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THE BATTLE OF KINGS MOUNTAIN

SPEECH OF HON. E. Y. WEBB, OF NORTH CAROLINA, IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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SPEECH OF HON. E. Y. WEBB

The House being in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and having under consideration the bill H. R. 17850—the naval appropriation bill—

Mr. WEBB. Mr. Chairman there is now a bill on the calendar for consideration by the House, carrying an appropriation of $30,000 for the erection of a monument on Kings Mountain battle ground, to commemorate the great victory gained there by the American patriots over the British forces on October 7, 1780.

I trust that no Member will oppose the passage of this bill, for it is a shame that the National Government has already waited 126 years to give fitting recognition of the importance of one of the decisive battles of the world. I use the words "decisive battle" advisedly. It will be remembered that the Revolutionary War had progressed in the North with varying fortunes to the American patriots. Lexington and Concord are hardly to be called battles—more properly important skirmishes. It is true that there it was that the shot was fired that was "heard around the world," but I propose to show this committee that the most important battle fought in the American Revolution was that fought at Kings Mountain. The Americans had fought bravely at Bunker Hill, but had lost. The fierce Battle of Long Island, fought August 27, 1776, with 15,000 British against 8,000 Americans, was a decisive defeat for the American arms, with a loss of 970 killed and 1,077 wounded, while the British lost 400 only. The result of this battle was a sad shock to the American cause, coming so soon after our national Declaration of Independence. A little later, in December, however, our cause regained some of its lost prestige at the Battle of Trenton, where our forces killed and wounded 30 British and captured 918, with a loss of only 2 Americans killed and 6 wounded. The Battle of Princeton, fought in January, 1777, was also important in molding American sentiment and cheering American hopes. After the Battle of Princeton yet another victory was added to the American arms at Monmouth, where the British lost 500 and the Americans 229.

At Brandywine, in September, 1777, however, Washington was driven from the field. This defeat fell heavily on the patriot cause. At Germantown, on October 4, 1777, the Americans lost 673 killed and wounded and 400 prisoners, and the tide of the battle was decidedly against us, recording another defeat for the patriots. Next comes the victory at Saratoga, in October, 1777, which gave fresh impetus to the cause of the rebellion.

During the year 1778 the war dragged along without any general campaign or important battles. At this time the French began to send us invaluable assistance. Clark, the veteran western hero and pioneer, pushed his way to Vincennes and there captured that fort. It was a splendid feat of arms, performed after a march of 240 miles through the wilderness and forest. Clark's victory practically broke the British hold in the West.

With honors about even in the North, and with New York in the hands of the British, England decided that the quickest way to conquer America now was to overrun the South. Florida was invaded. Georgia and South Carolina were to be enrolled under the British flag and the rest of the Southern States were to yield immediately. Abundant ships and troops were collected by the British, and the southern harbors were blockaded.

In the fall of 1778 General Prevost marched out of Florida and in a short campaign captured Savannah, Sunbury, and Augusta. On March 3, 1779, at Briar Creek, near Savannah, the Americans lost 1,000 men killed and captured, besides their cannon and small arms, while this battle cost the British only 16 men killed and wounded. Georgia was now in complete control of the British forces and influence, and the Government of King George was again thoroughly established there. A desperate effort was made by the Americans on the 8th of October, 1779, to recapture Savannah. In this sanguinary assault many of the patriot army were killed, among them being that prince of heroes, Count Pulaski, who fell mortally wounded and yielded up his life for the country which he had come so far to serve. This was another disastrous battle for the Americans, as our loss was more than 200, together with 600 French soldiers, while the British loss was very small. This defeat was a heavy setback to the cause of the Revolution in the South, and the outlook for success was becoming very gloomy. The militia of South Carolina and Georgia became discouraged and disbanded, and General Lincoln, with a small band of regular troops, fell back to Charleston. As said by Senator Lodge, in his Story of the Revolution, "Without men, without money, and without apparent ability for effective preparation, South Carolina seemed helpless if the enemy continued their invasion." Georgia was already completely and entirely in the control of the British, and South Carolina seemed destined to meet a similar fate. Charleston, the largest city in the State at that time, having a population of 15,000, was occupied by the American forces under General Lincoln.

During the Christmas holidays of 1779 Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Cornwallis sailed out from Sandy Hook, N. Y., with the splendid fleet of Admiral Arbuthnot, carrying 7,000 soldiers to commence an attack on the queen city of South Carolina. Only 4,000 Americans garrisoned the city. These soldiers were greatly dispirited on account of our losses in Georgia a short while before. On the 11th of February, 1780, the British fleet began the siege of Charleston, which continued for three long, gloomy, terrible months, by which time the enemy had gradually encircled the proud maritime city. Finally, on the 7th of May, after untold suffering on the part of the people of Charleston, the city surrendered. Many houses were burned during the siege and 98 officers and men of the American forces were killed and 146 wounded. Five hundred of the 2,000 Continental

troops were in hospitals. The regular American troops and sailors became prisoners of war. The English now sacked the city and divided the spoil among themselves to the amount of about one and a half million dollars. After the loss of Charleston it seemed as if the whole South were ready to surrender to the victorious troops under Cornwallis.

Colonel Tarleton was sent out to pursue Colonel Buford, whose regiment had failed to join the garrison at Charleston. Overtaking Buford at Waxhaw, Tarleton's Hessians and brigands attacked Buford's men as if they were savages, killing 113, while more than 100 were hacked to death and only 53 prisoners were taken. This bloody butchery, which was commended by Cornwallis, added to the general depression among all classes of American citizens. But while it depressed many, it urged many others to a determination to fight for their country and never surrender. At this period of time Sir Henry Clinton, just before sailing for New York, reported to the royal authorities as follows:

> Inhabitants from every quarter declare their allegiance to the King and offer their services in arms. There are few men in South Carolina who are not either our prisoners or in arms with us.

At this time the haughty Sir Henry spoke the truth, for it did seem that the whole South was either fleeing to the British standard or fleeing from it in terror. Those of the natives who were loyal to the American cause fled from South Carolina, leaving their homes to the torch of the invading foe.

At the battle of the Brandywine a gallant British officer of marked attainments was too brave and too noble to shoot General Washington in the back. This officer was wounded in that battle, but after complete recovery sailed with Sir Henry Clinton on his expedition to capture and overrun the South. This man, who played such a conspicuous part in the war from now on until his death, was none other than Maj. Patrick Ferguson. He had performed distinguished service in the Royal North British Dragoons in the wars of Flanders and Germany, where he distinguished himself for his coolness and his bravery. He was the inventor of a new kind of breech-loading rifle, which could be loaded and fired seven times in one minute. He was the finest rifle shot in the royal army, and possibly no other living man at this time surpassed him in unerring marksmanship. King George himself at one time attended an exhibition of his marksmanship. According to history and tradition, he could run his horse, suddenly check him, drop the reins on his neck, draw his pistol and throw it up into the air, catching it as it fell, take aim, and shoot the head off of a bird sitting on an adjacent fence. Major Ferguson also participated in the battle of Monmouth. Sir Henry Clinton selected him to accompany him on his expedition south and gave him a corps of 300 American volunteers to command, and for this special service he was given the rank of lieutenant colonel. Two hundred Hessians were also added to Ferguson's corps. Irving says:

> Ferguson was a fit associate of Tarleton in hardy, scrambling, partisan enterprise, intrepid and determined, but cooler and more open to impulses of humanity.

But all will admit that Ferguson was a much higher type of man than Tarleton, who was called "the butcher of the Carolinas."

After the fall of Charleston Sir Henry Clinton dispatched Lord Cornwallis to make a campaign up through South Carolina and on into North Carolina, while Colonel Ferguson was dispatched to Ninety Six, S. C., where he arrived on June 22, 1780. Ferguson's winning ways, combined with the awe and fear which the enemy's invasion had created in the minds of the people, were causing many young men to enlist under his banner. These recruits were immediately drilled and prepared for warfare in the royal arms, and their training was perfect, for Ferguson was the best drillmaster in King George's army. Knowing the terrible impression that Tarleton's savagery had created among the people, Ferguson, in his march up through the Carolinas, made the following statement:

> We come not to make war on women and children, but to relieve their distress.

By this time the royal authority was fully established and recognized in all the upcountry of South Carolina.

Draper, to whom I am indebted for many of the facts about this battle, says:

> The desperate, the idle, the vindictive, who sought plunder or revenge, as well as the youthful loyalists, whose zeal or ambition prompted them to take up arms, all found a warm reception at the British camp; and their progress through the country was marked with blood and lighted up with conflagration. During this period of several weeks the Tories scoured all that region of country daily, plundering the people of their cattle, horses, beds, wearing apparel, bee gums, and vegetables of all kinds—even wresting the rings from the fingers of the females.

In August, 1780, several skirmishes occurred between detachments of Cornwallis's army and the patriots under the leadership of Colonels Clark, McDowell, and Shelby, the most notable among them being Musgrove Mill, where the British lost 86 killed and 76 prisoners, while the Americans lost only 4 killed and 9 wounded. There were only about 250 Americans and about 300 British in this engagement. After this fight Shelby and McDowell and the other leaders dispersed their little band and fell back into the mountains to protect their homes from the enemy, and also to prevent complete annihilation from the forces of Cornwallis and Major Ferguson.

The most important military point in South Carolina was Camden. General Gates, in command of the American forces, marched against this point on August 15, 1780, and was met by Cornwallis and disastrously routed. The brave, chivalrous De Kalb was there mortally wounded leading the Maryland troops, and fell after having been pierced by 11 bullets. Gates, who had won distinction in the northern army, lost in this battle 800 of his brave soldiers. "His northern laurels," as it was said, "had changed into southern willows."

The American Army was truly broken and destroyed. Thus for the second time within 90 days the American Army at the South had been practically annihilated. This was the darkest period in the history of the Revolutionary War. The whole South seemed prostrate at the foot of the enemy, while nothing but a triumphal march lay before Cornwallis and Major Ferguson. To add to the gloom which then overhung the struggling young Republic there came the news of the treason of Benedict Arnold, which thrilled the American patriots with a sense of horror. It seemed that their cause was lost, and that nothing was left the British but to reap the fruits of their successive victories. Arnold's treason was no doubt prompted

by the feeling that the cause of American freedom was lost. In this awful period of depression even the unconquerable Washington said, "I have almost ceased to hope."

After his victory at Camden, Lord Cornwallis marched his army in September into North Carolina, and boasted that all the States south of the Susquehanna River would soon be in his grasp. When this victorious warrior reached Mecklenburg County in North Carolina he found a veritable hornet's nest of loyal patriots [applause], for on this soil Tories and deserters could not grow [applause], for here it was on May 20, 1775, that the first American Declaration of Independence was flung to the world in defiance of the King and all his army. [Applause.] All Mecklenburg was now united as one man in a determination to maintain this declaration with their lives and their sacred honor. [Applause.]

Cornwallis hoped to stamp out this spirit, and therefore pitched his tent in the plucky city of Charlotte. Major Ferguson was dispatched at the head of 1,100 soldiers to march into the Piedmont section of North Carolina to gather cattle and supplies for the army and to enlist all the natives who were willing to come under the King's standard. Charles McDowell, Clark, Shelby, and other leaders had fallen back into the mountainous section of North Carolina, and Ferguson entertained the hope of overtaking and capturing these leaders. Colonel Ferguson marched as far as Gilbert Town in Rutherford County, N. C., and pitched his camp there for several days. For many miles around Tories and weak-hearted natives visited the gallant officer and took the oath of allegiance, believing that since Charleston had fallen, Gates and Sumter routed at Camden, and the other patriot forces dispersed, that the patriot cause was absolutely hopeless. A portion of Ferguson's army marched as far as Brindletown, Burke County, and some even as far as the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

At Old Fort, Colonel Ferguson rode up to the home of Capt. Thomas Lytle, a noted patriot leader, who then lived 4 miles from Old Fort. The captain was not at home, but Mrs. Lytle stepped to the door, elegantly dressed, and invited the colonel in, which invitation he declined, saying that his business required haste, as the King's army had restored his authority in the South, and that the rebellion was practically quelled, and that he had come to offer a pardon to Captain Lytle. Mrs. Lytle then told Colonel Ferguson that she did not know where the captain was, but thought that he was out with friends, whom the colonel had called "rebels." Whereupon Ferguson replied deprecatingly:

> Well, madam, I have discharged my duty. I felt anxious to help Captain Lytle, because I had learned that he was both brave and honorable. If he persists in the rebellion and comes to harm, his blood will be on his own head.

The brave little woman gave the colonel the following spirited reply:

> Colonel Ferguson, I don't know when this war may end; it is not unlikely that my husband may fall in battle; all I positively know is that he will never prove a triator to his country.

[Loud applause.]

So thoroughly was Ferguson imbued with the idea that the rebellion was over that when William Grant offered him a troop of cavalry for

service in the King's cause he thanked him for his loyalty, but declined to accept them, "as the country was subdued and everything was quiet." This was in September, 1780, just 30 days before the great battle at Kings Mountain.

It was a critical and crucial moment in our history. Lord Cornwallis felt that he had the triumphant end of the Revolution in his hand. His chief lieutenants, Tarleton, Rawdon, Balfour, and Brown, had burned the people's property and hung the patriot leaders wherever they could be found.

Upon arriving at Gilberttown, Major Ferguson sent a verbal message by one Samuel Phillips, a prisoner and distant relative of Colonel Shelby, notifying the patriots who were then in the mountains that "if they did not desist from their opposition to the British arms he would march his army over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay their country waste with fire and sword." No other words could have so thoroughly aroused the patriots. Colonel Shelby at once communicated the message to Colonel Sevier, who was the efficient officer of the Washington County Militia, then in North Carolina, but now in Tennessee. These two brave leaders immediately resolved to raise all the men possible and to attempt to surprise Ferguson in his camp or wherever he could be found. Colonel Shelby also communicated with Col. William Campbell, of Washington County, Va. A rendezvous was agreed upon and the 25th of September was the time set for the meeting of the patriot leaders on Watauga River.

Cornwallis had intended to march his army from Charlotte to Salisbury, N. C., and expected Ferguson to join him there, and with their combined army to overrun North Carolina and Virginia and take them under the King's control. In the meantime the mountain men were gathering. The sacrifice they were about to make was great, for their wives and helpless ones would be left to the torch and scalping knife of the Indians. But they had become desperate and had now resolved to take their lives in their hands and to take every chance in order to rid their country of the invading foe. Colonel Cleveland, of Wilkes County, N. C., was also notified, and he agreed to collect as many men as possible and join in the expedition. The whole country was aroused and fired with the spirit and determination to rout Ferguson and his Tory outlaws, who had threatened to hang their leaders and burn their homes.

John Adair, the officer for the sale of North Carolina lands, loaned the patriot leaders $13,000 with which to obtain ammunition and equipment for the expedition. Colonels Sevier and Shelby binding themselves to repay the money if the legislature failed to ratify the loan. Adair hesitated about loaning the money, for he had no authority to do so, but finally said:

> If the country is overrun by the British, our liberty is gone. Let the money go, too. Take it. If the enemy by its use is driven from the country, I can trust that country to justify and vindicate our conduct; so take it.

Promptly at the time agreed upon Campbell, with 350 soldiers; Sevier, with 240, and Shelby, with an equal number of men, assembled ready for the march. The soldiers had no uniforms, no band of music had they, no bristling bayonets, no glittering equipage. Their only weapon was the Deckard rifle, which most of them had learned to use as experts against the Indians and wild beasts. Their other

equipment was simple, being a blanket, a cup, and a little parched corn meal mixed with maple sugar.

Before starting on their perilous march to meet Major Ferguson and his army the brave, simple, unsubdued patriots uncovered their heads while a devout minister, Rev. Samuel Doak, prayed to Almighty God that success might crown their undertaking, and closed a brief but stirring address to them with the Biblical quotation, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" Immediately they began their arduous and difficult march over the hills and mountains and through the valleys, some of the higher mountain peaks being covered with snow. Camping and moving, moving and camping, they passed around Roan Mountain, following Roaring Creek and the Toe River. The mountain scenery along their march is not excelled by any to be found in Switzerland or any other portion of the world. Around them on every hand were towering peaks, some of them rising to the height of more than 6,000 feet. A writer has well said:

> Here, if we were to meet an army with music and banners, we would hardly notice it; man and all his works and all his devices are sinking into insignificance. We feel that we are approaching nearer and nearer to the Almighty Architect. We feel in all things about us the presence of the great Creator. A sense of awe and reverence comes over us, and we expect to find in this stupendous temple we are approaching none but men of pure hearts and benignant minds. But, by degrees, as we clamber up the winding hill, the sensation of awe gives way—new scenes of beauty and grandeur open upon our ravished vision—and a multitude of emotions swell within our hearts. We are dazzled, bewildered, and excited; we know not how, nor why; our souls expand and swim through the immensity before and around us, and our being seems merged in the infinite and glorious works of God. This is the country of the fairies; and here they have their shaded dells, their mock mountains, and their green valleys, thrown into 10,000 shapes of beauty. But higher up are the Titan hills; and when we get among them we will find the difference between the abodes of the giants and their elfin neighbors.

They crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains at Gillespies Gap on the 29th of September. About this time Col. Charles McDowell and Maj. Joseph McDowell with 160 men joined the little army, while Colonel Cleveland and Major Winston with 350 troops joined them soon after. A portion of the army passed over Linville Mountain and stopped at Quaker Meadows, the home of Cols. Charles and Joseph McDowell.

Up to this time no head of the organization had been selected, but on Monday, October 2, by common consent, out of courtesy to Colonel Campbell, who was the only officer who had come from another State, all the others being North Carolinians, he was chosen commanding officer. Col. Charles McDowell, the senior North Carolina officer, was requested to go at once to the camp of General Gates and to notify him of the plans of the mountain men, while his brother, Col. Joseph McDowell, assumed command of his men. McDowell's command was largely increased in Burke County by the gallant colonel's relatives, friends, and admirers. On the 3d of October, at Cherry Mountain, in Rutherford County, the little army was increased by the addition of a few South Carolinians under Colonel Williams. Colonel Lacey, of South Carolina, and Colonels Graham and Hambright and Major Chronicle, of Lincoln County, N. C., soon joined the patriots.

When the army arrived within 16 miles of Gilberttown, where they still supposed Major Ferguson had his camp, they expected the

battle to begin soon, for they intended to attack the royal officer wherever they found him. On October 3 Colonel Cleveland, who at that time weighed about 250 pounds, requested the little army to form a circle. He was a man of great courage and hoped to infuse some of his own spirit into the minds of his men. Campbell, Shelby, Sevier, McDowell, and Winston came into the circle with Cleveland, whereupon Cleveland removed his hat and said with great feeling:

> Now, my brave fellows, I have come to tell you the news. The enemy is at hand, and we must up and at them. Now is the time for every man of you to do his country a priceless service, such as shall lead your children to exult in the fact that their fathers were the conquerors of Ferguson. When the pinch comes I shall be with you. But if any of you shrink from sharing in the battle and the glory, you can now have the opportunity of backing out and leaving, and you shall have a few minutes for considering the matter.

Not one of the men, be it said to their credit, accepted the invitation, but each one repledged his life and his fortunes to the perilous undertaking. [Applause.]

On the next day, the 4th of October, they learned that Ferguson had fallen back from Gilberttown for the purpose of avoiding battle. Ferguson had been informed by some native deserters that the mountain men were in pursuit of him; yet he fell back so leisurely that it became impossible for him to form a junction with Cornwallis before the patriots could overtake him. Ferguson dispatched two inhabitants of the country, carrying a message to Lord Cornwallis, asking for immediate assistance. These carriers passed Webbs Ford, on by Mooresboro, and on toward Kings Mountain, when some of the patriots, seeing them, suspected their mission and set out in pursuit of them, which compelled them to lie in hiding by day and travel by night. Hence they did not reach Cornwallis, in Charlotte, until the 7th of October, the day of the battle.

Ferguson marched almost in a southerly direction from Gilberttown, attempting to give the impression that his objective point was Ninety-Six, S. C. On the 3d of October he halted his army at Camps Ford on Broad River. In this neighborhood he remained two days. On the 5th he sent a dispatch to Lord Cornwallis, saying:

> I am on my march toward you by the old road from Cherokee Ford, north of Kings Mountain. Three or four hundred soldiers, part dragoons, would finish the business. Something must be done. This is their last push in this quarter.

He crossed Broad River at Cherokee Ford in South Carolina, and on the afternoon of October 6 arrived on Kings Mountain, a small mountain ridge which received its name on account of a man named King having lived near there. This mountain range is several miles in length, running northeast and southwest. The principal peak is something like 5 miles from the ridge on which the battle was fought, the battle ridge being about 500 yards long and 200 yards wide—"so narrow," says Mills's Statistics, "that a man standing on it may be shot from either side," and being just over the North Carolina line in York County, S. C. The ridge is about 75 feet above the surrounding country. Ferguson thought this would be an ideal spot on which to camp, and so pleased was he with his camping ground that he declared that the Almighty could not drive him from it, and affirmed that he would be able to capture or destroy any force the patriots could bring against him. One writer says that he declared that "he was on Kings Mountain, that he was king of that mountain, and that God Almighty could not drive him from it.

Meanwhile the gallant little army of patriots was pressing upon his march with enthusiasm and determination. When they arrived at Gilberttown and learned that Major Ferguson had fallen back, in order to follow him with greater speed all the foot soldiers were weeded from the ranks and left behind and only those on horseback proceeded, with great haste, to overtake the royal army. They marched nearly all of the night of the 6th of October, with the determination not to desist in their pursuit until they had forced battle on Ferguson or driven him into the army of Cornwallis. In the meantime Major Candler and Colonel Clarke, of Georgia, with their little band, joined the American forces. The men kept their guns dry by wrapping their blankets and hunting coats around the locks, exposing themselves to the rain rather than run the risk of destroying the usefulness of their trusty weapons. From some natives of that section they learned where Ferguson was camped and something of his strength. The combined force of the patriots was now 1,100 men, all of whom were well armed, and about 900 of whom were mounted, the remainder being foot soldiers. The patriots crossed the river at the same point where Ferguson crossed—Cherokee Ford. When within a few miles of the mountain a young girl, the daughter of a loyalist family, told the patriots that Ferguson was camped on the mountain. From some of the natives they had learned that Major Ferguson was dressed in a glittering uniform, but wore a linen duster to protect it. Each member of the army was apprised of this fact, and directed to look out for a man in such a dress and mark him for his rifle.

Finally they arrived within striking distance of the enemy and agreed upon their plan of attack. "Buford" was the watchword. Only 1 mile farther would bring them face to face with their long-sought enemy. The patriots were formed into two lines of battle, two men deep, Colonel Campbell leading the right line and Colonel Cleveland commanding the left. Each man understood that it was intended to surround the mountain on which Ferguson was camped, so that in shooting at him and his men there would be no danger of killing each other. The strictest orders were given that no talking would be allowed and that absolute silence must be maintained, which order was implicitly obeyed. This was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon on October 7. After the mountain had been surrounded the order was given to halt, dismount, and tie their horses. The final order was then given in these words: "Fresh prime your guns, and every man go into battle firmly resolving to fight until he dies!" This order was carried out with stoic determination. The idea of defeat was foreign to them. Dr. Lyman C. Draper, the author of the excellent history of this battle, well says in discussing this order:

> Never was war cry of the ancient Romans more ceaseless and determined that Carthage must be destroyed than was that of the mountaineers to catch and destroy Ferguson.

The provincial corps and well-drilled loyalists under Ferguson were carefully posted along the crest of the mountain. Here they were determined to stand their ground and never retreat. In Ferguson's army were about 1,100 men of the King's American Regiment, from New York, the Queen's Rangers, New Jersey Volunteers, and loyal militia. Every man in his army understood what actual fighting meant. They were specially skilled in the use of the bayonet, and

the guns which were not provided with bayonets were provided with long knives, the handles of which were cut to fit the muzzles of the rifles.

In speaking of the class of men composing the patriot army, Doctor Draper says:

> They were better educated than most of the frontier settlers and had a more thorough understanding of the question at issue between the colonies and their mother country. These men went forth to strike their country's foes, as did the patriarchs of old, feeling assured that the God of battles was with them and that He would surely crown their efforts with success. They had no doubts nor fears. They trusted in God—and kept their powder dry. Such a thing as a coward was not known among them. How fitting it was that to such a band of men should have been assigned, by Campbell's own good judgment, the attack on Ferguson's choicest troops—his Provincial Rangers. It was a happy omen of success—literally the forlorn hope—the right men in the right place.

Campbell's corps was composed of his own regiment, Sevier's regiment, and McDowell's and Winston's battalions, and were to cross the southern end of the ridge and attack Ferguson. Cleveland's corps was made up of Williams's command, which included the men under Brandon, Hammond, and Candler, his own men from Wilkes and Surry, those commanded by Lacey, and also the troops from Lincoln County under Hambright and Chronicle. Shelby commanded a corps of his own men. These troops under Cleveland and Shelby were to be disposed on the left of the ridge and opposite to Colonel Campbell's troops.

Thus arranged the entire force consisted of four columns, two columns being on the north side and the other two on the south side of the ridge, the columns being commanded respectively by Shelby and Cleveland, Campbell and Sevier. All the troops being thus arranged, the leaders then appealed to the soldiers to conduct themselves like heroes in the impending fight. Thus, standing on the very verge of what was to be one of the greatest fights of the Revolutionary War, Campbell visited each command and said to the soldiers that if any of them, men or officers, were afraid, to quit the ranks and go home; that he wished no man to engage in the action who could not fight; that as for himself he was determined to fight the enemy a week if need be to gain the victory.

After giving the orders in a voice that could be heard by most of the men, Campbell placed himself at the head of his own regiment, and, after each of the other commanding officers had done the same, the order to march was given. A large number of the soldiers threw away their hats and tied handkerchiefs about their heads so as not to be retarded by the undergrowth or limbs in charging up the mountain. On the gallant army marched, two men deep, for the scene of action. The actual battle ground was now about 1,200 yards away. Arriving in shooting distance, the men under Shelby and the men under Campbell began the attack. Ferguson did not discover the presence of the patriot army until they had approached to within 400 yards of him; whereupon the alarm in his camp was given, "to arms" was ordered, and his shrill silver whistle was heard resounding through the forest calling his men to prepare for battle.

The first actual firing was done by Shelby and his men on the north side of the ridge; whereupon, according to prearrangement, the entire patriot army united in a loud ringing frontier war whoop and dashed forward into the fray. The moment Colonel Campbell

caught first sight of the enemy he shouted to his men: "Here they are, my brave boys; shoot like h—l and fight like devils." On all sides of the hill the firing became rapid and regular. About this time, Cleveland, in order to encourage his men, said to them:

My brave fellows, we have beaten the Tories, and we can beat them again. They are all cowards; if they had the spirit of men they would join with their fellow-citizens in supporting the independence of their country. When you are engaged you are not to wait for the word of command from me. I will show you by my example how to fight. Fire as quick as you can, and stand your ground as long as you can.

Campbell led his men straight up the hill, pouring a deadly fire into the enemy. He and his men were immediately charged by Ferguson's men with fixed bayonets, and Campbell was driven down the hill. At the same time Shelby and his men were advancing in quick time on the other side of the ridge, so that Ferguson's army found it necessary to give their attention to Shelby's assault. As one has said:

Shelby, a man of the hardiest make, stiff as iron, among the dauntless singled out for dauntlessness, went right onward and upward like a man who had but one thing to do and with but one thought, to do it.

But he and his brave fellows, like Campbell's, were compelled to retreat before the dashing charge of Ferguson's men. When driven to the foot of the hill, Shelby cried out to his men:

Now, boys, quickly reload your rifles and let's advance upon them and give them another hell of fire.

[Applause.]

Thus back and forth, Campbell and Sevier on one side and Shelby and Cleveland on the other, the patriots charged up the hill three consecutive times and each time they were driven back and each time renewed the charge, until the whole hill was enveloped in flame and the rattle of the musketry sounded like thunder. The coils of the patriots—commanded by Campbell, Sevier, McDowell, Winston, Hambright, Cleveland, Lacey, Williams, and Shelby—were drawing closer around Ferguson, who galloped back and forth cheering his men and giving orders. Above the din and roar of the battle could be heard his shrill silver whistle, by which he gave his commands. The place of his encampment was cleared land, or rather bare of timber, which made his men easily seen and singled out by the attacking force; but the mountain sides were studded with trees, which furnished protection for the patriots. The distinguished Col. Harry Lee, after the battle, said of Ferguson's choice of the place:

It was more assailable by the rifle than defensible by the bayonet.

The battle was now in progress on all sides of the mountain. The roar and din was terrific. Hon. Bailey Peyton, of Tennessee, said:

When the conflict began the mountain appeared volcanic; there flashed along its summit and around its base and up its sides one long sulphurous blaze.

At the first fire delivered by Ferguson's men Colonel Lacey's horse was shot from under him. The conflict was terrible and sanguinary. The patriots were trained with the gun and were "dead shots." The royal troops were well drilled, well armed, and well commanded. Thus the battle raged for more than an hour, much of the time being engaged in hand-to-hand fighting. Capt. William Edmondson, one of Campbell's men, dashed up the side of the hill, knocked a rifle from

a Briton's hand, seized him by the neck, and dragged him to the foot of the hill. [Applause.] He returned again to make a similar conquest, when he fell mortally wounded. After the battle was ended one of his faithful men told him of the great victory, whereupon the dying man showed his great satisfaction of the result and passed away. Colonel Campbell took him by the hand and wept. He died with the shout of victory in his ears, "smiled, loosed his feeble hold on life, and the Christian patriot went to his reward."

Major Chronicle and Colonel Hambright, with their Lincoln County boys, were in the thickest of the fight, and while making a gallant charge up the mountain side Major Chronicle was struck with a ball by the enemy and fell; but Hambright took command and pressed on up the hill to victory. Many bold hand-to-hand fights took place during this terrible hour. The splendid steed which Colonel Cleveland rode was shot from under him. McDowell's men (Burk and Rutherford) did splendid service and were at all times where the bullets fell thickest. No regiment, no man, failed to do his duty. The brave Colonel Williams on the top of the mountain, fell and died like a hero. His dying words were: "For God's sake, boys, don't give up the hill." Each soldier of the army obeyed to the letter Shelby's battle cry, "Never shoot until you see an enemy, and never see an enemy without bringing him down." [Applause.]

At the end of an hour the brave fighters under Ferguson and De Peyster began to despair, for during the terrible preceding 50 minutes their numbers were rapidly decreased by the incessant and unerring fire of the mountain men. The Tories began to give way first, hammered and driven by Shelby and Campbell. At this time De Peyster, second in command, seeing that all was lost hoisted the white flag, whereupon Ferguson galloped up and cut it down with his sword. It is evident that Ferguson never intended to surrender, but his idea was to escape or die fighting. Accordingly he and a few of his closest officers made a daring attempt to break through the patriot lines for their freedom. Dashing forward, he cut and slashed on every side with his glittering sword. Some one in the American Army cried out: "There's Ferguson; shoot him." Whereupon more than a dozen muskets leveled at him and he fell from his horse after receiving eight fatal wounds, one of them being through the head He died almost immediately. To the men in Sevier's column is due. the credit of having delivered the fatal shots and prevented the escape of the royal commander.

Now a final hand-to-hand conflict between the contending forces ensued, which lasted about 20 minutes. Shelby and Campbell were leading the onslaught. The fighting was done within 100 feet range. This onset drove Ferguson's gallant rangers and well-drilled Tories back to their tents, where most of the rangers were killed. At this point Captain De Peyster, who fought gallantly during the entire battle, again hoisted the white flag. The royalists were now huddled in a group on the top of the mountain. The patriots were ordered to close up and surround them and receive their surrender. [Applause.]

After the surrender it was proposed to give three cheers for "Liberty," which was done, and the old hills and caverns resounded with shouts of victory and freedom.

Ferguson died like a hero; De Peyster commanded like a veteran. Considering the numbers engaged, there was no more sanguinary battle fought during the Revolutionary War. It was one of the most

complete and far-reaching victories that history records. Not one of Major Ferguson's army escaped, 456 having been killed and wounded and 648 taken prisoners. The American loss was 6 officers and 23 privates killed and 54 wounded.

Draper says that "so curious were the Whigs to see the fallen British chief that many repaired to the spot to see the body as it lay in its gore and glory." On the southeast portion of the ridge the valiant leader, wrapped in a raw beef's hide, without military cloak or hero's coffin, was buried, and his grave may now be seen by the passer-by, although this has been his sepulcher for more than a hundred years. Ferguson's famous silver whistle fell into the hands of Colonel Shelby, while Colonel Sevier took charge of his silken sash. To Colonel Cleveland was given Ferguson's beautiful white horse.

Thomas Young, in describing this battle, says:

Awful, indeed, was the scene of the wounded, the dying, and the dead on the field after the carnage of that dreadful day.

Another says:

The scenes of the battle ground the night after the conflict were heartrending in the extreme—the groans of the dying and the constant call of "Water, water."

Says another:

The groans of the wounded and dying on the mountain were truly affecting, begging piteously for a little water.

The red rose grew pale at the blood that was shed,
And the white rose blushed at the shedding.

Mr. Chairman, in the smoke and din of this terrible battle, in which were engaged 2,200 sturdy fighters, was born this magnificent Republic, whose blessings we now share. [Applause.] The effect of this great victory on the people, both North and South, was electrical. Every American took fresh courage, and the cause of the patriots began to ascend from that hour, and grew stronger and stronger until the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. This victory paved the way for his surrender. Ferguson, with his army, was the right arm of Cornwallis, and his loss and defeat compelled Cornwallis to evacuate Charlotte and hastily retire into South Carolina. Thenceforward the British cause waned, and the splendid fabric of this splendid Republic was made not only a possibility, but a reality.

Senator Lodge, in his Story of the Revolution, writing of this battle, says:

It proved one of the decisive battles of the Revolution. It turned the tide of war in the Southern States. From that time the British fortunes declined, while the spirit of the southern people rose at a bound. The back country was freed, for Ferguson and his men constituted the force upon which Cornwallis counted to subdue the interior and crush out all local risings. That force and its very brave and efficient commander were wiped out of existence.

Speaking of the retreat of Cornwallis from Charlotte, the same author says:

All the way his men had been shot down by the militia—something quite impossible before Kings Mountain. * * * Cornwallis had been forced to abandon his northern march.

Thomas Jefferson said of this battle:

It was the joyful annunciation of that turn in the tide of success that terminated the Revolutionary War with the seal of our independence.

Dr. J. Watts De Peyster, an eminent authority, says that Kings Mountain was the decisive battle of the war in the South, and, per-

haps, the decisive result everywhere. He further says that it was "the deadliest for the number who actually fought in it at the South." He says the tactics of the patriots in this battle were unexceptionable and, as applied to Colonel Cleveland, as "worthy of the strategem of Hannibal, which implies the highest commendation."

John H. Wheeler, the historian, says:

This was the turning point of the fortunes of America. This decisive blow prostrated the British power for the time, vanquished the Tory influence, and encouraged the hopes of the patriots.

John Fiske, in his War of Independence, says:

In the series of events which led to the surrender of Cornwallis the Battle of Kings Mountain played a part similar to that played by the Battle of Bennington in the series of events which led to the surrender of Burgoyne. It was the enemy's first serious disaster, and its immediate result was to check his progress until the Americans could muster strength enough to overthrow him.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I have tried in my poor way to show the House the importance of this battle in establishing American independence and in delivering our country from Britain's yoke, and believing that those Members who have followed me in this discourse are satisfied that Kings Mountain was one of the most important, if not the most important, conflict during the entire Revolutionary War, and believing thus, everyone must feel a deep sense of mortification in the failure of this Government for more than a century to commemorate this battle in some suitable way.

The great heroes who fought there and shed luster upon American arms need no monument to their memory. If they did, the high peak of Kings Mountain, standing isolated from its lofty neighbors, keeps eternal vigil over the battle ground, continually pointing to the spot "where valor proudly sleeps;" but we, ourselves American citizens, who have reaped the benefit of their sacrifice and their glory can not afford to let this spot go unmarked by national recognition. So let us, by our votes in this House, build upon this sacred spot a magnificent shaft, and if love of country, if patriotism, could be the architect, I venture to say it would pierce the clouds beyond the flight of the eagle, for it was there on that stony mountain crest that these patriots planted the banner of liberty, and there "blazed out the path and made clear the way up which all the nations of the earth must come in God's appointed time."

When honored and decrepit age shall lean against the base of this monument, and troops of ingenuous youth shall be gathered around it, and when the one shall speak to the other of its objects and the purposes of its construction, and the great and glorious event with which it is connected, there shall rise from every youthful breast the ejaculation, "Thank God, I—I also—am an American!"

But whether you build this monument or not, the example of the brave heroes who there fought and yielded up their stainless lives upon their country's altar will be a perennial inspiration to all the young people of this entire country—brave yeomanry! simple in their habits, lofty in their aspirations, patriotic in action, gallant in battle, and glorious in death! [Applause.]

But in justice to ourselves and to our country let us build to their memory a magnificient monument. In the language of Webster—

Let it rise! Let it rise till it meet the sun in his coming; let the earliest light of the morning gird it, and the parting day linger and play on its summit.

[Prolonged applause.]

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