

**A Scrap of Revolutionary History!**  
**MANUSCRIPT OF AN OLD SOLDIER—THINGS HE SAW.**

The Plain Truth From Robert Henry and David Vance.

I will now give the statements of Col. David Vance and Gen. Joseph McDowell, of the manner of raising the army to oppose Col. Ferguson's on its march, and the defeat of Col. Ferguson. This is the statement of Col. Vance on a sarcastic and severe remark of Mr. M. Matthews, that "they" (meaning the army under Campbell) "were a fierce and formidable set of chickens, and could make a great havoc among eggs, if each were provided with a stick." This elicited a more extensive reply and statement of the whole affair and its consequences from Gen. McDowell and Col. Vance. I will first give the reasons and upon what occasion Vance and McDowell made these statements. The general Assembly of North Carolina made an agreement with that of Tennessee to run and mark the divisional line between the two States, and in the year 1799, the State of North Carolina appointed Gen. Joseph McDowell, Col. David Vance and M. Matthews, Commissioners on the part of North Carolina, who appointed John Strother and myself surveyors, with the necessary number of chain bearers, markers and pack-horsemen, for that business, who met and went to the White-top mountain, a spur of the Stone mountains, where the Virginia line crossed the latter. Strother did not appear at the commencement. The company were asking a great number of questions relative to Ferguson's defeat, and at length requested that Vance or McDowell would give them a connected account of the whole transaction from first to last. It was agreed that Col. Vance should give that account. The Colonel consented to do so upon consulting with McDowell, our pilot Gideon Lewis—who was a news carrier, and myself, on the first wet day that would prevent us from progressing with the line. Accordingly a wet day happened when we were at the head of the Roundabout on the Stone mountain. Our bark camp was soon fixed and Col. Vance gave the account, ending with the account of the battle of King's mountain. I was provided with a note book, separate from my surveyor's book, to take memoranda of particular things that occurred, and commenced doing so, when Col. Vance, who was an elegant clerk, said that as there was only surveyor, I would not have time to do it, and he would give him my book he would write it down for me as he was at leisure.

Col. Vance says: "I have in some measure to depend upon my memory. I will begin with Col. Shelby's retreat after defeating the British at Enoree. Col. Charles McDowell had detached Shelby and Sevier with a party to go round where Ferguson was camped. This party defeated the British and Tories at Enoree when Col. Charles McDowell received intelligence of Gates' defeat and sent an express to us to retreat. Gen. Joseph McDowell was then Major, and together with Col. Shelby called a council of all the officers to know what was best to do. It was agreed that we must make a stand to get round Ferguson and his army. Col. McDowell, carrying our persons alternately on horseback and making short distances on foot; after going some distance found Col. C. McDowell had left his camp and was retreating towards Gilbert Town. We altered our course and overtook him and the main army. After joining with Col. McDowell, Col. Shelby and Sevier thought an army of volunteers could be raised to defeat Ferguson, stating that Ferguson's main object was to kill the Whig stock; that he would be on the head of Broad river and then he would cross the head of Catawba to execute that purpose, which would give time to raise volunteers over the mountains and in Surry and Wilkes counties. All the officers and some of the privates were consulted and agreed that it was right to make the trial to raise an army. It was then agreed that the prisoners be sent to Virginia; that Col. Shelby and Sevier should, with their men, go to their homes over the mountains and procure volunteers; that Col. Chas. McDowell should send an express to Col. Cleveland and Herndon in Wilkes for them to raise volunteers, and that Col. C. McDowell should also provide some way to preserve the Whig stock on the head of the Catawba river, and to provide some way of giving intelligence of Ferguson's movements. The prisoners were detached to Virginia. Col. Shelby and Sevier immediately started over the mountains, and Col. C. McDowell went to Col. Cleveland and Herndon to raise volunteers to be ready to march on the shortest notice. Col. McDowell then called the men on the head of Catawba and first proposed that they could not go over the mountains should take protection under Ferguson on his advance, and thereby save the Whig stock. Daniel Smith, afterwards Col. Thos. Lytle, Robert Patton and J. McDowell of the Pleasant Gardens, absolutely refused to do that, and stated that they would drive the stock into the deep coves under the eaves of the Black mountain; that others might take protection and save the stock that remained behind. John Carson, afterward Col. Wm. Davidson, Ben Davidson and others were

appointed to take protection and save the remaining stock. Jas. Nail, Jack Nail and Archibald Nail were appointed news carriers over the Yellow mountains to Shelby and were to be passing continually; that they were to receive the news in the Turkey cove relative to Ferguson's movements; that Joseph Dobson and James Macey were to be bearers of like news to Cleveland and Herndon, and were to receive their news at the Montgomery place, afterwards Jos. Dobson's place. Col. Cleveland appointed his brother, Robt. Cleveland, and Gideon Lewis, our pilot, to be news bearers between him and Shelby. Thus the news went the rounds as fast as horses could carry their riders. After Col. C. McDowell had thus arranged his business he received news that Ferguson was at Gilbert Town. He then collected all the men that he could procure from Burke county, and went to Shelby and Sevier who had engaged Col. Campbell, of Virginia, also to raise volunteers. The orders given to the volunteers were to equip themselves as quick as possible, and have nothing to provide when they were called on to march, but to saddle their horses and march on the shortest notice. Those who could not go supplied those who could go with everything they stood in need of. It was also announced to the volunteers, by the officers, that a battle with Ferguson was determined upon, and that they must rely upon a battle before they returned home. The news went the rounds by the news carriers before mentioned, of every thing that happened in Ferguson's camp until news came that John Carson had played a sly trick on Ferguson; that having saved almost all the Whig stock that had not been driven into the coves by Daniel Smith & Co., Ferguson began to suspect Carson of saving Whig stock; there being a large quantity of Tory stock ranging about the large cane brakes where David Greenlee lives, and that a large party of Ferguson's men were filed out to kill Whig stock, and they designing to go to that place and another party were going to the Montgomery place, where Joseph Dobson lived, for the like purpose. Carson went with the party to the latter place, without informing the other party going to Greenlee's that the cattle ranging there was the property of Tories then in Ferguson's camp. The parties each went on their business and returned to camp; those who had gone to Greenlee's boasted that they had killed over 100 head of 3, 4, 5 and 6 year old rebel steers. Carson observed that those cattle were the property of Brown, Dement and Johnston, who were then in camp, whereupon those men went and discovered that the steers killed were everyone their own. This turned the Tories rather against Ferguson. Ferguson said that the Rebels had outwitted him and that he was unable to effect his purpose there, and that he would start back to Gilbert Town on a certain day. As soon as the words left Ferguson's mouth, the news was on its passage to Cleveland and Shelby, it did not stop day or night. The news was soon at its place of destination. Shelby immediately directed Campbell and his men to meet him on a given day at Watauga, and Sevier to meet him and Campbell on a given day at the spring on the bald ground in the Yellow mountain, at the side of Bright's path, all of which was done with great exactness. He issued orders for Col. Cleveland and Herndon to meet him on a given day on Silver creek in Burke county, and ordered Daniel Smith, I. McDowell, Lytle, Patton and those who had taken protection to meet him by a certain night at William Nails, which was the next night after the meeting on the Yellow mountain. When the officers met on the Yellow mountain, it was at once agreed to send Col. Chas. McDowell with an express to Gen. Gates asking him to furnish an experienced officer to lead them in the battle with Ferguson. As soon as Chas. McDowell, with his silver mounted Tom Sampson rifle, disappeared, steering for the path on the Lincoln Ridge, the army descended the mountain on Bright's path, and went to Wm. Nails that night, where they met Jos. McDowell, Lytle, Daniel Smith and Patton, the men who had driven the Whig stock into the coves under the eaves of the black mountain, and also those who had taken protection, when it was agreed that McDowell, Lytle and Smith should remain on the head of the river, as it was expected that the Indians would fall on the frontier as soon as Ferguson left it, as these men were considered equal to a small army against Indians, and that those who had taken protection should stay to assist them. It was agreed that Joseph McDowell, afterwards a General, should take twenty men and follow Ferguson's trail, for fear of a surprise. At the head of Silver creek this body fell in with a party of Tories on their way to join Ferguson, killing some and putting the rest to flight, returning to the army next morning. After spending the night at Nails the army marched on to Silver creek, and at the place appointed met Col. Cleveland and Herndon so exactly as scarcely to occasion a halt; proceeding to Cane creek of Broad river, met Major Billy Chronicle with twenty men, still onwards at Camp creek Col. William Graham with 160 well mounted men joined, who gave intelligence that Ferguson had left Gilbert Town and had crossed Broad river at Twittie's ford on his way to join Cruger at Ninety-Six, and that Col. Williams was near Gilbert Town. On the march it was agreed

among the officers that Col. Herndon with his infantry could not overhaul Ferguson before he reached Ninety-Six. They began to count to see how many mounted men they could muster. Graham's 160 and Chronicle's 20 men must equal 200 instead of 180. Campbell told Chronicle that the lad he had with him should not carry the ammunition. Chronicle replied that the lad was the son of old "Rugged and Tough," and that the powder cask was too well hooped to leak. The boy mentioned is Robt. Henry, our surveyor. They counted on and found their number to be between 600 and 700, but told the soldiers that the number was 1,100 counting Williams' men. Orders were then given for those horsemen who were unable from any cause, to take a severe forced march, to fall into the ranks of the infantry, and turn their horses over to one of that body; several exchanges of this kind were made. At Gilbert Town orders were given to kill some beaves for the men, and for them to be ready to march in a very short time; some of the men who were tardy got nothing to eat, the halt was so short. The line of march was taken so as to cross Broad river at Poor's ford, below the mouth of Green river, thus taking a near cut on Ferguson's march to Ninety-Six. The day and night was showery. We crossed Ferguson's trail in the dark, and proceeded to the Cow-pens. We came to a Tory's house, pulled him out of bed, treating him roughly; asked him at what time Ferguson had passed that place, he said he had not passed at all, that he had torch pine and we might light it and see, and if we could find the track of Ferguson's army we might hang or do what we pleased with him, and if we did not find such a sign he would expect milder treatment. Search was made but no sign of the enemy was found; we then camped and began to send men out to find Ferguson's trail. Chronicle proposed to send Enoch Gilmer on this duty, but it was objected to as he was unacquainted with the country, but Chronicle said that Gilmer could and our everything better than those acquainted in the neighborhood, as he could act any character, could laugh and cry in the same breath, and act the fool so well as to make his own acquaintances believe him deranged; that he was a shrewd, cunning fellow and a stranger to fear, hence he was chosen amongst others for this duty. Gilmer went to a Tory's house on Ferguson's trail and told him that he wanted to join Ferguson, but had missed him, and wished to be put on the right track. The Tory told him that after Ferguson had crossed the river at Twittie's ford he had received orders from Lord Cornwallis to go to Charlotte, N. C., that he had called in Tarleton and all his outposts, and was going to give Gates another thrashing, and render North Carolina under British rule, as he had done South Carolina and Georgia, and would enter Virginia with a larger army than had ever been in America. Gilmer gave this account to the officers some time in the day; the march was then taken up for the Cherokee ford on Broad river. Night came on and our pilots missed their way as it was dark and rainy, so that when we came to the river hills it was near daylight; it was then agreed that Gilmer should be sent to see if Ferguson had been apprised of our approach, and if so prevent him from attacking us whilst in the river. Orders were given to protect the guns from the rain. Gilmer had been gone for some time when his voice was heard in the hollow, singing Barney Linn, a favorite blackguard song of the times; this was notice that all was right. Orders were given that as the river was deep the largest horses should be kept on the upper side of the current, the order was not obeyed, and it was remarkable that no one was missing on the other bank. After passing the river it was agreed to send Gilmer ahead to make all the discoveries he could; off he went at a gallop. The officers kept ahead of the privates at a very slow pace, the men cursing and saying that if there was going to be a battle to let it be over, &c., &c. All were very hungry, and whenever a corn field was come to the men soon stripped it, eating part of the corn off the cob, raw, and giving the rest to their horses. After going some distance the officers saw Gilmer's horse tied to a fence about a quarter of a mile off; putting spurs to their horses they went at full speed, reaching the gate, lit, went into the house and found Gilmer seated at a table eating Campbell exclaimed, "we've got you, you damned Rebel," Gilmer said, "Kingsman, by God," Campbell again said, "we've got you, you damned Rebel," Gilmer again said, "Kingsman, by God." In order to test Gilmer's powers of acting, Campbell had provided himself with a rope with a running noose, this he threw over Gilmer's neck, who commenced begging and crying; Campbell swore they would hang him on the bow of the gate, when Chronicle said that would be wrong, for his ghost would haunt the women of the house, who were in great distress. Campbell said, "all right, we'll hang him to the first tree we pass that has a stooping limb. Gilmer was then sent ahead one or two hundred yards, still begging and crying for his life, the rope was then taken off his neck and he mounted his horse. On being asked what news he had, he said that on coming to the Tory's hands he professed to be a true Kingsman on his way to join Ferguson, and desired to know where he could be found; that he had kissed the two women. The young-

est informed him that she had been to Ferguson's camp that morning to carry him some chickens, that his camp was about three miles off, on a ridge between two branches where some deer hunters had had a camp last fall. Maj. Chronicle and Capt. Mattox stated that the camp referred to was theirs, and they knew the ground well. It was agreed that as they knew the ground the should plan the battle. They retired by themselves; and then reported that it was an excellent place to surround Ferguson's army, and as the shooting would be up hill there would be no danger of destroying their own men; but doubted if we had men enough to surround them. It was instantly agreed by all the officers that we should attempt to surround our foes. They immediately began to arrange their men without stopping, assigning to each officer the part he should take in surrounding the hill. By the time this was done we were close to our enemy. Col. Wm. Graham and his men were the last to have their duty assigned. Graham desired leave of absence, alleging that he had received certain intelligence that his wife was dying of the colic about sixteen miles off, near Armstrong's ford on the South Fork. Campbell said to him that would be the greatest inducement for him to stay, as he could carry the news, and if we were successful it would be better than a dose of physic to his wife. Graham exclaimed, "oh, my dear, dear wife! shall I never see her again?" Campbell turned to Maj. Chronicle and in an angry tone of voice, said: "Shall Col. Graham have leave of absence?" Chronicle replied: "It is woman's business, let him go." Campbell told Graham he might go. Graham said he must have an escort, which Chronicle assented to, and he chose David Duckey. Duckey said he would rather be shot than go. Chronicle told him he must go; he said he "would rather be shot on the spot, but if I must go, I must." Graham and Duckey immediately took to the woods and disappeared. Campbell then said to Chronicle: "As Graham has left you must take his place," turning to Col. Hambrite, asked him if he had any objections; he said it was his wish, as Chronicle was well acquainted with the ground. Whereupon Chronicle called out, "come on my South Fork boys," and took the lead; the hill was surrounded in a few minutes and the battle of King's Mountain commenced. Our enemies outnumbered us two to one, so of course their fire was double that of ours. We killed of them 247; our loss was 143, agreeably to the account of Enoch Gilmer and Joseph Beatty, supposed to be the most accurate of any. Though they outnumbered us two to one, and had the choice of position, we fought them killing almost twice as many as they did of us, and took more prisoners than we had men to guard them. But we had not a coward to face the hill that day, they posted off till within two minutes of the battle the last coward left.

Now, friend Bob, I have written down my narrative, as nearly as memory will permit, thinking the reading of it might fill up a blank in your leisure hours, reflecting upon the situation of the times to which these recited facts refer.

Your friend,  
 D. VANCE.  
 [TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.]

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