

CUMBERLAND CENTENNIAL

We were present at the Cumberland Centennial and spent two days most pleasantly in the hospitable old town of Fayetteville.

On Monday evening at 9 o'clock the drums beat and flags were unfurled. The two military companies of the town were out in full force.

The meeting was opened with prayer by Rev. H. G. Hill, Mr. R. S. Huske read the declaration of association paper and prefaced it with the following eloquent words:

We are gathered to-day, fellow-countrymen, upon a spot immortalized a century ago by the pronounced action of a few resolute men, guided by that independent spirit which, in New Haven, influenced the fearless Ash and gallant Waddell, with their bold comrades, who, storming the palatial home of the haughty Tryon, wrung from his frightened subordinates a solemn pledge to desist from the imposition of unjust, onerous duties—and that too when a British fleet was anchored in the waters of the Cape Fear.

Stung perhaps by the thought that British troops had crushed the first promptings of freedom among the rugged hills of Alamance, where the Regulators had sealed their devotion to liberty with their hearts beat blood; stirred recently by the tidings from Lexington, and emulating the declaration that had just emanated from the grand old county of Mecklenburg, they gathered—not in disguise, not under the cover of the night, but beneath the light of yonder glorious sun; not in haste, not in fear, for these were brave men, deliberation was written on every brow; the look of every eye was a look of high resolve.

Despite the fact that the military prowess of Great Britain could compete with the world; despite the fact that her maritime power rode superior on every ocean; despite the fact that British soldiers were even then stationed in every colony, and, what is more astonishing, notwithstanding the fact, the glaring fact, that they were surrounded, completely hemmed in, by a race of men bound by a peculiar oath, and consequently as true as steel in their devotion to the existing sovereignty—a race hospitable to friends and foes, in peace gentle as the breeze from our Western mountains, but in open warfare with their enemies as rough as the billows of the stormy ocean; yet, despite these dangers a handful of men met here, with no means, no discipline, no organization; slow, in sight of, eye, in the midst of this haughty race of loyal highland clansmen, whose houses were scattered from Cross Creek to Gilegory, from Long Street to Killie Gray.

They met with the determination that the Colonies should know that there were men in Cumberland who dared bind themselves to the American cause, betide them weal or woe.

Think of it, fellow-citizens, 'twas a deed that emulates Thermopylae! 'Twas an action that will go sounding down the ages! We are now gathered here, as has been aptly said, to make tradition authentication. It is our privilege, it is our duty to remind North Carolina, to remind America that there were men who knew their rights, and knowing dared maintain them. It is our duty to stamp the seal of prosperity's approbation upon their deeds, to give vent to their admiration for their matchless bravery.

It has been asserted that this declaration is a copy of one passed in New Haven on the previous day. The bare statement of this assertion proves it the idle fancy of an ill-informed essayist, for the brevity of the interval negatives the possibility of its truth. It is, beyond doubt, the expressive outgrowth of the bold conceptions of the men of Cumberland, and most admirably does it compare with productions of its kind. The declaration of this Association is on file in the capital, in the handwriting of a member—Robert Rowan, "one of the few, the immortal names that were not born to die."

In emulation of the unity of this Association, here upon this common altar of our community, let us each, one and all, unite in a solemn resolve that we will go hence, determined, by our continued self-sacrificing efforts, to build up and push forward the intellectual and commercial interests of our town, and then, when a century has rolled away, a generation exceeding as we exceed these thirty-nine associates, gathering here to commemorate a second centennial, will pronounce us not unworthy descendants of these heroic men.

chivalric in his nature, do otherwise than make an attempt, when beauty's matchless eyes are thus brilliantly beaming.

In conclusion, I will read you the Declaration:

THE ASSOCIATION, June 26, 1776.

The actual commencement of hostilities against the continent, by the British troops in the blood scene on the 19th of April last, near Boston, the increase of arbitrary impositions from a wicked and despotic Ministry, and the dread of instigated insurrections in the colonies, are causes sufficient to drive an oppressed people to the use of arms. We, therefore, the subscribers, of Cumberland County, holding ourselves bound by the most sacred of all obligations, the duty of good citizens towards an injured country, and thoroughly convinced, that under our distressed circumstances, we shall be justified in resisting force by force, do unite ourselves under every tie of religion and honor, and associate as a band in her defence against every foe, hereby solemnly engaging, that whenever our Continental or Provincial Councils shall decree it necessary, we will go forth and be ready to sacrifice our lives and fortunes to secure her freedom and safety. This obligation to continue in full force until a reconciliation shall take place between Great Britain and America, upon constitutional principles, an event most ardently desired; and we will hold all those persons inimical to the liberty of the colonies, who shall refuse to subscribe to this Association; and we will in all things follow the advice of our General Committee respecting the purposes aforesaid, the preservation of peace and good order, and the safety of individual and private property. Signed,

Robert Rowan, Lewis B.arge, Maurice Nowlan, Lewis Powell, Martin Lennard, George Fletcher, Walter Murray, David Evans, John Elwell, Benjamin Elwell, Joseph Green, Robert Green, Robert Carver, Theophilus Evans, Thomas Moody, Joseph De Lospina, Arthur Goucel, Jas. Oliver, Charles Stevens, Wm. Harris, Robert Verner, David Dunn, Simon Danday, John Jones, Robert Conwell, Samuel Carver, David Shepherd, Micajah Farrel, John Wilson, James Enamet, Aaron Nerday, John Parker, Philip Herin, James Gee, Wm. White, Joshua Hadley, William Blocker, Samuel Hollingsworth, Wm. Carver.

At the close of the reading, Mr. Troy introduced the orator of the day, Mr. R. Fuller who responded in the following eloquent address:

The immortal Scott, in one of his finest works, gives utterance to this noble sentiment:

"Man dies, but glory lives."

It is the bugle-note which has sounded through the centuries of man's existence, summoning the race to its loftiest deeds of heroism, and its most magnificent achievements. It is the motto which inspired the mighty men of antiquity, the renowned warrior, the poet, painter, historian and statesman of every epoch, to leave behind a name and memory upon which men delight to dwell—a record of noble deeds, the outgrowth and expression of a noble life, and an example which succeeding generations would delight to honor.

Our gathering together this afternoon is but a new token of the reverence which we feel for that glory which was won in the past time, by the men of the century gone—won for us, who enjoy their well-earned fame as a part of our rightful inheritance; no less than the substantial reward of civil and religious liberty which they purchased with their lives. They left their footprints upon the sands of their times; which serve even yet to indicate the pathway first trodden by them to the heights of an imperishable renown. Seeing these, we may take heart and feel our strength renewed for all the conflicts which await us in preserving, consolidating, strengthening and beautifying the temple of liberty, whose foundations they laid broad and deep enough for the whole human race.

We clasp hands with them to-day over an interesting chain of an hundred years. Their names are preserved to us by a thoughtful care, and it is every way fitting that we should do honor to them, even at this day, bowing in reverence to their memory, and holding their ashes dear to our hearts. Would that we knew more of them—that we could point out how each one nobly fulfilled the promise which he made, and redeemed the pledge which he laid upon the altar of his country. But they have faded out of our ken; their kindred, most of them, have passed away and been forgotten; they have encountered the common fate of the living:

"These men are dust, Their good swords rust, Their souls are with the saints, we trust."

A hundred years! Who shall fill this mighty space! Who shall re-people the past with its thronging multitudes as eager in the pursuit of happiness as those who now surround us! Generation after generation have been gathered to their fathers; the scattered provinces which made this embryo republic a century ago have been multiplied in territorial extent, in numbers and in power, until the infant nation launched upon the uncertain and dangerous experiment of self-government, has become the mighty power that

shakes the earth with its nod. To fill the description or minute enumeration would be out of place in the rapid glance that we must take across this lengthened period. A powerful effort is required to bring together events so widely separated, or even to consider in one view the expanded present and the meagre beginnings of our prosperity and power. Were it not that we are linked to the past by a proud, enabling obligation of gratitude, we should find a difficulty in identifying ourselves with the apostles of liberty as to claim a pure, unalloyed succession to their worthy titles. But it is a heritage that honors them in bestowing, no less than ourselves in receiving and improving, that we may send it down unalloyed—unextended and glorified—to the men of the century yet to come. The famous Dr. Brockinridge was once asked how old he was. His reply came with that promptness and vehemence which were characteristic of the man: "I am one hundred and fifty years old, sir!" The astonishment created by the reply was greatly lessened when he immediately added, "If I measure my age by the work which I have done, I am one hundred and fifty; but my actual age, by count of years, is but sixty-five." So it is with our nation: if we measure its existence by its tremendous growth in everything that makes a people great, we might well claim that "forty centuries look down" upon us; or that, like the celestial empire, the most remote antiquity fails to reveal our earliest beginnings—and we need the touchstone of a true contemporary history to qualify and keep in bounds what might otherwise degenerate into the mere arrogance of presumption. And yet, in a very high and important sense, what we have done is the more accurate measurement of our life, either as individuals or communities. The momentum acquired is the true gain to be noted and valued, whether it be the result of initial force or the gathered strength of long-continued motion. The power of to-day is the net product of all the past, be it long or short, and its capacity for future usefulness is the one criterion of its excellence.

Could we summon to our midst this day the men who stood here one hundred years ago, how much greater would be their astonishment than ours! They would move in a world entirely new—new ideas, new methods, new appliances, not evolved out of the old, but new-created—would add to their bewilderment, until they would be "in wandering mazes lost" while it might be difficult for us, out of veneration for their names and memory, to repress a feeling of complacent pity, though tempered with tender respect, for their helpless wonder. Yet these men were the holders of our fortunes, the founders of our greatness; they filled the measure of their own time more fully, perhaps, than do we of this advanced age. They are to be honored for their achievements on a limited field no less than their descendants who have acquired a broader fame on a more extended theatre. They obeyed; and, in obeying, fulfilled and honored the law of growth and expansion under which they lived, and made all our advances possible by their own attainment of a higher plane of development than had been occupied by their immediate ancestry. They, without us, would not have been perfect—but we, in our greatness and power, without them, would not have been possible.

The onward progress of the human race has not been by a continued process of evolution and quiet development from the lower to the higher, from the pent-up circle of ancient thought and action to the full-orbed rotundity and majesty of modern civilization. On the contrary, there seems to have swept over the world, from time to time, great floods of devastating fire, in which all that was destructive, or not worth preserving, has perished forever, leaving, as the materials with which to begin the reconstruction, only those solid and enduring ideas which have slowly crystallized into strength and beauty. The wood, hay, stubble have been tried and they have miserably perished. The gold and silver and precious stones have alone survived the crucial test of their endurance and value. History is full of such examples. Men and ideas, governments and peoples have decayed, waxed old and vanished away; sometimes they have disappeared with the suddenness of an explosion—sometimes they have succumbed to the slower but quite as certain progress of a mortal disease which ended in dissolution. The former things passed away; the new was not a reproduction of the old, but an advance into a higher life, a more beautiful as well as a more healthful existence. After the death came the resurrection. Three such periods have been notably fulfilled in our own history as a nation within the hundred years now closing. The first of these culminated in the revolution of 1776, by which we became free and independent States. It was not merely passion, nor impatience of legal restraint, nor an impulsive longing for something new, uncertain whether it was to be better or worse, that led these few courageous

men, the companions of those whose names we celebrate to-day, to risk life and fortune in armed resistance, to voluntarily whose common duty they were assumed to obey. Neither was it a clear foresight of what might be the consequences of their acts, as envisaged in the struggle which then began. But they were men who knew and felt the burdens of their own time and condition—who were conscious of a strength as yet untried, that was quivering and throbbing in its impatience for a fuller and more complete development—who spurned the swaddling clothes of an early infancy, which they had been condemned to wear long after they were grown up, and who reached out after the possibilities of the future, though unknown and uncertain. Because they could never again be satisfied without a new experience of their own creation, the men of 1776-78 took a new departure; the past for them was finished, the volume was written out, rolled up and laid away—the drama was fully played to the last act—the curtain was lowered for a space; and then drawn up to present a scene, not only different, but conceived and executed by a new school. When it fell, the interval was filled with arms, conflict, the noise of the captains and the shouting, the exultant sighings of the war-horse—the pomp and circumstance of battle, with blood and wounds and death! When it rose, the scene was peaceful, if somewhat desolate, and youth and freshness had replaced the decrepitude and decay of a debauched and dissolute old age.

The second of these periods was one of short duration. The vigorous youth which appeared so lusty and strong, never attained a mature development. From the close of the Revolution in 1783 to the adoption of the Constitution of the United States in 1788-9, a feeble existence, a name to live was all that we could claim. Once more a new life was to be attained, and again a resurrection from the dead past was to be the means of its achievement.

But this time the old life ebbed peacefully away; its sands fell into the hourglass with no rude hand to quicken its steady wasting. Loving and gentle ministrations assisted the passage to the tomb, decently composed the arms now limp and powerless, and sadly draped the form of the dead in the ceremonies of its last, long sleep. "The King is dead"—but his successor is known and ready to be crowned. "Long live the King"—and the old Confederation—the weakling of the day—gives place to the giant of the ages—the government of the United States.

From our entrance on the new system until the year 1861 our nation grew and strengthened with unexampled rapidity and robustness; and, until the culminating events of that period, there were but few who saw that another death and another resurrection must take place before the nation could become thoroughly fitted to enter upon its larger field of glory. Again the curtain fell upon the past, and again the interval was filled with sighs and groans and tears and blood and death. Ah! then the demon of war had a holocaust of victims, and the land yet mourns the loss of its best and bravest men. But the curtain rose again upon a new scene, wherein was opened to the vision the great beyond. Its circumference is in the land of the cloudy mist; its height and depth, its length and breadth no human knowledge can yet assign. Happy shall we be, if we can but rightly fulfill our parts, so that future generations may stand upon this spot and pay to us the reverence which we now cherish and express for our fathers of a century ago! Here they met and pledged to each other their most solemn truth. They builded wiser than they knew; they rendered possible, nay, certain, all that we have since attained; they died unslain, but not forgotten—they died, but their glory still lives; they left to us their memory fresh and green, and fragrant of good deeds, and to-day we engrain them among "the few, the immortal names that were not born to die." They lived and acted under the behests of duty, that God-given incentive to noble and generous effort—duty that lies down with us at night and rises with us in the morning; that continues with us like a shadow, and never leaves us, until we leave the light of life. Let us emulate their virtue, let us grapple boldly, yet not presumptuously with the duty which beckons us onward; let us

Act, as in the living present; Heart within, and God overhead."

At the conclusion of Mr. Fuller's fine oration, the crowd called upon Hon. Josiah Turner, editor of the Sentinel, who was upon the stand, and that gentleman spoke in reply in his usual happy and vigorous style.

The military companies were then re-formed, and marched to Rowan street, where Colonel Starr had dressed parade of the battalion, in the presence of a large concourse of ladies and gentlemen.

Under the management of Col. Starr, the ceremonies passed off smoothly and satisfactorily; and the day, ending with fireworks and a grand ball at night, was very pleasant.

Joshua Turner was next introduced by Mr. Fuller. He said he came to listen and to learn, and to take a humble part in celebrating a great event in which his grandfather, great grandfather and great uncle took part. It was a great event not only in the history of Cumberland and the Cape Fear, but in the history of the world. It was a time of great destruction and great creation. An old and long tried government was overthrown, and a new and untried system created. Seven years of darkness, bloodshed, suffering and tears followed the declaration made on this spot dear to memory and sacred to heroism and to liberty. Right on this spot thirty-nine bold, good and true sons of Cumberland solemnly engaged the one with the other and all together by the solemn ties of religion, honor and duty to resist force with force the aggressions of King George and every other foe. And they declared all others inimical to the liberties of the colonies who would not join them. It was a solemn and trying occasion. The world had never before looked upon such an event save at Mecklenburg, just one month before.

The next year the declarations of Mecklenburg and Liberty Point became the declaration of the thirteen colonies on the 4th of July, 1776. We compute the age of men by years, and the age of nations by centuries. Three score and ten is allotted to man by the Psalmist, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years then is their strength but labor and sorrow. We learn from the same sacred source that a thousand years are as yesterday when it is past. With this mode of computation we may call our nation, dating from the Liberty Point declaration, one century, or one year old. Nations, like individuals, have their birth, youth, old age and decay. Like boys, nations sow their wild oats. I hope as a nation we are through sowing "wild oats." We have certainly reaped an abundant harvest from the seed sown.

You and I, my friend, have witnessed the birth and death of many nations. I might mention that of Maximilian, Napoleon the Third, the Confederate States of America, the French and Spanish Republics. The last named was strangled in infancy by a light-haired lad called Alphonso, who parts his hair in the middle. He was guilty of infanticide. We are now closing up the first century, or if you please the first year of our existence. Our youth as a nation has not been as tranquil and prosperous as I could wish. Our Republican baby has grown as never did a baby before. But the baby has been ill with colic and fits, and all the ailments incident to infancy. I trust when one century more has run out, and our descendants stand where we now stand to post up their centennial books, they may find more cause to rejoice than we have at the close of our century. I hope they will be in a spirit and frame of mind to inspire their descendants with love and reverence for the free and noble institutions to which we owe our growth, greatness and strength despite of the colic and fits which have so sorely afflicted the baby Republic. We have had my friends too much of war. Instead of heaving our swords into plowshares we have turned our plowshares into swords and cast our church bells into cannon. A seven years war followed the bold declaration made one hundred years ago where we now stand. Only twenty-nine years of peace followed, when came the war of 1812. Only thirty-one years of peace came when followed the Mexican war. Thirteen years of peace followed to be succeeded by four years of the greatest and most destructive war ever known to ancient or modern times. I mean the late war between the States.

When the next one is to come God only knows. I shall not attempt to divine. It will all depend upon the wisdom of those younger than myself. The Athenians taught their children that they were born not only to their parents but to their country, and the same sentiment inspired our ancestors who stood where we stand a century ago. A government to be loved must be lovely. The government of King George was not lovely in the sight of our ancestors, and they would have no more of it.

The government of the United States has not been lovely in our sight, and when it is I will answer for you all, you will love it, until then you may obey but you cannot love it. Nor are you to blame, the Lord has so made you and you cannot help it.

But I am talking more than I intended, and what is worse, more perhaps than you expected. I cannot, however, close without saying something personal of the thirty-nine whose great deed we have met to commemorate. I regret that I know so little of them. What I know was mostly collected this morning in talking with the grand children and great grand children of the thirty-nine signers.

Rowan, after whom is called one of your streets, was the author of the declaration or association paper as it was called. He was the leading spirit in the great movement. He was to the signers of the Cumberland declaration in 1776

what Jefferson was to the signers of the national declaration in 1776. I learn from a great grand daughter of George Fletcher that he lived in the house on Rowan street where Dr. Melles now lives, and was killed in a duel. His wife was a sister of Theophilus and David Evans, two of the signers of the declaration, she was dressing for a ball when her husband entered the house about midnight and said he would return in a half hour. He returned within the time but was a lifeless corpse. Mrs. Fletcher was a resolute, courageous woman, and had great contempt for such pests as squirrels, monkeys and poolle dogs. Her favorite pet was a she bear, and with this pet she saved the life of a patriot friend who was pursued by the enemy. He was required to enter the cellar by a trap door, and brim was stationed at the entrance, and the pursuers forced to search the cellar where their victim lay concealed. A grand daughter of John Elwell tells us how his wife swam the Cape Fear, riding one and leading another horse to get them from the reach of the enemy. The grandson of Samuel Hollingsworth says he was killed by a bite from a rattlesnake. He killed the snake and carried it to the house, where he died in six hours after the bite. James Gee served faithfully for seven years to make good the Mecklenburg, the Cumberland and the Philadelphia declarations of independence. Dr. Duffy and the Kirkpatricks are of his grandchildren. Theophilus and David Evans were brothers. Theophilus married Susan Carver, the daughter of William Carver, one of the thirty-nine. David Evans was the father of the late Jonathan Evans, whose children are of this Assembly. Mr. Kirkpatrick, the grandson of James Gee says his grandmother, Mary Gee, often told him how she ransomed Theophilus Evans from the hands of his captors by giving them a bottle of whiskey, and this may account for the partiality of some of that old man's descendants for that exhilarating beverage. His captors were told that he was under his horse's belly with ropes and chains, and it may be that Mary Gee, his deliverer, found him in this unpleasant attitude, and novel mode of securing a prisoner of war. I shall be glad if the descendants of the thirty-nine signers will give me what tradition has handed down to them respecting their ancestors. I trust my friends that the next century will be brighter and happier than the one which has just closed, and whether it will or will not depends upon the virtue, worth and intelligence of our posterity. I hope our evil days are over, and that this is the first day of a tranquil and happy century, a century to be noted for its love of peace, for its love of religious and political tolerance, its temperate freedom and equal justice to all. I am gratified I assure you at having been allowed to take part in such a jubilee of which no man ever sees but one. And now when I have thanked you again for the kind reception you have given me, I will say good evening and good bye, and if I am living you may look for me at your next centennial.

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