

She devoted herself to her children, and her sons owed much to this wise and affectionate parent. She is said to have possessed all the brilliant intellectual qualities of her father, Stevens Thomson, and she was also a woman of great personal charms and most amiable and domestic disposition.

But while George Mason's youth was indebted much to his mother's judicious training, doubtless, there was another influence not to be overlooked. His early years must have felt the impress of John Mercer's mind. For it was to him the youth would have turned as to a second father for direction in his studies and for guidance, later, in the management of his affairs. The considerable difference in the ages of the two brothers, felt in childhood and youth, though lost sight of in maturer years, left the eldest son without a companion in his own family during his minority. He would naturally find associates in the household of his uncle and guardian, and the latter must have regarded with special solicitude the ward who was in the position of the heir to his father's property, with all the responsibilities this entailed. John Mercer was a man of fine talents and attainments. As a lawyer he stood in the foremost rank of his profession. And as a patriot he was among the first to raise his voice against the aggressions of Great Britain. He was the owner of one of the best private libraries in the colony, and some of his books, having his heraldic book-plate in them, are still to be found in the collections of Virginia bibliophiles. George Mason must have enjoyed the advantages of this library and the benefits of his uncle's scholarship. Whether he received his early education, technically speaking, at a school kept by one of the clergy, as was common about this time, or whether he had a private tutor, cannot now be determined. It is certain from an item in his will that he had at one time others associated with him in his studies; for he speaks in this instrument of a "Mr. Richard Hewit, my old schoolfellow and acquaintance from my childhood." Be that as it may, there is no evidence of his having been sent to college, and it