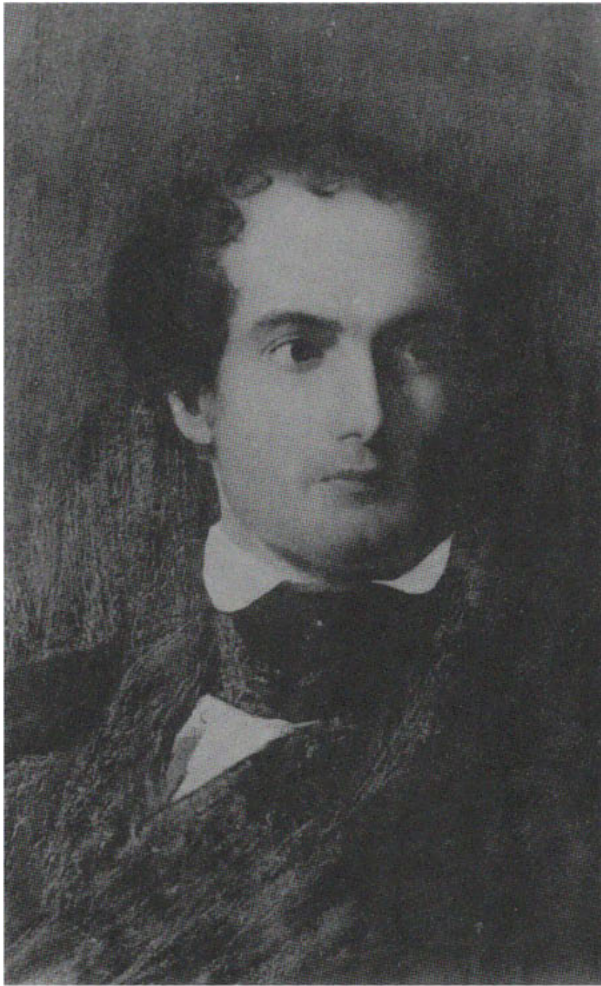


George Henry Calvert
AMERICAN LITERARY PIONEER



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G. H. Calvert.

George Henry Calvert

AMERICAN LITERARY PIONEER



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A WARTIME BOOK

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To the Memory of my Mother

PREFACE



THIS research was suggested by Professor Clarence L. F. Gohdes, and was carried on under the scholarly supervision of Professor Ralph L. Rusk, at Columbia University. I owe a great deal to Professor Rusk for his patient reading of many revisions of the manuscript and for his generous counsel at every step.

I am also extremely grateful to Professors Adriaan J. Barnouw and Suzanne Howe Nobbe for careful criticism of the manuscript; and to Professors Jean-Albert Bédé, Oscar James Campbell, Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, Robert Herndon Fife, Roger Sherman Loomis, Emery Neff, and Allan Nevins for making helpful suggestions.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. Marion Osborn and Miss Anne Lincoln for painstaking criticism of the manuscript and for generous encouragement; to Mlle Germaine Lorin for valuable comment on my transcriptions of the originals of French letters reproduced in my notes; and to my colleague, Professor Harold H. Dunham, for careful scrutiny of the galley proofs. I also wish to thank Professor Margaret M. Bryant and Miss Marie Buffa for helpful comment on certain portions of the manuscript.

Mrs. George Calvert, Mrs. Henry Walter Lilly, Mrs. Thomas Henry Spence, Mrs. William D. N. Thomas, Mr. C. Baltimore Calvert, Mr. George Henry Calvert, Jr., and Mr. Richard C. M. Calvert, grandnieces and grandnephews of George Henry Calvert, have been most courteous in permitting me to use manuscripts and books in their possession.

To the Hon. John Ridgely Carter, I am especially grateful for the photograph used as frontispiece, and for the French originals of some of the letters written in Maryland (1797-1819) by his great-grandmother Rosalie Stier Calvert to her brother Charles Jean Stier, in Antwerp. Of these originals and others written by various members of the Stier family, Mr. Carter has generously provided twenty-six for use in this biography. Unfortunately he has been unable to locate the originals of all the letters of Rosalie Calvert. About 1905, however, he had a number of them, including some now lost, turned into English by a professional translator; and typescript

copies of these translations were kindly furnished to me by Mr. Richard C. M. Calvert in 1932, when I began my research.

Since the completion of this book, several months ago, Mr. William D. Hoyt, Jr., has published in *The Maryland Historical Magazine* (June, September, and December, 1943) a series of articles called "The Calvert-Stier Correspondence." The text upon which Mr. Hoyt's extracts from the letters are based is apparently another copy of the same English translation which Mr. Calvert furnished for use in this biography. My extracts from the correspondence contain much, however, which is not to be found in Mr. Hoyt's articles, and I have had the advantage of access to the French manuscripts described above, some of which have apparently never before been available either in the original or in translation.

Translations from the extant originals are my own. The originals themselves are referred to in the notes as Carter MS. Letters which I have seen only in translation are labeled Carter Tr. Additional comment on these MSS and translations is given in Chapter I, note 49, and in Chapter III, note 7, below.

I am further indebted to Mr. Carter for the original MSS of seven letters written by George Henry Calvert from Germany in 1825.

Mrs. Francis W. Belknap, Miss Caroline Stuart Hunter, Mrs. Stewart Edward White, Mr. James E. Steuart, and Dr. Augustus Thorndike have also kindly provided manuscripts, reminiscences, and photographs. I am extremely grateful to Mr. Steuart for a typescript copy of a letter written by Elizabeth Steuart Calvert, but I regret that since this was the only one of her letters made available to me, I have not been able to present as clear a picture of Calvert's wife as I have of his mother.

For permission to use Calvert MSS in their collections, I wish to thank the libraries of Harvard, Yale, Brown, and Duke Universities, the Peabody Institute, the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa, the New York Public Library, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. For the use of the Tayloe Papers, I am indebted to the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia. The Houghton Mifflin Company have granted me permission to quote from one of their publications, *Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers*, 1902; Dr. Kenneth Murdock, President of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts has given me permission to quote from *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, and Professor Harry Pfund has permitted me to quote from his essay, "George Henry Calvert, Admirer of Goethe," in *Studies in Honor of John Albrecht Walz*, Lancaster, 1942.

I should like to thank here individually all of the people who have answered my letters of inquiry, or rendered other assistance, but their names would make a very long list. I shall therefore thank them collectively, mentioning only a few whose courtesy deserves a special word of appreciation. I am peculiarly indebted to Miss Helen H. Yerkes and other members of the staff of Columbia University Library for many kindnesses during a period of more than ten years; to Professor S. Foster Damon, Curator of the Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays, Brown University, for permission to use 106 MS letters of George Henry Calvert, contained in that collection; to Dr. Haven Emerson, for permission to quote from photostatic copies (in Columbia University Library) of the letters of William Emerson; to Mr. James W. Foster and Miss Florence J. Kennedy, of the Maryland Historical Society, Mr. Louis H. Dielman, of the Peabody Institute, Miss Frances Hubbert, of the Redwood Library, Mr. Herbert O. Brigham, of the Newport Historical Society, Mr. Clifford K. Shipton, of the American Antiquarian Society, Mr. Robert H. Haynes, of Harvard College Library, and Miss Belle da Costa Greene, of the Pierpont Morgan Library, for courteous attention to my requests.

My greatest indebtedness is to my mother, whose unfailing sympathy gave me the courage to see this through.

IDA GERTRUDE EVERSON

Wagner College
Staten Island, New York
March, 1944

INTRODUCTION



HER to the name, lands, and traditions of the founder of the Colony of Maryland, George Henry Calvert grew up in an atmosphere of European culture. His mother, a fugitive from Napoleonic tyranny in Belgium, brought with her to America an Old World gentility which softened the rugged simplicity of her plantation home. But she had also that independence and buoyant courage which are associated with the American frontier. These contrasting characteristics seem to have been inherited by her son and help to explain the curious combination in his writings of the conservative and formal with the radical and new.

Fortunate in having received the best education that this country and Europe had to offer, Calvert was well equipped for a career in politics or in one of the recognized professions. But despite the hopes of his parents, he determined to make letters the means of earning a living. This choice, unconventional in 1829, revealed the pioneering spirit which was his throughout a long life and which gives his work its first claim on the attention of readers today.

His student days at Göttingen and his visit to Goethe, when the great German poet was little known in America, stimulated his imagination and set him to exploring German literature with a zeal which later made that field peculiarly his own. His translation in an obscure Baltimore magazine of the "Hymn of the Archangels" from *Faust* was probably the first version of Goethe's famous chorus written in this country. He was the first American to complete a translation of a drama by Schiller, the first to translate a volume of the *Schiller-Goethe Correspondence* into English, the first to write a biography of Goethe.

But his literary explorations were by no means limited to German themes. As he grew older, he turned to England and France and Italy, both past and contemporary; to Dekker and Wordsworth, to Joubert and Sainte-Beuve, to Dante and Garibaldi. He wrote the first American biography of Wordsworth and the first American translation of the "Thoughts" of Joseph Joubert. His essays on Dante and Sainte-Beuve in *Putnam's*

Magazine were among the earliest studies of those writers in this country. Nor did he confine himself to literary subjects. His biography of his own ancestor, Peter Paul Rubens, was the first American life of the great Flemish artist. These books were not, however, mere literary curiosities; many of them had intrinsic worth. Calvert's inquiring mind also led him into phrenology and later into spiritualism at a time when each of these cults was getting its first wave of attention on this side of the Atlantic. The same experimental tendency made him a devotee of hydropathy before its practice was known in America.

Calvert was also a prolific writer of works not distinguished by their pioneer quality. Among these were his books on travel, and his historical dramas, which attracted a certain reading public, although they were never produced. His poetic aspirations found expression in a steady, though un-inspired, flow of poems, both lyric and narrative, which continued throughout his life. His father's concern with politics, and his mother's experiences as a refugee brought to young Calvert at an early age an awareness of the differing forms of government and their effects upon the governed. This awareness, strengthened at Harvard, was intensified by a trip to Europe in 1840 and brought to a focus in a second journey of 1849-1851, when Europe itself was struggling vainly to gain some measure of the freedom enjoyed by the American Republic. Charles Fourier, whose doctrines Calvert later expounded in his books and from the lecture platform, had few more ardent supporters in America.

In the choice of friends, Calvert showed almost as wide a variety of tastes as in the choice of subjects for his writings. His four most intimate companions were John Pendleton Kennedy, novelist and "gentleman of the old school"; Henry T. Tuckerman, art critic and author of travel books; "Shepherd Tom" Hazard, sheep breeder, spiritualist, and reformer; and John Swinton, chief of staff of *The New York Times*, later a radical Socialist. Other friends were George Bancroft, George H. Boker, Anne Lynch Botta, Charles Timothy Brooks, Charlotte Cushman, William Emerson, Ferdinand Freiligrath, Margaret Fuller, Horatio Greenough, Paul Hamilton Hayne, Julia Ward Howe, William Morris Hunt, Washington Irving, Hugh Swinton Legaré, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Hiram Powers. He knew also John Quincy Adams, Albert Brisbane, William Cullen Bryant, Henry Clay, Joseph Green Cogswell, James Fenimore Cooper, Edward Everett, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edwin Forrest, Parke Godwin, George W. Greene, Fitz-Greene Halleck, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Charles

Eliot Norton, Harrison Gray Otis, George Ripley, and William Edward West.

He was particularly proud of having called upon Wordsworth and Carlyle. Other English acquaintances included Mrs. Gillman, Samuel Laurence, Harriet Martineau, and Fanny Wright. He also met Michel Chevalier and Tocqueville, and became a close friend of Joseph Nicolas Nicollet.

Among critics who noticed Calvert's works were C. A. Dana, Edward Dowden, John Sullivan Dwight, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, and Edgar Allan Poe.

This biography has grown out of an abundance and variety of material. Aside from the diaries and letters and reminiscences of the distinguished friends of Calvert, much of his own correspondence still remains, and there is a volume of unpublished memoirs. Perhaps even more stimulating than these sources are the intimate and vivid letters of his Belgian mother. They cover his formative years and make possible an adequate understanding of his qualities of mind and character. Finally, his own published writings are themselves often autobiographical.

In view of the comparatively large amount of material available, it is strange that so little has been written about George Henry Calvert. The best study is that by Harry Pfund, "George Henry Calvert, Admirer of Goethe," in *Studies in Honor of John Albrecht Walz* (1941), but this essay is devoted almost entirely to Calvert's contributions to German-American scholarship. E. A. and G. L. Duyckinck's *Cyclopædia of American Literature* (1885) has an article on Calvert, and Allan Westcott wrote an account of him for *The Dictionary of American Biography* (1929). Edwin Harold Eby devoted a few pages to Calvert's aesthetic and literary criticism in his unpublished doctoral dissertation, "American Romantic Criticism (1815-1860)," University of Washington, 1927. Karl Knortz, in his *Geschichte der nordamerikanischen Literatur* (1891), Orie W. Long, in *Literary Pioneers* (1935), Walter Wadepuhl, in *Goethe's Interest in the New World* (1934) and Bayard Quincy Morgan, *A Critical Bibliography of German Literature in English Translation* (1938), noticed his works, and there have been other brief accounts and references, but for the most part, Calvert has been all but forgotten.

Much of his writing belongs to the "genteel tradition," which drew its inspiration from Old World sources. But, unlike Irving and Longfellow, who are better-known exemplars of the same cultural ideal, Calvert had as his heritage all of the Old World gentility that could be made a part of

the life of a Maryland plantation. His earliest education was planned with the thought that he would some day complete it abroad. When that day came he was prepared to see Europe not as a storybook world of romance and legend but as it actually was. He was more interested in living conditions and forms of government than in literature and art. This social interest colors much of his literary output, giving it freshness and vigor, and providing at least one example of a "genteel" writer who looked to the future as well as to the past and was able to glimpse something of a new era of economic reform.

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George Henry Calvert *frontispiece*

After the painting by William Edward West, Baltimore, c. 1839.

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Chapter One
OLD WORLD BACKGROUNDS



IN his London mail Benedict Calvert found a letter from the fifth Lord Baltimore, dated February 18, 1745/46. Calvert was a natural son and had been sent to America in early childhood. He knew little of his father. But he read with interest:

“Dr. Child

“I send you herewith an Order to take Immediate Possession of Some Lands and Negroes, wth all y^e Stocks of What kind so Ever, which Mr. Sam. Hyde Has Transfer’d to me this Day, And are under the Care of Mr. Will. Mattingly, His Overseer at Patuxon, and as I Design this for You, I desire you will take Immediate Possession of them . . .

“Pray do not think of Marrying till you hear from me haveing some things to Propose to you much for Your Advantage, And believe me I never will force Your Inclinations, Only Propose what I think will make you most Happy, Afterwards Leave it to Your own Determination . . .”¹

The lands in question were part of “the great Maryland grant,” which the Crown had made to George, first Lord Baltimore, in 1632. They comprised 9,200 acres,² later known as Mount Airy,³ situated in the valley of the Patuxent, about twenty-five miles southwest of Annapolis. This was the Mount Airy destined to be the birthplace of Benedict Calvert’s grandson, George Henry Calvert.

When Benedict received his father’s letter, he was established as Collector of Customs at Patuxent,⁴ but this property settlement was most welcome. Just enough of his unusual past was known to make him the center of many a whispered story. This inheritance, however, would do much to dull the edge of gossip. He was born about 1724⁵ and in early childhood was sent to Maryland on a British frigate, in charge of Captain Vernon⁶ and Onorio Razolini, who later served as his tutor. His early years were spent in Annapolis under the care of Dr. George Steuart, where he was known for a time as Benedict Swingate.⁷ Stories about his mysterious birth began to circulate among his companions and at length reached

his ears. When he discovered that his father was Charles Calvert, the fifth Lord Baltimore, he wrote to ask about his mother. But his inquiries on that subject were in vain; her identity remains a secret.

On April 21, 1748,⁸ Benedict married Elizabeth, the daughter of Charles Calvert, formerly governor of Maryland (1720–1727). Onorio Razolini wrote to Benedict's father commending the bride as having "had the best offers in the county" and hoping that his Lordship would think that he had done right in encouraging the match.⁹ Calvert replied:

"I am favour'd wth Your letter of 11th May, & am Extremely glad to hear¹⁰ ——— has made so good a Choice, & you need not Doubt but I will Endeavour to make his fortune Agreeable to the young Ladys."¹¹

Difficulty in surveying the Patuxent plantations which his father had intended for him had caused Benedict to write to Lord Baltimore in the fall of 1746¹² for a copy of the original deed from Henry Darnall to John Hyde.¹³ On March 4, 1748/49, however, Charles Calvert showed a change in his plans for disposing of the property.

"D^r Son

". . . if I find any thing can be done . . . to serve you, you may be Assur'd I shall use y^e proper means, & every thing Else as it offers to me, I have therefore sign'd a Power of Attorney to you to Dispose of the Plantation and y^e Different Stocks on y^e same, w^{ch} I desire may be done as soon as possible of w^{ch} I should be glad to see amount to y^e Appraisments, And to remitt me out of the Purchase Monies the sum of £300 & y^e Remainder I desire you will Except for Your own use, as part of what I propose for You, my Compliments to y^r wife & am

"Y^r Affectionate Father
"Baltimore"¹⁴

On June 29, 1750, at the direction of Lord Baltimore, who still owned them, these lands were sold at public auction to Ignatius Digges for £1,470. Lord Baltimore died April 24, 1751. On June 3, Benedict bought the Patuxent plantations from Digges for the same amount Digges had paid for them.¹⁵ In this way the property came into the possession of the one for whom Charles Calvert had long intended it. Perhaps it would have been difficult to establish legal ownership in any other way, since Frederick Calvert, Charles's only legitimate male heir,¹⁶ might have put in a claim had the transaction not been sealed by a deed of purchase.¹⁷

Benedict now began to think about building a house on his lands. There could hardly be a better site than the one already occupied by a two-story

stone hunting lodge which crested one of the wooded hills. The lodge had been built about 1660 by the third Lord Baltimore.¹⁸ With its tall chimneys and great fireplaces facing each other at opposite ends of the room it was not unattractive, and it commanded a far-reaching view of distant ridges and of the narrow silver river meandering through the valley. The building was substantial and could be used to advantage as part of the new house, for, according to the tradition, the immense old English bricks of which it was composed were laid with the ends out so that the resulting walls were two feet thick.¹⁹

Construction soon began at the top of Mount Airy; cartloads of brick and other building materials, all paid for in hogsheads of black tobacco, were hauled up the long incline from the valley, and for the first time in the history of those broad acres a home was erected upon them. Although the house was completed at a time when the formality of Georgian influence was making itself felt in America, its simplicity belonged to an earlier era. Like those planters who lived more simply than their well-to-do successors, Benedict Calvert thought more of comfort than of style, and his home soon began to reflect something of his quiet tastes and unassuming manners.

The house was invisible from the road; it was reached by a driveway that wound uphill for about three quarters of a mile, passing through a grove of linden trees, and coming out upon a circle of box in front of the door. It was an unpretentious but dignified structure. The gambrel roof, with hips on each wing, and the tall brick chimneys gave a hint of the commodious interior, where a broad central hallway separated the drawing rooms in the new wing from the hunting lodge, which now served as dining room and pantries. Two large staircases, one at either end of the hallway, led to bedrooms on the floor above. From windows in the rear of the house, one might look out upon an old-fashioned garden and an orchard on slopes facing the distant hills.²⁰

Mount Airy now became a center for the gathering of family traditions and culture, a homestead where future generations were to be born. Many of the Calverts had already brought distinction to the pages of Maryland history: George, the founder of the Colony, recipient of two degrees from Oxford and author of works in Latin and English; his son, Cecil, a man of broad tolerance; Benedict Leonard, fourth Lord Baltimore, poetaster and owner of thirty-five editions of his favorite writer, Horace.

But more important for the encouragement of art and letters in the Colony

was this fourth Lord's second son, Benedict Leonard the younger, Governor of Maryland from 1727 to 1731. Thomas Hearne, the English antiquary, characterized him as "my ingenious friend,"²¹ an epithet which suggested at least one reason for the young governor's popularity in the Colony. By the magnetic force of his personality he drew together a few scattered sparks of literary activity in Annapolis and helped to form the first significant literary circle in the South—perhaps the first in the New World to devote itself chiefly to imaginative writings. The group included three men whose fame has somewhat eclipsed his own: William Parks, printer; Ebenezer Cooke, author of *The Sot-Weed Factor*; and Richard Lewis, schoolmaster, who translated Edward Holdsworth's *Muscipula* into English and dedicated to Governor Calvert

THIS FIRST ESSAY
Of *Latin Poetry, in English Dress,*
Which MARYLAND hath publish'd from the Press.²²

Calvert himself subscribed for ten copies and sent one to Hearne soon after Parks published it.²³ Governor Calvert was also interested in education in the Colony and expressed some of the ideas later advanced in the movement for consolidated schools.²⁴ Upon his death, in 1732, he left one third of his personal estate to the King William School in Annapolis.²⁵ Had he lived he would probably have written the first history of Maryland.²⁶

Benedict Calvert was only eight years old when his uncle died, but stories of the Maryland governor whose name was the same as his own must have reached him while he was growing up in Annapolis and must have been part of the literary heritage which he brought with him to Mount Airy. When he built his home there in 1751, he did not at once make it his permanent residence. He may still have been living there only during the summer when he wrote a letter from "Mount Airy June 24th 1765."²⁷ Its content indicated, however, that although he was still employed as Customs Collector, he was even then in the straitened circumstances which eventually led him to use his country estate as a year-round home:

"As for my affair with My Lord²⁸ its very hard that he will not give me any satisfaction for my Right. I have now Eight Children and very probably shall have many more such an addition as the Manor²⁹ would be considerable towards their future well fare and its very certain my fortune is such that I am not able to contend with his Lordship, as the expense of a Law Sute would be more than I could well spare without throwing my family

into the greatest distresses. I can't at present go to England as I have not got leave from the Commissioners of the Customs. . . . I hope it will not be thought intruding upon your good nature in desiring when ever opportunity offers you will still continue your good offices to me in recommending me to his Lordships favour, and I cant help flattering myself from his Lordships generosity & good nature when he comes to consider the largeness of my family but he will make it up to me. He has two Manors in Frederick County at present but of little value to him If he would give me a grant of them I should be thankfull as I have three Boys it would be something for them, the youngest of which I have taken the Liberty to call after you. . . ."

There is no indication that Benedict Calvert ever received the additional manor for which he was contending, and matters grew worse for him when, during the troubled years before the Revolution, he lost his position as Collector of Customs. Certainly by this time, if not earlier, he had changed his permanent residence from Annapolis to Mount Airy.

The home which Benedict and Elizabeth established on that lonely hill-top was by no means isolated from society. Many distinguished visitors rode along its driveway, but none came with greater zeal and spirit than young Jack Custis, stepson of George Washington.

Eleanor Calvert, Benedict's second daughter, probably first became acquainted with fifteen-year-old Jack Custis when he was in Annapolis in the care of the Reverend Jonathan Boucher, the picturesque Tory rector of old St. Anne's, who, it is said, preached during his last six months in Maryland with a brace of loaded pistols in the pulpit.³⁰ Eleanor's brother, Charles Calvert, a year younger than Custis, was another of Boucher's charges at the time, and undoubtedly the romantic attachment began under the tutor's very eyes, although he later protested that he had not the slightest intimation of what was going on. Boucher had ideas of his own concerning education, and whatever mistakes he may have made, he seems to have had the interest of his pupils at heart. "There is a Deal of Difference to be observed," he once wrote to George Washington, "in y^e Educatⁿ a Gentleman, & a mere Scholar."³¹ Once when he was particularly exasperated with Jack Custis, he wrote candidly to the boy's guardian at Mount Vernon: "I must confess to You I never did in my Life know a Youth so exceedingly indolent, or so surprisingly voluptuous: one w^d suppose Nature had intended Him for some Asiatic Prince. . . ."³²

When, at length, the news that Custis intended to marry Eleanor Calvert

reached Boucher's ears, he was deeply hurt because the boy had not mentioned his engagement to him. His only fear was for her happiness, but with somewhat blunt courtesy he wrote to Washington: "Miss Nelly Calvert has Merit enough to fix Him, if any Woman can: and I do, from the Fullness of a warm Heart most cordially congratulate his Mother & Yourself, as well as Him, on the Happiness of his having made this most pleasing of all Connexions, with this the most amiable young Woman I have almost ever known. I know Her well and can truly say, She is all that the Fondest Parent can wish for a darling Child." ³³

In the meantime a polite exchange of letters was taking place between George Washington and Benedict Calvert. Washington made it clear that he had no objections to his stepson's marriage with Calvert's daughter but that he wished the wedding to be deferred until the boy had received a better education and had grown a little older. He was doubtless fully aware of his ward's shortcomings. "How far a union of this sort may be agreeable to you you best can tell," he wrote; "but I should think myself wanting in candor, were I not to confess, that Miss Nelly's amiable qualities are acknowledged on all hands, and that an alliance with your family will be pleasing to his." ³⁴

To this Benedict replied with becoming deference on April 8, 1773.

"Dear Sir

"I Received the favour of yours of the 3^d Instant by M^r Custis which I feel myself highly honoured by, and am truly happy in your Approbation of that young Gentlemans future Union with my Second Daughter. I should be dead to Parental feelings, were I untouched with the polite manner in which you are pleased to compliment Nelly's Qualifications . . .

"M^r Custis I must acknowledge, is, as a match for my Daughter, much superior to the sanguine hopes which a parents fondness may have at any time encouraged me to indulge; He is luckily so circumstanced in point of fortune, that the Inconsiderableness of the portions, I shall be able to bestow on my Daughters, is, in this Alliance, a mere matter of a very secondary consideration—And that circumstance seems to prognosticate great happiness to Nelly, being a clear proof of the young Gentlemans disinterested affection for her—I can only add, on this subject, that, from the largeness of my family (having ten Children) no very great fortune can be expected . . ." ³⁵

Custis was sent to King's College in the hope that this experience would divert his mind. But he remained in New York only three months, and

on February 3, 1774,³⁶ he married Eleanor Calvert, the ceremony being performed in one of the great drawing rooms at Mount Airy. Custis was nineteen and his bride, sixteen. Boucher's fears for their future happiness were never realized.

The marriage strengthened an intimacy already existing between Washington and his Tory friend—a friendship which remained unbroken even during the years before and after the Revolution. Sometimes they played cards together to while away the long evenings of fall and winter. On September 9, 1772, Washington recorded in his cash memorandum book, "To Cash won at Cards at Mr. Calverts 10 s." ³⁷ And, as good friends are wont to do, they generously borrowed supplies from each other and apologized for the quality of the goods they returned: "I am very much obliged to you," wrote Calvert to Washington, in the summer of 1773, "for the wheat you were so kind as to spare me—I wish mine in return had been better." ³⁸ Washington's diaries of 1772-1775 record the exchange of several visits; Calvert often brought one or two of his children with him to Mount Vernon, and Washington frequently traveled on horseback to visit Mount Airy. It is recorded that he spent the first night after his retirement as commander-in-chief of the army with the Calverts and thus brought upon himself the censure of hyperpatriots.³⁹

Less well known than Eleanor Calvert, but more important for this biography, was her brother George, born February 2, 1768.⁴⁰ When this George Calvert, father of George Henry Calvert, was a boy of seventeen or eighteen he began to accompany his father on the visits to Mount Vernon. Washington invited his namesake to go fox hunting with him and they had many a run together in the sparkling days that followed summer; Washington even lent the boy his pedigreed hounds, descendants of the French dogs sent to America by the Marquis de Lafayette.⁴¹ Sometimes George Calvert stole out before daybreak to his father's stables and saddled a horse that carried him the twenty miles to the Potomac. Here a ferry brought him to the opposite shore just in time to join in the morning chase over the fields around Mount Vernon.⁴²

When Benedict died, in 1788,⁴³ Washington continued on intimate terms with this son, and it may have been Washington who guided young Calvert into a political career. The name of George Calvert first occurred in the roster of the state legislature at Annapolis in 1796.⁴⁴ Of his experiences in the legislature we have no available record, but a fair amount of his time during these years seems to have been devoted to looking after his nephew,

George Washington Parke Custis, whom Washington had adopted when the boy's father died in 1781. The boy, a chip off the old block, was in turn causing a good deal of trouble at Mount Vernon, when Washington in despair sent him to school in Annapolis. "I can manage men, I cannot manage boys,"⁴⁵ he announced to George Calvert as he placed young Custis in his charge.

But the romantic atmosphere of old Annapolis was not conducive to study. In the course of a few months Calvert found it necessary to notify Washington that the lively lad of fifteen had fallen in love with a beautiful girl of his own age. Washington replied: "The moment you receive this, send George home."⁴⁶

The young legislator now found himself relieved of a responsibility which had become increasingly distasteful. More than once he must have questioned the wisdom of interfering with his nephew's plans; for his own sister Nelly had married in spite of all opposition and had never regretted the choice. Now that the whole burden had been shifted back onto Washington's shoulders, Calvert felt a sense of relief. He could turn his whole attention to a matter of greater moment—a matter which had not, however, the slightest connection with his duties at the State House. For George Calvert had become a regular visitor at Strawberry Hill,⁴⁷ an estate which lay just outside the old city of Annapolis. He had fallen in love with Rosalie Eugenia Stier, a young Belgian girl whose family were living there temporarily; any day now her family might pick up their household goods and return to their native Antwerp as precipitately as they had left it three years before.

The occupants of Strawberry Hill were newcomers to Maryland, and to America. Henri Joseph Stier was a well-to-do Fleming, of high social rank,⁴⁸ who had fled with his family from Antwerp just before the Napoleonic invasion of July, 1794, and had been living in Philadelphia and in Alexandria, Virginia, since October of that year. But finding something more in keeping with his Old World ideals of comfort in the spacious mansion surrounded by gardens and lawns, he had moved his massive Flemish furniture from Alexandria into the great brick house at Annapolis. On December 3, 1797,⁴⁹ Rosalie Eugenia Stier wrote to her brother Charles:

"At last we are here—citizens of Annapolis and after two or three more wearisome days we shall be ready to welcome you to our new home. The room reserved for you is the most cheerful of all. Mama is sleeping there while her own is being put in order. I am busied with a Jungfrau for your

benefit and she is much amused. The household is moving smoothly and we have a very fat cook who makes delicious tarts. . . . I am sorry that I cannot as yet describe in detail the fashions for the gentlemen for I have not seen enough to be able to judge, but when I am more familiar with them I shall write to you. The new hats have very high crowns a little smaller at the top than at the base. Please say to sister Mimi⁵⁰ that there was only an ell left of that muslin, which is not enough for a mantle. I am sorry that she did not write me about it a little sooner. But, my dear brother, is it possible that you wished to come here on horseback? That is not practicable at this time of the year and besides you could not bring luggage with you! and you wished to journey to the North in this fashion! Reflect for a minute and you will see that it is impossible! Your wife would have to wear a cloak over a pelisse at the very least; your face and hands would freeze, and then what a strange way to travel in the winter. You would not be received in any boarding house. In your place I should buy a pretty phaeton with two little ponies. It is the best way to travel unless you go by the public stagecoach which is even better as it is only half filled in the winter. You could put Witcke somewhere to pasture until you return. My poor Brilliant has been sold to a tailor here but we still have the pet Bucephalus and the two carriage-horses—all at Strawberry Hill.

“Goodbye, my dear brother, I must finish as it is very late and vigils will not help to cure my cold which is so in the way just now. It is better, but I speak like Mademoiselle Pafetrode. Adieu, then my ‘big brother,’ your little sister kisses you a thousand times and sends her love to everyone.

“Rosalie Stier

“P.S. You will find enclosed some notes Papa sends you to be discounted. He bids me tell you that he has not time to write to you for this post but he will do it for the next one. These two lines from Papa are worth more than all mine it seems to me.”

Presently she wrote again, in one of her many letters which made commonplaces memorable: “At present we are growing used to our citizenship in Annapolis and we are to make the rounds in the coach tomorrow for the first time. They tell me you still have no house, but indeed why do you wish to take one when the departure for Europe is so certain? You would do better to come and pass the winter here and if you must go from time to time to Alexandria you could go into lodgings there. As soon as spring comes on we are going from Bath to Niagara Falls in a phaeton with our two small ponies. Isn’t that a good idea? Our new house is so

enormously big, four rooms below, three large and two small ones on the second floor besides the staircases, and the finest garden in Annapolis in which there is a spring, a cold bath house well fitted up and a running stream! What more could I wish for? . . . Adieu, my dear brother, with my love! Everyone here is well except Louise who neither eats nor drinks. The little one is much plumper already.⁵¹

“R. S.”⁵²

George Calvert was probably serving his second year in the Maryland legislature when he made his first call at Strawberry Hill. He was a fine-looking young man in the late twenties, with chestnut-brown hair, ruddy complexion, and a candid expression in his blue eyes which immediately inspired confidence. Just how he became acquainted with Rosalie Stier is not known. It may have been at one of the gala parties given now and then by the Scotts and Keys, Carrolls and Cookes; or at one of the formal balls given for members of the legislature, at which Democrat and Federalist alike gathered to pay homage to the belles of the city. By the end of December, 1797, he was included among the guests invited to tea parties in the drawing room at Strawberry Hill. On the day following one such occasion, Madame Stier wrote to her son in Virginia: “Your sister dances every day, but a quartan fever has been her partner for some time lately, which makes the others jealous as you can imagine. Yesterday we had a tea party with Mrs. Ogel who asked whether I could receive her, Miss [Shaaf?],⁵³ Miss Aienbottem,⁵⁴ the Doctor, Mr. Ogel,⁵⁵ the Frenchman and Mr. Calvert. As our drawing room is well arranged this was the easiest thing in the world. Moreover I am not the least bit embarrassed by American ladies and they are pleased with everything that Europeans do . . .”⁵⁶

Even more at ease than Madame Stier herself in the presence of American guests was her daughter, Rosalie Eugenia, whose use of English during the past three years had given her confidence to preside with serenity at her mother’s tea table. She was now twenty years old, and although she could not be called beautiful, the broad high forehead and sensitive mouth indicated mental alertness and sweetness of character. Perhaps the charm of her Continental manners first attracted George Calvert to her. But in addition to her social graces, she possessed common sense and fortitude, qualities that appealed strongly to his own straightforward and honest mind.

They soon discovered that they had much in common—pride in family

history, a heritage of family portraits, love of flowers, fondness for horses. He told her of his fox-hunting days with George Washington, and she took him out to the stables to show him "Bucephalus," her pony, and the plated bridle which her brother had sent her from Virginia. The family had two carriage horses also, for driving about Annapolis. But when spring came they were all going in the phaeton to Niagara Falls. They wanted to see something of America before going back to Antwerp, which they intended to do as soon as conditions were favorable.

Gradually young Calvert heard the story of Rosalie's childhood and of her coming to America. She had been educated in a convent of English nuns in Liège,⁵⁷ where she had learned to speak their language. In June, 1794, just before the French occupation of Antwerp, her father had decided to flee with his family to America.⁵⁸ The small band of emigrés had gone first to Amsterdam, where on August 2, 1794, Sylvanus Bourne, Consul of the United States, had granted them a passport which stated they were going to America to settle some commercial affairs and private interests. A few days later they had embarked for Philadelphia on the *Adriana*,⁵⁹ Captain Keran Fitzpatrick commanding. The vessel carried seven cabin passengers and two servants.⁶⁰ Stowed away in its hold was one of the most remarkable collections of Old World paintings that had yet been transported to the new land.⁶¹ Rosalie's father was too loyal a descendant of Peter Paul Rubens⁶² to think of parting with these treasures, which included some of the Flemish master's original canvases. Henri Stier had many of the pictures taken down from the walls of his home in Antwerp and carefully wrapped and packed for the long voyage. Others had been brought from Cleydael Castle, a summer residence some six miles distant on the Scheldt.

When George Calvert began to call at the Stier home, not all of the paintings had yet been unpacked, but with each visit a few more were doubtless taken from their wrappings until he had at length seen the entire collection. Little by little during these visits with the Stiers in the winter of 1797-1798, George Calvert was able to piece together the story of their exile. The *Adriana* had landed at Philadelphia on October 13, 1794. Here the family had set up a temporary home, for America was only a convenient haven until they could return to Belgium. On July 23, the French army had occupied Antwerp, levying a war contribution of 10,000,000 francs upon the town, to be paid within five days. Although most of the patricians had left the city by that time they were taxed in proportion to

the supposed amount of their fortunes. Henri Stier was required to pay 40,000 francs, and his son-in-law, Baron Van Havre,⁶³ 18,000 francs.

When news had reached Henri Stier in Philadelphia that a portion of his property had been sold to help meet this levy, he had executed, on July 7 and November 23, 1795, powers of attorney to one Louvrex in Antwerp to administer his affairs. In this way, he hoped to retain the remainder of his property without appearing in person to put in a claim. In the meantime he had been seeking a suitable place in which to settle, at least until he could return to his homeland. He had found it difficult to adapt himself to the ways of his temporary home. In Antwerp he had been accustomed to comfort and the aid of well-trained servants. In America all this was changed. Since he could not speak the language, he often found it difficult to make his wants known. His son Charles, who had adapted himself much more easily to American ways, was traveling in the South with his wife and could not be consulted except at infrequent intervals. His daughter Isabelle had taken unkindly to the country from the start and was of little assistance to him. Consequently the brunt of managing his financial affairs had fallen upon his younger daughter, who assisted him with his accounts and acted as his interpreter. In this way, Rosalie Eugenia had gained that poise and balance of judgment which George Calvert found so attractive.

The family had left Philadelphia because Charles Stier wrote favorably of living conditions in Virginia and Maryland, and urged his parents to settle in one of the pleasant Southern towns. Alexandria or Annapolis, he had thought, would please his father. The suggestion had met with Henri Stier's approval, but he was at a loss to know just how to carry it out. There were many details to be considered—and the portraits to be looked after. It was difficult to get things done efficiently in America. He wrote with faltering enthusiasm to "M^r Stier, Poste restante a Alexandrie." This letter, dated "phil: lundi 5 Julliet 1795," in a delicate, closely written hand, is still clear and legible. In the French original, the spelling of American place names and other English words is not always correct or consistent, and even the French reveals that casual disregard for accuracy which characterized the language of many a well-educated gentleman in the eighteenth century: "Vessels leave Philadelphia only rarely for annapolis the voyage by sea is long for it is necessary to go by way of norfolk, and to go by steam-packet by way of baltimore it is necessary to travel 16 miles by coach one must load and unload the furniture which suffers much in the process, when we shall have arrived we shall need a carriage, a coachman, horses, a cook. a

gardener, a garden—provisions of every kind—all that frightens us, get hold of all the information you can on all these things, above all whether there is a livery-man at anapolis, how much a negro gardener costs & a negress to do the cooking, or whether one may hire them, and whether there are white servants to be had, in a word all that you think might be useful to me, when you are in alexandrie find out the price of lands, awaiting the clarification of all this, present my compliments to your wife and accept those of the family I am

“Your very affectionate father
“H. J. Stier”⁶⁴

By December, 1795, the Stiers had moved to Alexandria, but they were not happy there. They had been troubled by the news from Antwerp. Their anxiety had increased when, on September 5, 1796, the municipal authorities of that city included their names on a roll of inhabitants who were accused of being emigrants and granted them fifty days in which to protest against this registration. Louvrex, however, had presented a petition to the city tactfully stating that “Mr. Stier, with his family, had gone to America to arrange his business affairs and also to escape the tyranny of the English. . . .”⁶⁵ It would not have been politic to state that they had left the country to escape the invading French, who were now in power. Accordingly, on June 13, 1797, Louvrex paid in Henri Stier’s name the sum of 3,094 francs to complete (including interest) the total of the original tax of 40,000 francs. On June 23, he paid a further sum of 6,000 francs, which had been assessed in another forced loan of December 10, 1795. Fortunately these details had been taken care of by the time the family moved to Strawberry Hill, and Henri Stier may have enjoyed peace of mind while preparing his garden for the spring.

Meanwhile his younger daughter was also finding that life in Maryland was bringing quiet happiness. She had begun to look forward to the evenings with George Calvert. And he, sitting with her in the candlelight, felt strangely moved by her high, clear voice as she sang some of the simple French airs which she had learned in childhood. Presently Madame Stier would come in. Often in these informal gatherings she spoke the French which came naturally to her. More than once George Calvert was sure that he caught the words “le vaisseau pour l’Anvers.” After a while, Henri Stier would enter and sit down in a brocaded chair at his side, mumbling something about “les peintures” and “le voyage par mer.”

The garden at Strawberry Hill had been planted by Henri Stier him-

self, with bulbs sent from Belgium.⁶⁶ The flowers had been in his thoughts during the winter months, and with the first sign of spring he was out of doors, kneeling for hours at a time, digging little holes, and adding more bulbs and seeds according to the pattern which unfolded in his mind. By the end of April his garden was a show place.⁶⁷ Like his daughter, Henri Stier laid no claim to the artistic talents of his great ancestor, but he had an eye for color, and the picture which he produced was not unworthy of the Flemish painter himself. Everywhere were gay daubs of color—pansies, tulips, magnolias, red dogwoods gleaming softly as though lighted from within. And when the sun began to slant through the willows, great banks of hyacinths, in cloudlike masses of pink, purple, and tallow white, glowed on the distant terraces like a reflection of the sunset sky.

As he walked with Rosalie Stier in the spring of 1798 beside the little stream, George Calvert was faced with a difficult problem. Could he ask this young woman who had been accustomed to the cultured life of a Belgian metropolis to share with him the life of a Maryland plantation?

From the letters which Rosalie Stier subsequently wrote to her brother, it is clear that when she finally gave her consent to remain in America, it was with a strong conviction that the two families would not long be separated from each other. She and her husband would visit their relatives in Belgium at frequent intervals, and her family would visit her from time to time; or, better still, her parents, who were daily growing more attached to America, might be led by some unforeseen twist of circumstances to make Maryland their permanent home.

A notation in an old family Bible, still in the possession of the Calvert family, gives the date of her marriage to George Calvert as June 11, 1799.⁶⁸

Chapter Two
MOUNT AIRY



GEORGE CALVERT took Rosalie to the Mount Airy mansion. It had recently passed into the possession of his brother Edward Henry,¹ who arranged for him to live there and cultivate the land. Some changes had been made in the house since Benedict Calvert left it; but there was still nothing in its architecture that did not serve a practical purpose. As if to make the most of the fine spring and fall weather of the Chesapeake region, a long narrow veranda had been built across the full width of the house at the second story. It added a touch of friendliness and sheltered the stone-paved floor beneath. The pitched roof, a characteristic of the first plantation homes, was now supported by tall white pillars, which lent graceful dignity to the simple doorway.

The first months of married life were busy and happy. Among the most frequent visitors to Mount Airy was Ex-President Washington. On Washington's birthday in 1799, Calvert had dined at Mount Vernon on the occasion of the marriage of his niece, Nelly Custis, to Washington's nephew, Lawrence Lewis.² After Calvert's own marriage Washington invited him and his bride to dinner at Mount Vernon. Washington himself recorded the names of the guests of June 20, five of whom were Rosalie's relatives:

"The following company dined here: Chief Justice of the U. S. Ellsworth,³ Mr. and Mrs. Steer Senr., Mr. and Mrs. Steer, Junr., Mr. Van Havre, Mr. and Mrs. Ludwell Lee, Mrs. Corbin Washington,⁴ Mr. and Mrs. Hodgson, and Miss Cora. Lee,⁵ Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Calvert, and a Captn. Hamilton and Lady from the Bahama Islands."⁶

But the happiness of those months did not last. Rosalie Calvert's first anxieties were for her own family. There was bad news from Antwerp. All seemed well when, by a resolution of April, 1797, the names of Henri Stier and his family were erased from the roll of Belgian emigrés, leaving them free to remain in America, or to return to Antwerp as they pleased. But in November, 1799, five months after her marriage, the April resolution was revoked and word came to Maryland that their personal property

and real estate were to be sold for the benefit of the French Republic. This edict was followed by the appalling declaration that they themselves were now forbidden to return to their homes under pain of being treated as emigrants guilty of breach of banishment, a crime punishable by death.⁷ It was one thing to remain in America by choice, but quite another to be arbitrarily exiled from familiar scenes and faces.

The gloom of those days was brightened, however, when Rosalie Calvert's father purchased an estate of several hundred acres lying about a mile north of Bladensburg and took a house in town, near enough to superintend the details of a home which he intended to build on his lands.

The house was planned on the grand scale to which Henri Stier had been accustomed in Antwerp. It was made of solid brick, with an adjoining chapel for family worship. It was to be called "Riversdale"⁸ from its location in the valley of the eastern branch of the Potomac.

Rosalie Calvert came often to her parents' home in Bladensburg to watch the progress of the new building. Then, in the summer of 1800, her first child was born. Since her husband was not a Catholic, he had been asked to sign a prenuptial agreement⁹ whereby their children would be brought up in the religion of their mother. Caroline Maria¹⁰ was, therefore, baptized in infancy by Father Vergnes, a French priest. In the months which followed, Rosalie Calvert's interest centered largely in Mount Airy and the care of her little daughter. But she rejoiced with her family when, in October, 1801, word came of a reversal of the previous resolution. Wives and daughters of Belgian emigrés were now authorized to take possession of their property, and by April, 1802, all had been included in a general amnesty, under the terms of which they must return to their native country before September 23 to take the oath of fidelity to the French Constitution.¹¹ Her brother, Charles Stier, and his wife had sailed for Antwerp, probably in the fall of 1801, intending to return to Maryland when their affairs were settled. Rosalie Calvert's first letters to him were buoyant with the expectation of seeing him soon again. She wrote from Bladensburg: "I am very curious to know how you liked everything, and I fear that my uncle and aunt Joseph¹² will be extremely disappointed not to see Papa and Mama. They are very well, especially Papa. The labour and employment of building seem to agree with him. What a pity, dear brother, it is that now Papa is on the point of being settled we are not all together; but I hope it will not be long before we have that pleasure again . . .

"I came back today from the Federal City, where we spent several days

with Mrs. Law,¹³ who is certainly almost the most charming woman I have met in this country. . . . Society will be very brilliant this winter. You asked me to write you all the society gossip, but the time at my disposal does not allow me to do so now. I am planning to begin my diary tomorrow. My husband asks me to say that he will write to you next. My little Caroline is very well and is growing rapidly. She runs around now and is beginning to talk. We come very often to Bladensburg which seems to give Papa and Mama pleasure. The house is progressing well and though there are so many hardships and deprivations in this country I think they would be very happy now if you were here. Therefore, dear brother, fix your return as soon as possible. As for myself I wish for nothing but the pleasure of seeing you again, and how great would be the additional joy if my uncle and aunt Joseph S. could be persuaded to accompany you! . . . Adieu, dear brother! My tenderest love and think sometimes of your affectionate sister who never lets a day go by without prayers for the happiness and return of her 'Little Brother.'"¹⁴

She wrote again, December 30, 1801:

"I begin this letter by wishing you and Mimi a happy New Year, but hoping at the same time that it will be the last occasion when I shall have to do so in this way, and that next year will see us all re-united. Following this country's custom we are now with Papa. Do you remember how gay we were at the same season when you were here? It is not so now. I cannot help thinking how far you are from us. Everything recalls the time we were together. Our horseback rides, our stay in your pretty home in Alexandria—Memory makes precious every moment spent with you and makes me regret how short they were. When you left, we both promised to keep a daily journal of every interesting happening, but the simple retired life I lead in the country gave me no material, so I have not yet begun. Indeed, dear brother, what should I have had to write every evening in my journal but renewed protestations of my attachment which are needless because you could not doubt it, or wishes for your return to be fulfilled perhaps sooner than I dare to hope. I often imagine myself near you and going out with you. . . . Papa is well but suffers a great deal with headaches and colds. Mama is not so well. She is often ill with the slightest cold she takes. This house they are living in causes a greater part of their indispositions, for neither the doors nor the windows close properly and when it is cold we freeze!

"I must now tell you the great event of Annapolis society. Polly Lloyd is