting were the sites and reminders of war. For much of the way the Pike follows roughly the course of Braddock's trail—the path through the wilderness that General Braddock hacked out and fought for in an overland expedition to attack Fort Duquesne, where Pittsburgh now stands. Just east of Chestnut Ridge is General Braddock's grave. He died there of wounds in July 1755, while retreating after his defeat at the hands of the French and their Indian allies. In Marshall's day the grave was on a knoll by the road in a grove of trees surrounded by a white board fence. On an occasional picnic here (nine miles from Uniontown) young Marshall and his friends would sit on this fence in the moonlight and talk to their girls.

East of Braddock's grave, scarcely a mile away (Marshall got there on hunting or fishing trips with his father), is Fort Necessity, where Colonel George Washington on July 14, 1754, fought the first real battle of the French and Indian War. George Marshall heard the story of the battle in detail from his father, saw again the Indians fighting from behind trees ringing the bowl of the meadow, and traced the remains of the earth entrenchments from which Washington's men had fought.[6]

Marshall senior evidently took pleasure in telling his son the tales of local history and also, during the evenings, in read-

ing aloud, particularly from historical romances. The General recalled that his father read very well "and we all liked to listen." To the family assembled several nights a week, he read *Sant' Ilario* and *Don Orsino* by F. Marion Crawford, many of the books of James Fenimore Cooper, Conan Doyle's *The Refugees,* Eugène Sue's *The Wandering Jew,* Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico.* In old age the General remembered some of the tales, particularly those that concerned Indians, so vividly he could hardly forbear to retell them and recapture the excitement of those evenings long ago.

Some part of the boy's pleasure certainly was a feeling of closeness to his father—a feeling as rare as it evidently was precious. His father found it difficult to unbend except on occasions which were obviously special and so permitted a comradeship clearly exceptional and not to be traded on. Such occasions were hunting trips into the mountains to shoot grouse. Marshall, who owned an especially fine shotgun, was an excellent shot and no doubt enjoyed teaching his son and showing off a bit himself. It was on these trips that young Marshall became familiar with sections of Braddock's trail, because these were grass-covered clearings in the woods where the grouse liked to come to earth. In such casual ways did history make contact with the excitement of the moment and become fixed in memory as something personal.

There were also fishing trips along the Youghiogheny River, where they caught salmon pike. One day young George went along with his father and two of his father's friends. It was hard going for the boy, clambering over the large rocks lining the banks of the river. All of the morning passed without a strike. The men then wanted to go on two or three miles upstream to a place of reputation among fishermen called "Rattlesnake Hole." But the boy could not have made the climb and Marshall senior "very generously and wistfully" said he would stay behind.

"We went up to a rock which had halved off, leaving a flat surface on one side about a foot above the water." Here was a pool in which they decided to try their luck. Young George fished with one of his father's poles. He had no reel because his father thought he was too small to manage one. "When he baited my

hook with minnows, I threw it in and he started to bait his own. I got a strike, the first strike of the day for any of us. When I began to pull the fish in, I had two bass, one on each hook. My father had to help me land them and lift them out of the water. Then he had to get them off the hook and rebait it." Scarcely had the boy dropped the hooks into the pool again than he had another bite. Between them that afternoon father and son pulled in thirty bass, and with creels filled and a string of fish besides they returned to the mountain cabin in which they were staying, to bathe and eat. When, after dark, the other two fishermen came in empty-handed, the Marshalls side by side, father and son, displayed their catch and were men together, full of a good warm pride.

These were moments to be cherished. For the most part, Mr. Marshall had his own sense of rather prickly importance. He had by this time acquired a little paunch, though he carried it trimly. He wore the pince-nez then in vogue and a full mustache. Sensitive to criticism and quick to anger, he did not enjoy jokes on himself. Yet he was well liked in town, especially by the newer families, "because he was convivial and liked people and they liked him." Perhaps he was inclined to be stiffer within the family because families are notoriously less considerate of the slight ego-stuffing that he seemed to feel was necessary to keep him properly poised. Or perhaps it was only that in an age when father was still taken seriously as the head of the household he took seriously his obligations to command.

The boy often felt that his father did not like him and that Stuart was favored. At least the elder Marshall had a lively concern for his younger son's advancement. The General remembered only one incident connecting his father with early schooling, but it was revealing. When young Marshall transferred from Miss Thompson's to public school he was taken by his father to an interview with Professor Lee Smith, head of the public schools.[7] Professor Smith asked a number of "simple questions" to which the boy could give no answers. His own pain over his inadequacy was keen enough and lasted long in memory. In recounting it, the General significantly added that his father "suffered very severely."

Father and son were alike in the tenderness of their egos, but

the goals of their ambition were significantly different. The father seems always to have craved the recognition of the local society in which he found himself. The son sought personally to excel and to be without visible flaw in whatever he tried to do. When frustrated, as in his schoolwork, the boy wished above all to avoid the appearance of failure even if he could do so only by seeming not to try. His fears made him diffident, yet he seems to have been happiest when he could conquer them and command. While the father found sustenance in being a Marshall, the boy wanted to strike out on his own.

In some of his more enterprising extracurricular activities his father strongly encouraged him. He and Andy got a notion one summer, when they were both very small, of going into business. They decided to grow plants and, supposing that the first necessity was a "green" house, they borrowed remnants of green paint from their friend Frank Llewellyn, who ran the carriage shop. Thinning it with turpentine, they painted as much as they could of the shed in the back yard. Plants were more difficult to come by, so they began with weeds potted in tin cans. In soil dug out of the old stable, the weeds flourished even more luxuriantly than weeds commonly do, and Mr. Marshall, visiting the greenhouse one day, was impressed. He suggested that they ought to buy some seeds. "He gave me seventy-five cents and Andy's mother gave him the same thing." With their money the boys went to the town greenhouse, whose owner proved a man of generous good humor. "We picked around so long that he asked us what we had in mind. We were looking at the smallest pots he had because we thought we could get more for the money. When he found that we were getting them for our greenhouse and were going to be his competitors in business, he gave us quite a large collection of these small pots"—far more than they could have bought for a dollar fifty.

The enterprise began to flourish. Shortly the boys read in the Peter Henderson seed catalogue of a contest to name a new tomato, the winner to receive fifty dollars. "Well, that was the largest sum I think we had ever heard of at that time. So we sent for the seed and proceeded to grow the plants." In the rich soil that had once been the floor of the stable the plants put forth very

large tomatoes. "My father showed me how to prune the plants." When they were ripe the boys rushed out to sell them to the grocer downtown for a few pennies. "My father was rather contemptuous of us for selling them so cheaply." Presently the groceryman was asking for more for "one of his richest clients. We came back and reported with great glee that our stock was in great demand and particularly by this well-to-do family. Then my father told us, 'Now you set the price,' and suggested it. Well, the grocer blew up because he thought he would get them for almost nothing."

The largest tomato the boys saved to photograph with a Brownie camera, using a silver dollar to show the scale, and sent the picture to Henderson's with a suggested name. Henderson & Co. did not like the name but were so impressed with the tomato, which they said was the largest they had ever seen, that they asked "our parents to write and tell how the tomato had been raised. I told my father and he was intensely interested and wrote to Peter Henderson. He finished by saying, however, that you couldn't tear down a stable every time you wanted to raise a tomato. That was the Ponderosa tomato and the man who proposed 'Ponderosa' was the winner of the contest." [8]

Despite this triumph the greenhouse came to a sudden, undeserved end. Its principal steady customers were the girls who would come down after school to buy "green things," and the young entrepreneurs, eager to please, were out one day in a pony cart in which they roamed the countryside looking for old bones and other salable items when they came upon a patch of forget-me-nots in the third hollow. They spaded up a number of plants, brought them home, and boxed them in strawberry boxes which they cleaned and painted green with a black stripe around each. During a recess period they rushed home, got the boxes, and sold them to the girls.

But, alas, a little later "we were having a May Day picnic with these same girls in this hollow as we called it, where the little waterfall was." And there, of course, were the rest of the forget-me-nots. The girls turned on the florists, saying they had been cheated into buying flowers that were grown free by nature in the fields. It was in vain that they spoke of the labor of digging and carrying, the service of personal delivery, the art of painting

the boxes with a neat black stripe. From then on the girls would not buy and the greenhouse had to close.

George and Andy tried the restaurant business at the old spring house, where in the winter they sold apples and sweet potatoes made attractive by lots of sugar. One day, however, Andy ran out of sugar and sprinkled on sand instead—and again the customers balked. Then there was the bar set up in the cellar for the sale of root beer and corn-silk cigars. Unfortunately the root beer belonged to George's father, who had put it down to age. This was one enterprise he discouraged firmly by confiscating the stock. Yet his son recalled no display of anger. Probably Mr. Marshall continued to be pleased by the boy's show of business enterprise, if not always of business acumen.

George always struggled for his father's approval but was also a little afraid of him. He shared triumphs with his father; the scrapes—and he got into them often enough—he concealed when he could. In this his mother abetted him. It was his recollection that he told her everything. "She never corrected me, because, if I told her, I realized it was wrong and there was no use telling me again it was wrong." She had a special tenderness for her youngest and in various small ways made a world for him in which he stood happily at the center. There were miniature pies for him at baking time, and at Christmas his most important toy was featured under the tree. He remembered during the winters sitting by the fireplace with an iron upside down between his knees, cracking hickory nuts with a hammer "for Mother's very famous hickory nut cakes. . . . I always liked our fires, because we . . . had what we called cannel coal and it made a soft, delightful, homelike flame. . . . Later on when natural gas was piped in, the fireplace lost a great part of its charm."

From manhood looking back he thought probably he was spoiled. He had wanted nearly all the things his brother and sister got, and "too often, I think, I was allowed to have them." Yet he spoke then as a man who had developed an abhorrence of anything that smacked of favoritism toward others or of indulgence toward self. What he remembered as spoiling sounds only like the expression of natural, relaxed affection in a home where affection often was not easily expressed.

Mrs. Marshall was not gregarious like her husband. She enjoyed

the society of a few close friends—the Blisses, the Gilmores—but did not share her husband's love for constant community activity, and of course it was not usual in those times for a wife to do so. She liked to play the piano, which she had learned as a girl in Philadelphia when she had stayed with her aunt in Rittenhouse Square. Her son recalled that she played almost every night.[9] Sometimes there was singing. The family liked to sing, and Stuart played "two or three instruments" besides. Only George lacked a voice. Although he could strum a little on the banjo and guitar, he did not enjoy the singing much, particularly when his mother and father sang together and he "had to sit around on a hassock and listen and keep quiet." But he loved to hear his mother play, semi-classical music that included most of his favorite tunes.

She was a quiet woman, tall and stately. One who remembered her after more than half a century said that her image tended to merge with that of Queen Mary of England.[10] But she was easy with children, and her younger son remembered her patience, her unfailing sympathy, edged with a sense of humor that permitted her to laugh at her son's exploits without wounding him. The truth is that she seems to have rejoiced in him as he was and did not seek out and reprove his faults as his father so often did. He depended on her for that. Already his sense of self and his wish to excel were strong in him. He needed the release which he found in her love and laughter.

There was the episode of banditry, for instance, when George was eight. In the early spring of 1889 a gang of robbers broke into several houses in Uniontown and then fled to the mountains where eventually they were rounded up. Fired by tales of the outlaws, George and Andy armed themselves with air rifles and took to the hills to play highwayman. They would hide beside the road until a farmer's buggy passed, then pretend to hold it up and fire when it had gone by. It happened that on one of these buggies the little isinglass window behind the farmer's head was broken and one of the BB pellets "went through and hit the farmer on the back of the neck." There followed what the General remembered as "one of the most thrilling escapes we ever went through." Since little boys can notoriously run faster or scurry more nimbly than irate farmers, they got away. But afterward they were afraid to go home.

"Finally we turned our coats inside out and set our hats on backwards thinking that we were disguising ourselves and returned home. My mother thought that was the funniest thing she ever saw when we turned up in this 'disguise.' " She laughed at them but she took their fears seriously, shielding them from embarrassing questions during the three subsequent days in which they lived in dread of being captured and would not leave the premises. No other punishment was needed. That was George's last holdup.

It was not his last experiment in lawlessness. Perhaps four or five years later he and Andy became interested in raising fighting chickens. They started with bantams, then got some eggs from Georgia and raised Georgia Reds. Inevitably they reached the point where they wanted to pit their cocks against outside competition. Since cockfighting was illegal, boys would not have been allowed into the clandestine pits, so they persuaded their older friend, George Gadd, the blacksmith's son, to enter their cocks. One day they slipped off to watch them fight. Having left their horse and cart some distance away, they arrived late. Moments later, the gathering was raided by the sheriff. The two boys "squirted out into the forest and got separated and hid out." George, with visions of arrest, jail, and his father's wrath, hid out most of the afternoon before he dared begin to creep "Indian fashion" out of the woods, pausing at every sound. Presently, to his horror, he became aware of someone else prowling furtively through the trees. Becoming an Indian in earnest, "I scouted him and he scouted me." This double-stalking went on for about an hour before he discovered his shadow was Andy. "We were the only people left up there."

Close to one in the morning he reached home and crept upstairs without waking his father. His mother, however, was up and came into his room. He told her the whole story. "Parts of it she thought were very funny, and I remember she laughed until she cried." No word of reprimand came. To mother and son it was equally clear that he "was not going back to any other chicken fight and go through that again."

Although not, in the ordinary sense, spoiled, in some ways George Marshall does appear to have grown up as an only child. His brother Stuart was six years older. There was little contact

between them and still less affection. In later years their estrangement was complete. Marie, four years older, in the period before George went away to school regarded him largely as a pest, and whether by instinct or in retaliation he gave her cause. The memories in which Marie figured were the classic big-sister tales. She discovered him one day playing hookey at Gadd's blacksmith shop and reported him, so that he got a licking. Once at church, when she was home from private school on vacation, he imitated her affected tremolo until she had him sent outside. From an upstairs window on another day she watched and jeered while poor George, on his father's orders, hosed down the street in front of their house. This was a chore imposed on George after the streetcars arrived and Main Street was paved; it was a chore he resented with peculiar intensity, for while he worked the boys and girls going by on their way to school stopped for such rude and giggling comments as they calculated might make him angry. He decided on this particular morning to get even with Marie. Hearing her come out of the house as he finished his work, he whirled and turned the hose on her. He caught her square, but when he looked it was not Marie but his mother. Laura Marshall's understanding and sense of humor proved equal even to this. She recovered her glasses, which had been knocked askew, the General recalled, and was "rather shocked but much amused because she knew the terrible plight I was in." The terrible plight was Mr. Marshall, who, not at all amused, gave the boy the last licking he remembered ever to have had.

Marie escaped that time but suffered on another occasion. She was having a party one summer day for a schoolfriend who had come to visit from Philadelphia, and decreed that her barbarian brother should be kept out of the house for the duration. He wandered over to Andy's place, where some of the fellows had gathered. Being in that sort of mood, they decided to fight bees. The sport consisted in whittling a bat out of a shingle and cutting a few air holes in it. Then you stirred up a bees' nest, and as the bees came out you swung at them with the paddle; the object was simply not to get stung. Among the bee fighters that day was Herbert Bowman. He and George and an angry bee tangled in a wild melee of swatting, ducking, splintering shingles, shouts,

and buzzing. Before long Bowman's athletic talents proved too much for George, who found that the bee was giving him almost undivided attention. "In a desperate effort to get free of the bee, I broke loose. With the bee chasing me, I came from the back yard of my chum's house and passed his house in a flash and crossed the street. My front door was open and I went straight down the long hall. Then I remembered I was forbidden the house. The party was going on on the side porch, peaceful and delightful. So at the last moment I turned to the right and went off into the dining room. But the bee went straight ahead and stung the guest of honor. I didn't dare come home until late that night."

Marie was to wonder later how she ever managed to get married, for George, in the manner of younger brothers everywhere, was impossible to the young men who called on her. She recalled that he used to drop water bombs on their heads from the second-story windows.

Probably he did—once anyway. But that he did is less revealing than that the act stuck in the older girl's memory as the way things were at home. Long afterward, when she had grown to admire her younger brother, it was the sort of anecdote she liked to tell—the classic humorous touch to the portrait of an ordinary middle-class family, so normal that it could be remembered by Marie as well as by George in terms of something like folklore. The General himself liked to tell of how he was fired from his Sunday job of pumping the organ in St. Peter's Church because one morning he became so immersed in the adventures of Nick Carter during the sermon that he missed his cue at the end to start pumping.[11] He was fond, too, of a farcical adventure in playing soldier. Stuart and some of his friends, inspired by a summer encampment of the Pennsylvania National Guard regiment at the Uniontown fairgrounds, set up a tent in which to spend the night on a nearby creek. George, who was then very young, wheedled permission (with his mother's help) to join them. In the middle of the night a cow stumbled over the tent ropes. The older boys, imagining an enemy attack, rushed out, tumbled into the creek, and ran home. They arrived to discover that George was not with them. George was still in the tent, sound asleep through both invasion and retreat.

These are the tales of a small-town boy—one who grew up in intimate association with the lovely land of western Pennsylvania before it was blighted by coal mining. Associating the country with play and not work, as a farm boy does, George Marshall developed a lifelong attachment to simple rural pleasures. His only experiences on a farm were in the summers he spent as a youngster at Andy's grandfather's place west of Uniontown. Jasper M. Thompson was the town's leading banker, but he and his wife remained simple in their habits. Andy's grandmother helped the maids in the kitchen and waited on the table where she fed "masses of food" to the harvest hands. "You all washed out in the yard near the horse trough and you had a tin basin and one little broken mirror and an old comb. You would slick your hair down and make a sort of curl around on your forehead. That was the way you got ready for lunch." The boys "were allowed to sit at the table with the harvest hands and listen." George was fascinated, though perhaps a little dismayed with what he heard. "The conversation at the table . . . smacked very much of the conversations in the Westerns . . . always making fun of each other and dressing down one of their members if he in any way seemed to brag of any achievement of his. They were always tearing down a fellow and making little of him to the immense amusement of all the others."

Various chores were found for George; he helped in the barn —"a beautiful barn"—and in the field, "hauling in the hay shocks" and "distributing manure." He enjoyed it all and "learned a great deal about it, without being really conscious of the fact that I was learning." In other summers later on he went back for brief visits with Andy, and "we were always rewarded with whole pies and that was a wonderful thing." In these later summers, beginning in his teens, he had jobs, usually in the icehouse in town. The Marshalls by then were in straitened circumstances, but in any case it was the thing to do, for Uniontown, like most American small towns, admired work and thought idleness in young or old a temptation to the devil. So strict was this article of faith that when a bright young blade of means spent his leisure driving his buggy and fine horse around the countryside while others worked, he was virtually ostracized until he got a job and walked back and forth to work, carrying his lunch pail.

It is part of the picture of a normal happy boyhood that the General's memories reflected no sense of the passage of time. He could add to a reminiscence that he was quite small on that occasion or that on another he was older. Aging, however, was largely an external fact to be reckoned in various practical ways but not in the way he felt. He himself divided his youth into only two acts: the first was domestic, and he called it the period when he was "running a greenhouse and things of that sort." The second he thought might be called the "bicycle age," when in a day he might travel ten or twelve miles from home to discover, for instance, the town of Brownsville on the Monongahela, which had produced James G. Blaine, Speaker of the House and Secretary of State, and Philander C. Knox, soon to be Attorney General and then Secretary of State. At Brownsville, once, he and his friends loaded their bicycles on a boat and traveled a few miles away to New Geneva, Albert Gallatin's town, where artisans from Switzerland and Germany had developed glassworks. He watched the glassware being loaded on river boats and was reminded of the fact, which to him seemed rather like a miracle, that artisans from Europe so many years before had brought to this country not just themselves but skills they had learned in alien lands. The bicycle age was literally a time of liberation from the immediate confines of Uniontown; in a larger sense it was a time of release, of expanding imagination, a time when in retrospect he had begun to step out of the comfortable world of childhood and, indeed, out of an era.

There were many other ways in which from the outside his growing up could have been related to history. The year 1890 might be taken as a watershed, for it was then that the family fortunes drastically changed. In the previous year George Catlett Marshall and his partners, needing money for some of their operations, offered to sell Frick their Oliphant holdings. Frick, whose company was on the way to getting a monopoly on coke operations in the Connellsville area, insisted the sale include also the Kyle Coke Company, which Marshall and Bliss had formed in 1888 with a capital stock of a hundred thousand dollars.[12] The partners and their associates ended by selling all of their holdings south of Uniontown for a good profit, realizing at least four hundred and fifty thousand dollars on the transactions.[13] Marshall,

who probably got as much as a third of this sum, chose against the strong advice of Mrs. Marshall to put the money into land speculation. He had apparently been attracted for some time by schemes to develop industrial centers and resort towns in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Unfortunately the boom, in progress for nearly ten years, had reached its peak when Marshall plunged heavily in the Valley Land and Improvement Company of Luray. The company, capitalized at two million dollars, acquired the Luray Inn, controlling interests in Luray Caverns, and more than ten thousand acres of land which were to be subdivided and sold. Marshall became vice-president and general manager, took his family to Virginia for the summer, and for a moment seemed to have crowned business success with affluence and power. He brought up a riding horse from Kentucky which was said to move "like a king." [14]

Mercifully, perhaps, the reckoning was swift. Luray lots were widely advertised for sale and in September potential buyers were brought down from New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. But of one thousand parcels of land offered, only three hundred were sold. For a month or so afterward the boom talk, to which the local newspaper contributed its utmost, continued in Luray, but Marshall probably had few illusions left. With the approach of winter he sent the family back to Uniontown. In December he resigned as manager of the land company and went back home himself on the plea that business matters there required his attention.[15] A sign of approaching disaster came a few days later when his draft on the Luray bank, drawn to pay Stuart's tuition at Virginia Military Institute, was not honored. Early in the new year the bank, headed by the president of the Valley Land and Improvement Company, closed its doors. So presently did banks nearby in New Market, Waynesboro, and Warrenton. In November 1891, the Luray Inn burned to the ground at a loss of one hundred thousand dollars.[16]

Besides losing his direct investment, Marshall made himself liable for thousands of more dollars by signing personal notes to back up company credit. During the eighteen months following the first indications of failure he was sued by three of his chief creditors and at least one judgment was entered against him.[17]

Out of the crumpling of his fortune Marshall managed to save his one-third interest in the Percy Mining Company near Dunbar and some coal lands in West Virginia. Mrs. Marshall retained some property in Pittsburgh and Augusta, which in the years to come would furnish a large proportion of the family's modest income. There was also some cash put aside to pay for Stuart's and Marie's education.[18]

The General recalled that after 1890 "we had to economize very bitterly," and that the burden fell, he thought, most heavily on his mother. She, accustomed throughout her life to servants, now did all of her own housework and attempted to make her personal income meet current expenses. Mr. Marshall kept up a front—sometimes bringing home expensive gifts to his wife which she felt they could ill afford, and talking more and more about the Marshall family tree. He had more time for local politics, for Masonic activities, and for hunting and fishing, and indulged them all. He became secretary of the Sportsman's Club, helped pick slates of candidates for local offices, and took a hand in organizing political parades and barbecues.

As for George, he had to learn an unaccustomed and unwelcome respect for money and he developed a passion for solvency which he never lost. In comparative poverty he found new sources of humiliation. Since the family could no longer afford a cook and the two older children were away at school, the Marshalls began to take some of their meals at one of the local hotels. To feed their dogs and—local tradition has it—to furnish meat for an occasional stew, Mrs. Marshall asked for scraps from the hotel's kitchen. George had to carry them home. Later he thought the experience contributed to his education, but he remembered it as "painful and humiliating" and called it "a black spot on my boyhood."

Yet in larger matters the financial pinch does not seem to have altered his daily life in any essential way. Even in relative affluence that life had been rural and remote from sophisticated (and expensive) urban pleasures. So it continued happily enough for him in harder times. The fishing with Andy, attendance at county fairs (where he learned the tricks of the concessionaire's wheel), watching the local baseball team, playing football (at

which he was not very good), courting a pretty girl (at which he was apparently never particularly assiduous), and, of course, attending school—these things went on without interruption or change. It is not even clear that his transfer to public school at about the time his father's financial troubles began was enforced by poverty. In any case the General remembered the experience gratefully and thought that "every boy in a democracy should attend, for at least a period of time, a public school." Money was somehow found after he entered high school to send him back to private school. His last two years were spent at the University School under Professor Albert H. Hopkins, a "handsome, popular, beautifully educated" man who regrettably had no financial talent and stayed in business only just long enough to graduate George Marshall.[19]

If family difficulties did not seriously impinge on the boyhood idyl, still less did the larger difficulties of the nation, which during Marshall's years in Uniontown was passing through one of the great upheavals in American history. The fabulous wealth extracted and created in the postwar decades flowed into very few pockets. Under the impact of inflation, coupled with high tariffs, the real wages of the average worker were actually declining. In the depression of 1873-78 America had its first experience with mass unemployment, and in the railroad strikes of 1877 its first flare-up of industrial war. Recovery put most of the unemployed back to work but did not materially improve wages or working conditions. So long as immigration kept the labor market full, employers saw no reason to reduce hours or raise wages. The result was labor organization and endemic strikes throughout the period. Between 1881 and 1900 the United States Bureau of Labor estimated that the country endured at least twenty-four thousand strikes and lockouts. The harsh reality summarized in these statistics could be seen close up in Uniontown and as grimly as from any other vantage point in the nation. Marie Marshall recalled that her father seemed always to be coming home with word that the miners were out on strike again.[20] During Marshall's boyhood three region-wide strikes, all attended by violence, erupted in the Fayette and Westmoreland coal fields and coke plants, in 1887, 1891, and 1894. In all three cases the large

operators employed private police forces and strikebreakers who were chiefly Negroes imported by contract labor agents at fifty cents a head from West Virginia and farther south.[21] In all three, miners were killed, and in all three the operators were victorious, often with the help of the militia called out to keep order. Although the implications of class, or even economic, warfare were scarcely recognized, on one occasion Uniontown's Company C was discovered to have a disturbing sympathy with the strikers and was sent home.[22]

The bitterness of these conflicts endured and made a strong impression on Marshall. Twenty years later, as an instructor with the Pennsylvania National Guard, he observed that few miners signed up for service with the organization and considered the military in general as anti-labor.

There is no record of what Mr. Marshall senior felt about the strikes—when the last two (and worst) came along he was no longer a major employer—or what was said about them in the Marshall home. Marshall recalled only one personal experience when (possibly in 1894) he went to a coke plant at Percy during a strike and sat in an empty freight car watching the picket lines. Someone threw a lump of coal which hit the tipple under which the car was halted. Hurtling down the chute, it struck him on the forehead. He was knocked out for a moment and for the rest of his life was to carry a small blue scar as a memento. But that was all.

So far as local opinion can be deduced from the *Genius of Liberty,* it reflected chiefly a rural distrust both of big business and of union interference with the right of any man to do as he liked with his own. There was not at this time a class-conscious cleavage in the county. The *Genius of Liberty* stood firmly on the virtue of self-reliance and deplored all seductions to dependency either by organization or by such alien philosophy as was supposed to have been imported by the Hungarian immigrants.[23]

So the larger significance of what was happening was missed. The revolution swirled around and through Uniontown but it did not breach the sturdy defenses set up by rural, traditional America. When George Marshall left Uniontown in 1897 he left the town he had always known, not outwardly changed nor, so far

as he was aware, inwardly disturbed. He stepped out, he thought, of an era. In fact the world he entered, in which he was to carve so brilliant a career, had already at least one foot in the next age—the era in which America would spend a good part of its energies on two great problems bequeathed to it by the nineteenth-century coming-of-age: how to reconcile industrial concentration with democracy and how to harness democracy with world power.