

A Scrap of Revolutionary History!

MANUSCRIPT OF AN OLD SOLDIER—THINGS HE SAW.

The Plain Truth From Robert Henry and David Vance.

Robert Henry goes on to say: I will now relate a few facts relative to the battle of King's Mountain, which came within my own view and not related by Col. Vance. In Vance's narrative he refers to Col. Graham's and Duckey's leaving the army to visit his wife, and Major Billy Chronicle's taking his place and calling on his South Fork boys to follow him. At that time Enoch Gilmer called on Hugh Ewit, Andrew Barrow and myself to follow him close to the foot of the hill. We marched at a quick step, letting Maj. Chronicle advance about ten steps ahead of us, but further from the hill than we were, until we met the wing from the other side of the hill; then Chronicle, raising his hat, called out, "Face to the hill!" The words were scarcely uttered when a ball struck him and he fell—and in a second after a ball struck Wm. Robb, and he dropped about six feet from Chronicle. We then advanced up the hill close to the Tory lines. There was a log across a hollow where I took my stand, and by stepping one step back I was safe from the British fire. I remained there firing until the British charged bayonets. As they charged they fired, at which fire it is supposed they killed Capt. Mattox and J. Bold, and wounded Wm. Gilmer and John Chittim. The South Fork boys then fired and I did considerable execution. I was preparing to fire when I saw one of the British advancing. I stopped and was in the act of cocking my gun when his bayonet running along the barrel of my gun gave me a thrust through my hand and into my thigh. My antagonist and I both fell. The Fork boys retreated and loaded their guns. I was then lying under the smoke, and it appeared some were not more than gun's length in front of the bayonets, and the furthest could not have been more than twenty yards in front when they fired their rifles; and it is said every one dropped his man. The British then retreated in great haste and were pursued by the Fork boys. Wm. Caldwell saw my condition and pulled the bayonet out of my thigh, but it hung to my hand. He gave my hand a kick and went on. The thrust gave me much pain but the pulling of it off gave me still more. With my well hand I picked up my gun and found it discharged. I suppose when the soldier made his thrust I gripped the trigger and discharged it. The load must have passed through his bladder and cut a main artery in his back, as he bled profusely. Immediately after Caldwell pulled the bayonet out of my thigh the word was that the flag was up. The Whigs then shouted, "Hurrah for Liberty!" three times at the top of their voices. It was immediately announced that Ferguson was killed. I had a desire to see him and went and found him dead. He was shot in the face and breast. It was said that he received other wounds. Samuel Tolbert turned him over and got his pocket pistol. Being in much pain and very thirsty, I left my gun and went to the branch met David Duckey and Col. Graham riding his large black horse wielding his sword and crying, "Hooray for Liberty! Damn the Tories!" and ascended the hill. Having seen him get leave of absence to visit his sick wife I was filled with excitement and a conflict of passion and extreme pain. But this brought on another set of feelings that may be understood but I am not possessed with language to describe. I then went to the branch, drank, bathed my thigh and hand, then went to see if Maj. Chronicle and Wm. Robb were dead or wounded. Found them dead, and saw some of the boys hauling Capt. Mattox and John Bold down the hill, and Samuel Martin carrying Wm. Gilmer, who was wounded in the thigh. Some of the South Fork boys were desirous to start back home that night and wanted to know how many were killed on both sides. Joseph Beatty and Enoch Gilmer were appointed for that purpose. They reported 248 British and 43 Whigs killed. They gave no account of the wounded. In the mean time Hugh Erwin, Andrew Barry and Nathaniel Cook brought their horses and mine. They helped me on my horse but would not carry my gun. We rode over the battle ground, saw in some places the dead lay thick and in others thin. We went about five miles from the battle ground and stayed all night. My wounds pained me extremely. Sunday morning we started for home. When we came to the South Fork the waters were high. My company would not suffer me to ride the river, but took me across in a canoe and hauled me home in a slide. I continued to suffer extreme pain when my mother made a poultice of wet ashes and applied it to my wounds. This gave me the first ease. On Monday morning Hugh Erwin and Andrew Barry came to see me, and soon after came several neutrals, as they called themselves—though they were really Tories—to hear the news about the battle, when the following dialogue took place between Erwin and Barry on the one part and the Tories on the other:

Tory—"Is it certain that Col. Ferguson was killed and his army defeated and taken prisoners?"

E. and B.—"It is certain, for we saw Ferguson after he was dead and his army prisoners."

Tory—"How many men had Col. Ferguson?"

E. and B.—"Nearly 1,200, but not quite 1,200."

Tory—"Where did you get the men to defeat him?"

E. and B.—"We had the South Carolina and Georgia refugees, Col. Graham's men, some from Virginia, some from the head of the Yadkin, some from the head of Catawba, some from over the mountains, and some from everywhere else."

Tory—"Tell us how it happened and all about it."

E. and B.—"We met at Gilbert Town, where we found that the infantry could not overtake Ferguson, and we took from 600 to 700 cavalry, leaving as many infantry to follow. We overhauled Ferguson at King's Mountain, where we surrounded and defeated him."

Tory—"Ahl that won't do. It would take 2,000 to surround Col. Ferguson. 700 couldn't do it."

E. and B.—"But we were all of us blue hens chickens."

Tory—"There must have been of you, foot and horse, 4,000. We see what you are at; you want to catch Lord Cornwallis napping."

This ended the dialogue. Not more than two hours after sunrise Monday morning the Tories sent an express to Cornwallis giving him the news of Ferguson's defeat.

Before my wounds were well I went to Charlotte, after Cornwallis had left, and met David Knox, an acquaintance. David Knox was either a brother or near relative of James Knox, grandfather of President Polk. He gave me the following information: That on Monday next after Ferguson's defeat, he being a prisoner in the streets of Charlotte, an office came to the office of the guard and the following conversation took place:

First officer—"Have you heard the news?"

Second officer—"No. What news?"

First officer—"Col. Ferguson is killed and his whole army defeated and taken prisoners."

Second officer—"How can that be, and where did the men come from to do that?"

First officer—"2,000 desperadoes, calling themselves blue hens' chickens from most everywhere, started on horseback in pursuit of Ferguson, leaving as many on foot to follow, overtook, surrounded, killed and took prisoners him and all of his army at a place called Kings Mountain. We may look out for snakes."

Second officer—"God help us!"

Whereupon David Knox jumped on a pile of wood in the street, slapped his thighs, crowed like a cock and exclaimed, "Day is at hand!" Hence he was called Peter's Cock. It was generally reported about Charlotte and elsewhere that this exaggerated report came from the Neutrals, and Col Campbell's force, horse and foot, amounted to 4,000, which carried a strong air of plausibility with it and which induced Cornwallis to retreat from Charlotte that night.

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Two pounds of each variety of tobacco. Ten pounds of each variety of grass; one bundle, six inches in diameter, of each variety of grain in sheaf.

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