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The North Carolina Home Insurance Company,

Established 1868.

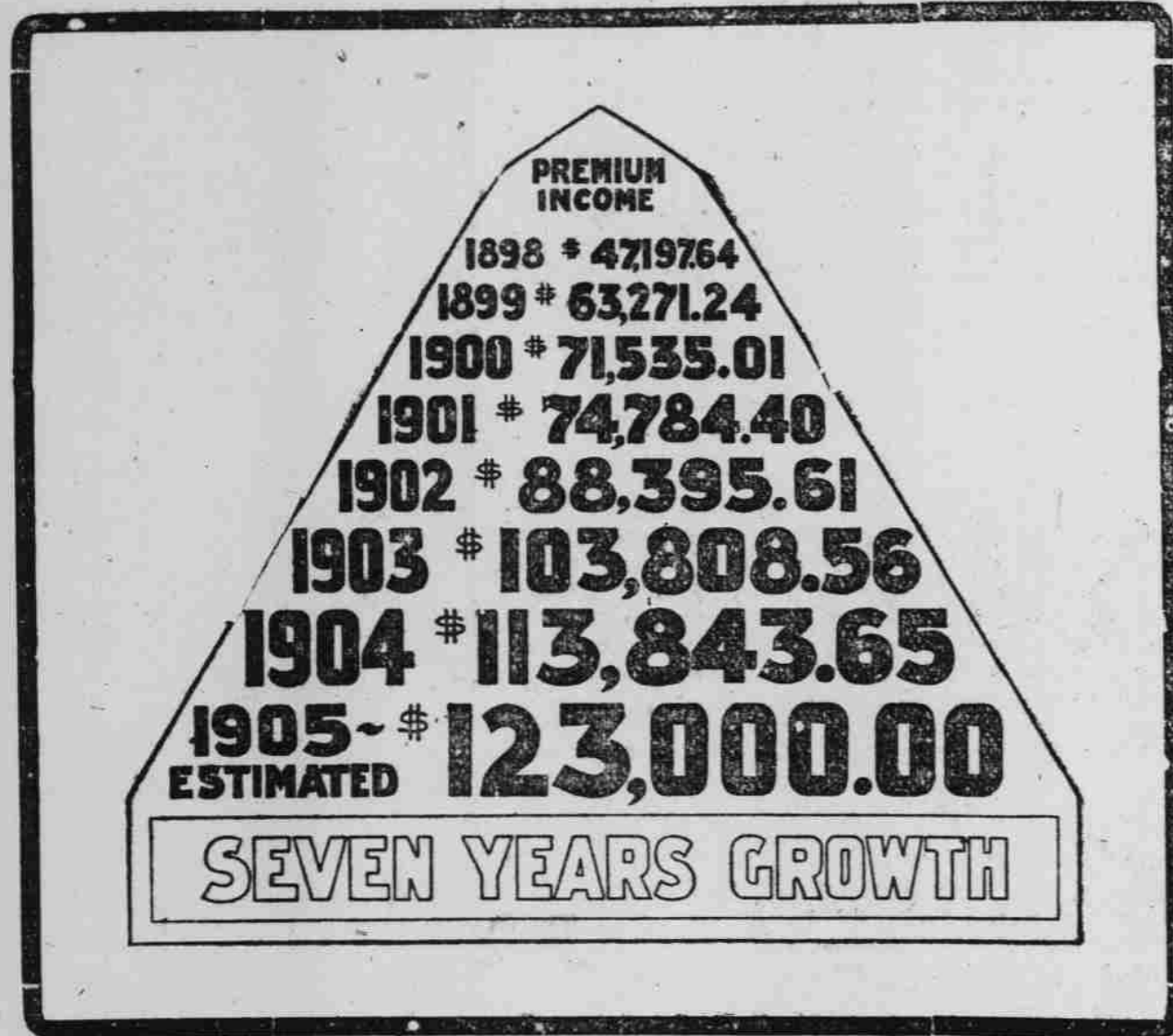
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AGENTS WANTED IN UNOCCUPIED TERRITORY

THE STORY OF KING'S MOUNTAIN

By BENJ. JOS. BEAL

October 7th.—In cancelling passing days on the calendar, the hand of time marks this date as the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the battle of King's Mountain.

Fond memories bring to the mind of one happy autumnal day spent in his picturesque native country.

Among the hills of Gaston, York, Mecklenburg and adjacent counties there must yet remain much of the beautiful primeval nature to lure their folk from the "clearings" to the shadow of the trees, for it is here that her healing balm is sought by those bearing the wounds of over-civilization.

School children, in the full enjoyment of their Saturday's holiday, are seeking the fallen treasures of the trees—chestnut, walnut and hickory—in the beautiful hiding place nature has provided for them in her many hued carpet, woven of autumn leaves and grass.

From the top-most weight-bearing branch of some tall hill-oak, the venturesome young grape-hunter may view winding deep-worn highways, large plantations, beautiful homes and farther on the line of vision the smoke of thriving cities and great manufacturing factories, that have grown from the foot paths and first clearings of his pioneer forefathers. The only war-like sound that reaches his ears is the far off crack of the squirrel hunter's rifle, whose hereditary instinct sends forth with maybe the same old barrel that was borne by a great-grand father, which with some modern improvements is still capable of speaking the death-knell of animal-kind. In his hunts he has noticed on trees and rocks, unintelligible marks of the pathfinder's knife and hatchet that time has nearly effaced. Older lips will tell him legends thereof—wild tales—that have lived for more than a century and a quarter, for in the sunlight and shadows of these hills and glades were wrought deeds of terror that wrung the hearts of men and aroused a spirit of heroic and determined retaliation that drove from them forever the "Scourge of the Carolinas."

It was here that we first learned to twist effectively the tail of the British "Lion" and deal him wounds that led to his final undoing at Yorktown, whence he was driven from our shores, that we might live in peace and prosperity, freedom and liberty.

It is a glorious heritage that our forefathers fought, bled and died for. Let us forget in these peaceful but busy days, the story of their deeds should be often told that we may better remember them in love and veneration.

Americans were worsted, about one hundred escaped, the rest were captured, and sued for quarter. One hundred and fifteen of these were brutally slaughtered on the spot, a hundred and fifty so badly maltreated that they could not move, and only fifty three brought away as prisoners. This cold-blooded massacre was on May 23th of the same year at the border line of our state. The prisoners who survived this kind of warfare were sent to rot in vile prison-ships or compelled to take up arms for the enemy in their West Indian possessions.

General Clinton's return to New York left Cornwallis and Tarleton to complete the subjugation of the south. The British soldiers soon became a licensed band of marauders. A band of indiscriminate confiscation was prepared for the whole of the Carolinas. Protection could only be had by unconditional and active loyalty. They were determined to crush the spirit of independence and males of arms bearing years were to be pressed into the British service, all being enrolled the British or Tory officers were appointed, with almost unlimited authority, both civil and military. Those over forty-years old were to be preservers of this authority at home; all younger were to serve six months in the tyrant's army. The whole of the Carolinas was to become a drill ground of the king.

After the proclamation, any Carolinian taken who was armed was liable to a death sentence for desertion and bearing arms against the crown. One of the proclamations issued, and preserved in the annals of our history read:

"If any person shall meet a soldier straggling, and shall not secure him, or spread an alarm for that purpose, or if any person shall shelter or guide a soldier straggling, they shall be punished by whipping, imprisonment or be sent to serve in the West Indies. I will give ten guineas for the head of any deserter belonging to the volunteers of Ireland, and five guineas only, if they bring him in alive."

Tarleton had decided to put an iron-yoke upon our people. He issued orders to all commanders to "imprison all who will not take up arms for the king, and to seize or destroy their whole property. Any militia man who had borne arms with the British, and afterward joined the American should be hanged immediately."

A great many of such orders were executed upon the patriots.

To quote a historical writer: "His (Tarleton's) underlings Tory and British, all through the state, bettered by his instructions. They patrolled the country far and near, burned, ravaged and put to death whom they would."

"In violation of agreements the continental soldiers who capitulated at Charleston, nineteen hundred (1900) in number, were transferred to wretched prison ships, where they were joined by hundreds more taken at Camden.

"In thirteen months, one third of

them had perished by malignant fevers. Others were impressed into the British naval service, or taken by violence or board transports and forced to serve in British regiments in Jamaica. Of more than three thousand all but seven hundred were thus made away with."

Often in the quiet night a peaceful family residing in their lonely mountain domicile were aroused by the red coated patrol which would force them out at the point of the bayonet, light the hill side with their burning home and turn them adrift to the mercy of the elements.

Thus were tender young children, budding young women, gray old grandmothers left unprotected by absent heroes to be distracted at the midnight hour with the horrors of a merciless warfare that considered neither age nor sex. Many reared in pioneer luxury were taught to sleep in beds of leaves, drink the turbid waters of mountain streams and eat the scanty fruits and nuts of the wilderness.

Is it a wonder that the south seemed at one time stunned and paralyzed by the military disasters and the savage cruelty of their oppressors? Yet the Carolinas remained unconquered, and the avenger was aroused and started forth in retaliation.

During the summer of 1780 British agents had begun to stir up the Cherokee tribes by bribing them with costly presents which were to spur their zeal in murderous work. They had started for Augusta to receive the presents when Colonel Clark, a fugitive patriot from Georgia with a company of riflemen assisted by a band of back-woodsmen from North Carolina attacked and defeated them, captured the presents and drove the Indians back to their lair.

Col. Furguson, commander of the British post of "ninety-six" and next to Tarleton in brutality, audacity and cruelty moved out to waylay and capture this American detachment.

He advanced and met them near the green fields of the Cowpens on the Broad river—historical ground which has also passed into such glorious history. Here they all joined forces, counted numbers, and found they were thirteen hundred strong—strong in physique, strong in the righteousness of their cause and the determination to carry it to the heroic end they achieved. The world has seldom seen such a body of men. Armed with the long, four-foot-barreled small-bore hunter's rifle, dressed in buckskin or homespun, with head-gear made generally of the skins of the animals their prowess had brought them, they were a strange type of soldier. They had never paraded together, knew little if anything of military tactics, had perhaps never been in any kind of drill. To the trained British soldier who was unfamiliar with anything but their looks they appeared ridiculous as fighters, and were termed the "mountain rabble." But they possessed one qualification that outclassed those of any other soldiers—they were the most deadly shots with these bayonetless rifles that the world ever knew—these pioneer fighters. Accustomed to the rifle from their earliest infancy, dependent upon it to a large measure for their food and clothing, and at times their very life depending on its single small bullet aimed at the lurking savage, they could not afford to miss their aim, and their rifles were the pride of their lives, being kept with all the care bestowed on any

Colonel Cleveland of North Carolina with his regiment and the fugitives under McDowell started to the appointed rendezvous on September 25, 1780.

On the next day, each man mounted on his own horse armed with his own rifle, and carrying his own store of provisions began the ride over the hills. Scarcely a bridle-path existed through the forest in these days, nor a house for the forty miles that lies between the Watauga and the Catawba. But they were guided by such powerful heroic figures as Galbraith Robinson (old horse shoe) and Nockle-chucky Jack Sevier who could readily pilot them as only such pathfinders could, and they had left their families in secluded valleys far distant, one from the other, exposed not only to parties of royalists but of Indians, to do so.

When Furguson heard that these avengers were on his trail he dispatched to Cornwallis for assistance. The ubiquitous Tarleton was sent to his assistance.

Meanwhile another frontiersman, who was soon to lose his life in the fight, was assembling another force to aid our cause on the upper Catawba, and was gratified with the success of his efforts, having gathered about four and fifty men of the same stock. He soon learned of the success of the other leaders and the mountain torrent of determined heroes who were descending, swelling as it came.

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inanimate possession of our time. Many regretful looks were to be cast on them on the morrow as stern eyes viewed a shattered stock that had broken a British head, or a hacked barrel that had saved a life from the broad, long cavalry sabre of a murderous red-coat.

Williams and the others called a council and it was decided to push on and take Furguson by surprise. They took nine hundred of the best mounted and rode thirty-six hours with but one stop, and until the evening of October 7th, when they reached the foot of King's Mountain—perpetual monument to them.

Furguson had, all told, eleven hundred. He was strongly placed, and with all his men felt confident that they could not be dislodged, and looked for an easy victory, so impregnable did they consider the eminence with its craggy cliffs, boulders and trees, making a natural breastwork. But these men of the backwoods, coming so rapidly onward, had in mind the fresh outrages he had just committed, and to around their last camp-fire such stories of the regular British thing would still be told and determination to have revenge—death.

They tied their horses in a secluded spot and formed themselves into columns under four leaders. Old Horse-shoe Robinson, so some tell us, was familiar with the surroundings and guided those under Colonel Campbell of Virginia, who had selected the most dangerous post.

With Colonel Shelby's command they formed two columns which were to attack in front.

Their first charge was met with overwhelming numbers. It was British bayonet and sabre against the hunter's clubbed gun, tomahawk and knife—an unequal struggle. Old Horse-shoe engaged in a struggle with a petty cavalry officer of the regular British forces that was typical of many. There had been several clashes between the two forces, when this officer would always be backed by such numbers that Horse-shoe would have to use strategy instead of his great strength. He had long sought a personal encounter on equal terms where his individual prowess might be pitted against this powerful soldier of fortune. Here came his first opportunity in this charge. They engaged hand to hand, Horse Shoe Robinson's gun having emptied before he spied his old enemy. The red-coated soldier seeing him thus thought he had him at his mercy, and charged the sturdy old scout from horseback. Well did his knowledge of horses stand him in stead now. Afoot, he succeeded in dismounting the Englishman who aimed a terrific sabre blow at his head which was parried by the rifle barrel of Robinson. The British blade broke, but so strong was the blow that the flying blade made a deep wound on the head of Robinson as it parted from the hilt. The powerful hunter then swung his rifle with all of his strength so accurately that

the flint and hammer were buried in the British soldier's brain.

Thus they slowly retired down the slope to rally again. Another death struggle ensued. To the autumn hued leaves were added a newer and deeper color as the blood of both sides flowed. The right and left wings of the Americans closed around the British and encircled them with a ring of those death-dealing rifles. They began to waver. For fifty minutes the battle raged until the British could no longer withstand the deadly accuracy of the unerring marksmen. An officer's guady uniform suddenly became distinguishable among the straggling English in a vain endeavor to rally them. He was spied by one of our marksmen. Soon he was seen to reel on his white charger which was dashing down the hillside.

A crimson stream dyed the scabbard and the white charger a deeper red as Furguson's life blood flowed from this and other wounds he was receiving. His steed galloped untrolled into the American lines. Furguson fell, and the battle of King's Mountain was won.

The force of British that remained endeavored to escape along the top of the ridge but were met by Colonel Sevier and Williams. They were all captured.

The loss of the British was four hundred and fifty killed or severely wounded, and six hundred and fifty prisoners. The American loss was twenty-eight killed and sixty wounded. Among those killed, however, was the heroic Colonel James W. Hlamson—a "man of excited character and of brief but glorious career."

So strong was the spirit of retaliation for the deeds mentioned above that eleven of the British and Tories who had been guilty of the most crimes against mother, wife and sister were hanged the following morning. A just God permitted the great Furguson to linger in mortal agony until during the night when he expired.

The mountaineers had surrounded Tarleton this time. He heard the rattling of the forks of the Catawba and retreated in all haste.

The results of this battle were great and were far-reaching. It reversed the gloom of the south in two days of rejoicing. The more timid plans were dropped. Scores flocked to the standard and joined such men as Morgan Sumpter, Pickens and Lee, and led them on to the Cowpens and Yorktown.

Today, over the scenes of these deeds, through the peaceful glades from peak to peak, echo the bells of a happy people summoned them to prayers of thanksgiving and song of praise to Him who preserved our forefathers and has preserved us as a people in freedom and full liberty for a century and a quarter.