

RAILROAD REGISTER

AND NORTH CAROLINA GAZETTE.

"Ours are the plans of fair delightful peace, unwarp'd by party rage, to live like brothers."

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JOSEPH SALES & SON,
EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS.

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THE SOLDIER'S RETURN.

Seven or eight years ago, I was traveling between the Berwick and Selkirk, and having started at the crowing of the cock, I had left Melrose before four in the afternoon. On arriving at Abbotsford, I perceived a Highland soldier, as apparently disguised as myself, leaning upon a walking-stick, and gazing intently on the fairy palace of the magician, whose wand is since broken, but whose magic still remains. I am no particular disciple of Lavater's, yet the man carried his soul upon his face, and we were friends at the first glance. He wore a plain Highland bonnet and a coarse gray great coat, buttoned to the throat. His dress bespoke him to belong only to the ranks; but there was a dignity in his manner, and a fire, a glowing language, in his eyes, worthy of a chieftain. His height might exceed five feet nine, and his age be about thirty. "The tresses of manly beauty were still upon his cheeks; but the sun of a western hemisphere had tinged them with a sallow hue and imprinted untimely furrows.

Our conversation related chiefly to the classic scenery around us; and we had pleasantly journeyed together for two or three miles when we arrived at a little sequestered burial ground by the way-side, near which there was neither church nor dwelling. Its low wall was thinly covered with turf, and we sat down upon it to rest. My companion became silent and melancholy, and his eyes wandered anxiously among the graves.

"Here," said he, "sleep some of my father's children, who died in infancy."

He picked up a small stone from the ground, and throwing it gently about ten yards, "That," added he, "is the very spot. But, thank God! no grave stone has been raised during my absence! It is a token I shall find my parents living—and," continued he, with a sigh, "may I also find their love. It is hard, sir, when the heart of a parent is turned against his own child."

We drooped his head upon his breast for a few moments and was silent, and, hastily raising his fore finger to his eyes, seemed to dash away a solitary tear. Then turning to me, he continued: "You may think, Sir, this is weakness in a soldier; but human hearts beat beneath a red coat. My father whose name is Campbell, and who was brought from Argyleshire while young, is a wealthy farmer in this neighborhood. Twelve years ago, I loved a being gentle as the light of a summer moon. We were children together, and she grew in beauty on my sight, as the star of evening steals into glory through the twilight. But she was poor and portionless, the daughter of a mean shepherd. Our attachment offended my father. He commanded me to leave her forever. I could not, and he turned me from his house. I wandered, I knew not, and I cared not, whither. But I will not detain you with my history. In my utmost need I met a serjeant of the forty-second, who was then upon a recruiting service, and in a few weeks I joined that regiment of proud hearts. I was at Brussels when the invitations to the wolf and the raven rang at midnight through the streets. It was the herald of a day of glory and of death. There were three Highland regiments of us—three joined in one—joined in rivalry, in love, and in purpose; and, thank Fate! I was present when the Scots Greys, flying to our aid, raised the electric shout, "Scotland for ever!" "Scotland for ever!" reverberated as from the hearts we had left behind us; and "Scotland for ever!" re-echoed "Victory!" "Heavens!" added he, starting to his feet, and grasping his staff, as the enthusiasm of the past gushed back upon his soul, "to have joined in that shout was to live an eternity in the vibration of a pendulum!"

In a few moments the animated soul that gave eloquence to his tongue drew itself back into the chambers of humanity, and resuming his seat upon the wall, he continued, "I left my old regiment with the prospect of promotion, and have since served in the West Indies; but I have heard nothing of my father—nothing of my mother—nothing of her I love.

While he was yet speaking, the grave digger, with a pick-axe and spade over his shoulder, entered the ground. He approached within a few yards of where we sat. He measured off a narrow piece of earth—it incircled the little stone which the soldier had thrown to mark out the burial place of his family.—Convulsion rushed over the features of my companion; he shivered—he grasped my arm—his lips

quivered—his breathing became short, and loud—the cold sweat trickled from his temples. He sprang over the wall—he rushed towards the spot.

"Man!" he exclaimed in agony, "whose grave is that?"

"Hoot! awa' wi' ye," said the grave digger, starting back at his manner;—"what na way is that to gliff a body!—are ye daft?"

"Answer me," cried the soldier, seizing his hand; "whose grave—whose grave is that!"

"Mercy me!" replied the man of death, "ye are surely out o' your head—it's an auld body tha' ca'd Adam Campbell's grave—now are you any thing the wiser for spierin'?"

"My father?" cried my comrade as I approached him; and, clasping his hands together, he bent his head upon my shoulder, and wept aloud.

I will not dwell upon the painful scene. During his absence, adversity had given the fortunes of his father to the wind; and he had died in an humble cottage, unlamented and unnoticed by the friends of his prosperity.

At the request of my fellow-traveller, I accompanied him to the house of mourning. Two or three poor cottagers sat around the fire. The coffin with the lid open, lay across the table near the window. A few white hairs fell over the whiter face of the deceased, which seemed to indicate that he died from sorrow rather than from age.—The son pressed his lips to his father's cheek. He groaned in spirit, and was wretched. He raised his head in agony, and with a voice almost inarticulate with grief, exclaimed, inquiringly, "My mother?"

The wondering peasants started to their feet and in silence pointed to a lowly bed. He hastened forward—he fell upon his knees by the bed side.

"My mother!—O my mother!" he exclaimed, "do not you too, leave me?—Look at me—I am your own son—your own Willie—have you, too, forgot me, mother?"

She too, lay upon her death-bed, and the tide of life was fast ebbing; but the remembrance of her beloved son drove it back for a moment. She opened her eyes—she attempted to raise her feeble hands, and it fell upon his head. She spoke, but he alone knew the words that she uttered; they seemed accents of mingled anguish, of joy, and of blessing. For several minutes he bent over the bed, and wept bitterly.—He held her withered hand in his; he started; and as we approached him, the hand he held was stiff and lifeless. He wept no longer—he gazed from the dead body of his father to that of his mother—his eyes wandered wildly from the one to the other, he smote his hand upon his brow, and threw himself upon a chair, while misery transfixed him, as if a thunderbolt had entered his soul.

I will not give a description of the melancholy funeral, and the solitary mourner. The father's obsequies were delayed, and the son laid both his parents in the same grave.

Several months passed away before I gained information respecting the sequel of my little story. After his parents were laid in the dust, William Campbell with a sad and anxious heart, made enquiries after Jeanie Leslie, the object of his early affections, to whom we have already alluded. For several weeks his search was fruitless; but at length he learned that property had been left to her father by a distant relative, and that he now resided somewhere in Dumfriesshire.

In the same garb which I have already described, the soldier set out upon his journey. With little difficulty he discovered the house. It resembled such as are occupied by the higher class of farmers.—The front door stood open. He knocked, but no one answered. He approached along the passage—he heard voices in an apartment on his right—again he knocked but was unheeded. He entered uninvited. A group was standing in the middle of the floor, and among them a minister commencing the marriage service of the Church of Scotland. The bride hung her head sorrowfully, and tears were stealing down her cheeks—she was his own Jeanie Leslie.—The clergyman paused. The bride's father stepped forward angrily and enquired, "What do ye want, Sir?" but instantly recognising his features, he seized him by the breast, and, in a voice half-choaked with passion, continued—"Sorrow tak' ye for a secound! what's brought you—ye for a man especially at a time like this? Get out o' my house. Sir! I say, William Campbell, get out o' my house an' never darken my door again wi' your ne'er do-well countenance!"

A sudden shriek followed the mention of his name, and Jeanie Leslie fell into the arms of her bridesmaid.

"Peace, Mr. Leslie!" said the soldier, pushing the old man aside; "since matters are thus I will only stop to say farewell—for auld lang syne—you cannot deny me that."

He passed towards the object of his young love. She spoke not—she moved not—he took her hand, but she seemed unconscious of what he did. And as he again gazed upon her beautiful countenance,

absence became a dream upon her face. The very language he had acquired during their separation was laid aside. Nature triumphed over art, and he addressed her in the accents in which he had first breathed love, and won her heart.

"Jeanie!" said he, pressing her hand between his "it's a sair thing to say FAREWELL, but at present I maun say it. This is a scene I never expected to see, for oh, Jeanie! I could have trusted to your truth and to your love, as the farmer trusts to seed-time and to harvest, and is not disappointed. Oh! Jeanie, woman! this is like separating the flesh from the bones, and burning the marrow. But ye maun be another's now—farewell!—farewell!"

"No! no!—my ain Willie!" she exclaimed, recovering from the agony of stupefaction, "my hand is still free,—and my heart has been yours—save me Willie! save me!" and she threw herself into his arms.

The bridegroom looked from one to another, imploring them to commence an attack upon the intruder, but he looked in vain. The father again seized the old gray coat of the soldier, and, almost rending it in twain, discovered underneath to the astonished company, the richly laced uniform of a British officer. He dropped the fragment of the outer garment in wonder, and at the same time, dropped his wrath, exclaimed, "Mr. Campbell!—or what are ye?—will you explain yourself?"

A few words explained all. The bridegroom a wealthy, middle aged man without a heart, left the house, gnashing his teeth. Badly as our military honors are conferred, merit is not always overlooked even in this country, where money is everything, and the Scottish soldier had obtained the promotion he deserved. Jeanie's joy was like a dream of heaven. In a few weeks she gave her hand to Captain Campbell of his Majesty's—regiment of infantry, to whom long years before she had given her young heart.

Richard M. Alexander.

The MOBILE CHRONICLE contains the following account of the death of this gentleman, and brief sketch of his life:

"Oppressed with the heat of the day, he had retired at an early hour to his chamber; and taking a seat in the window of the third story of his dwelling house, for the purpose of enjoying the breeze, he fell from thence on the pavement in the street—a height of about 30 feet. His whole frame was bruised, his flesh mangled, and his bones broken. He lived from the hour of 10 o'clock, P. M. of Monday, till 4 o'clock, P. M. of the next day; during which time he complained not—uttered not a groan—and was yet evidently not insensible to passing events.

Whether he fell asleep while sitting in the window, or casually lost his equilibrium, it is now impossible to say. His friends abstained from making the enquiry of him, for fear of giving him pain, as he evidently spoke with difficulty, and from the hope which they entertained to the last that he might yet survive. He expired without pain, surrounded by faithful friends.

Wm. Lee Alexander, the father of Richard M. Alexander, was an officer in the army of the Revolution—was the friend and associate of Gen. W. R. Davie—of Wm. Polk, and of the Grahams; who so successfully annoyed Lord Cornwallis in North Carolina, and on the borders of South Carolina. At the battle of Eutaw Springs, that bloody and successful battle, which rescued South Carolina from the arms of the enemy, and confined them to Charleston Neck, Wm. Lee Alexander greatly distinguished himself, and received from the hands of his commanding officer, an acknowledgment of the high service he had rendered to his country and his country's cause.

At the close of the war, Wm. Lee Alexander turning his attention to the arts of peace, and pursuing the bent of his inclination, prosecuted with vigor and success the study of the law. With diligence in his profession, and with talents of the highest order, he soon rose to eminence, and became a distinguished member of the Bar of the Salisbury District, in North Carolina.

The mother of Richard M. Alexander, Esq. Mrs. Elizabeth Henderson, was the daughter of Richard Henderson, one of the Judges of the Superior Courts of Law and Equity for the State of North Carolina.—She was the own sister of Archibald and Leonard Henderson—names dear to every son and daughter of North Carolina, and revered by the good and great who knew or have heard of them.

Archibald Henderson was among the most distinguished and eminent counsellors who have ever appeared in the courts of justice in North Carolina. The minds of the Court and of the Jury were enchained while he spoke; they listened with delight to his elocution, and his earnestness and learning secured attention and riveted conviction. The cause of the client was secure under the management of so good a man, and so great and learned an advocate. Repeatedly was he listened to with confidence and admiration in the councils of the State and of the Nation.

Leonard Henderson, "clarissimum nomen," often a member of the Legislature,

was for many years before, and at the time of his death, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. He was alike distinguished for the warmth of his attachment to what was right and just, and for the vigor and discriminating powers of his mind, which had been highly polished by laborious study. His reported decisions are read with pleasure, for the purity and perspicuity of the style and arrangement, and with profit for their erudition and the high tone of morality inculcated by them.

Such is a brief sketch of the immediate and near relations of the deceased, Mr. R. M. Alexander.

In referring thus minutely to the ancestry of the subject of this notice, it is not to be understood that we would impute to the offspring of illustrious ancestors, merit from that adventurous circumstance; but as a degeneracy in that particular, by the force of contrast, adds to the degradation of any individual, so it is a matter of just commendation to exhibit in our lives the virtues of those whose names we bear, and whose blood flows in our veins. In the case of the unfortunate individual whose premature death we now deplore, this reference is made, because the signal virtues and talents of both his paternal and maternal progenitors, were still preserved and illustrated in his life and conversation.

The subject of this notice was born in the county of Rowan, in the State of North Carolina. Having made himself familiar and thoroughly acquainted with the usual elementary studies of an academic course, he was at an early age sent to the University of North Carolina; where he graduated with the honors of the College conferred upon those who distinguish themselves for scholarship, and where the amenity of his disposition secured the approbation of his instructors, and the friendship of his fellow students. Leaving the University, he commenced and prosecuted the study of law in the house, and under the care and supervision of his maternal uncle, Leonard Henderson. The vigor of his intellect, and the discriminating powers of his mind, soon enabled him to master such branches of his profession as are required to be understood by candidates for admission to the practice of the law in the several courts of the State of North Carolina. He was duly admitted as counsellor and attorney in the several Courts of Law and Equity of his native State. Diligence and learning in a very short period secured a full share of practice, and he fast rose to distinction in his profession. While he resided in North Carolina, he was chosen by the freemen and freeholders of the town of Salisbury, as their representative in the Legislature of the State; and for many years he officiated as President of the Branch Bank of the State of North Carolina, at Salisbury.

About three years ago, he determined to seek a more extended field, in which he might exert the powers of his mind, & where he might prosecute his profession with better remuneration for mental labor: He removed in the fall of 1835 to this city,—was immediately admitted to the bar of the courts of the State, and was fast securing to himself the rewards of industry and talent, when he has been snatched from his friends by this awful visitation of Providence.

His intellect was vigorous; his mind discriminating; his heart affectionate and warm; his demeanor conciliatory, mild and unobtrusive. His whole heart and soul was devoted to a fond sister and most affectionate brother. To his friends he was sincere, and to his companions interesting and mild. His heart was the throne of virtue and honesty, and his mind the dwelling-place of science and learning. "The life of a man of science is seldom fertile in events which are calculated to interest our curiosity." The private life of this good and unambitious man, was characterized more by the habits of benevolence and virtue, than by striking incidents.

Such was Richard M. Alexander, whose death our community bemoans!"

From the Knickerbocker of July.
CLIMBING THE NATURAL BRIDGE.
BY THE ONLY SURVIVING WITNESS OF THAT EXTRAORDINARY FEAT.

I have some reason to believe, that I am the only surviving witness of that most adventurous exploit of climbing the Natural Bridge in Virginia; and believing that the particulars ought to be put upon record, I have selected the Knickerbocker as the medium. I have oftentimes, and for many years, withstood repeated solicitations to do this, for the following reasons, which I give, lest it might be supposed, by some suspicious persons, that I had waited for the death of the other alleged witnesses.

Immediately after the adventure had been accomplished, and while all the circumstances were fresh in my memory, I recorded them in a sort of journal, kept to record visitors' names, by poor Patrick Henry, a man of color, who kept the Bridge. This record was referred to by Patrick, whenever a visitor became inquisitive about the circumstances. Some believed my statement, and others disbelieved it; but by far the greater number disbelieved it, as he informed me. This was far from being pleasant to one who had never had his veracity doubted before. But this was not all.

I happened to be at the Bridge, some time after the event, when a large company of respectable looking ladies and gentlemen had just returned from under the Bridge, and were waiting dinner, like myself, at the house on the summit, to which I have alluded. The conversation, among this company, naturally turned upon the remarkable event, as it does to this day; and the book was referred to, as usual, for the particulars. I immediately gave Patrick the hint, that I wished to remain incog., in order that I might hear for myself the remarks upon my testimony. It is an old saying, that a listener never hears any good of himself, and so it turned out on this occasion. The company were unanimous in discrediting my testimony, ladies and all. Little did they imagine that the man himself was enclosed in a corner of the same room with themselves. I forthwith determined to volunteer no more testimony about things so out of the common current of events; at all events I determined to hold my peace, until the public mind should settle down into the truth, as it generally does at last.

That time seems to have arrived. The public, without an exception, so far as I know, has yielded its credence to the united testimony of so many witnesses. Scarcely a periodical in the country, or a book of travels, but mentions the subject.

But there is another reason for coming forward at this time. Tradition has got hold of the story at the wrong end. In the very last number of your Magazine, one of your contributors misrepresents the matter unintentionally no doubt—and Miss Martineau, in her "Retrospect of Western Travel," undertakes to detail the whole affair, scarcely one circumstance of which she does correctly. Under these circumstances, I think a discerning public will appreciate my true motives in coming out over my own signature; indeed, unless I were to do so, it would be useless to say any thing at all.

I think it was in the summer of 1818, that James H. Piper, Wm. Revely, Wm. Wallace and myself, being then students at Washington College, Virginia, determined to make a jaunt to the Natural Bridge, 14 miles off. Having obtained permission from the President, we proceeded on our way rejoicing. When we arrived at the Bridge, nearly all of us commenced climbing up the precipitous sides, in order to immortalize our names as usual.

We had not been long thus employed, before we were joined by Robert Penn, of Annerst, then a pupil of the Rev. Samuel Houston's grammar school in the immediate neighborhood of the Bridge. Mr. Piper, the hero of the occasion, commenced climbing on the opposite side of the creek from the one by which the pathway ascends the ravine. He began down on the banks of the brook; so far, that we did not know where he had gone, and were only apprizing of his whereabouts, by his shouting above our heads. When we looked up, he was standing apparently right under the arch, I suppose an hundred feet from the bottom, and that on the smooth side, which is generally considered inaccessible without a ladder. He was standing far above the spot where Gen. Washington is said to have inscribed his name, when a youth.

The ledge of rock by which he ascended to this perilous height, does not appear from below to be three inches wide, and runs almost at right angles to the abutment of the Bridge; of course, its termination is far down the cliff, on that side. Many of the written and traditional accounts state this to be the side of the Bridge upon which he climbed. I believe Miss Martineau so states; but it is altogether a mistake, as any one may see, by casting an eye up the precipice on that side. This story no doubt originated from this preliminary exploit.

The ledge of rock on which he was standing, appeared so narrow to us below, as to make us believe his position a very perilous one, and we earnestly entreated him to come down. He answered us with loud shouts of derision. At this stage of the business, Mr. Penn and servant left us. He would not have done so, I suppose, if he had known what was to follow; but up to this time, not one of us had the slightest suspicion that Mr. Piper intended the daring exploit which he afterwards accomplished. He soon after descended from that side, crossed the brook, and commenced climbing on the side by which all visitors ascend the ravine. He first mounted the rocks on this side, as he had done on the other—far down the abutment, but not so far as on the opposite side. The projecting ledge may be distinctly seen by any visitor. It commences four or five feet from the pathway, on the other side, and winds round, gradually ascending, until it meets the cleft of rock over which the celebrated cedar stump hangs. Following this ledge to its termination, it brought him to about thirty or forty feet from the ground, and placed him between two deep fissures, one on each side of the gigantic column of rock on which the aforementioned cedar stump stands. This column stands out from the Bridge as separate and distinct as if placed there by nature on purpose for an observatory to the wonderful arch and ravine which it overlooks. A huge crack of fissure extends from its base to its summit; indeed it is cracked on both sides, but much more perceptible on one side than the other. Both these fissures are thickly overgrown with bushes, and nume-

rous roots project into them from the trees growing on the precipice. It was between these, that the before mentioned ledge contacted him. Here he stopped, pulled off his coat and shoes, and threw them down to me. And this, in my opinion, is a sufficient refutation of the story, so often told, that he went up to inscribe his name, and ascended so high that he found it more difficult to return than go forward. He could have returned easily from the point where he disencumbered himself, but the fact that he did thus prepare so early, and so near the ground, and after he had ascended more than double that height, on the other side, are clear proofs, that to inscribe his name was not, and to climb the Bridge was his object. He had already inscribed his name above Washington himself, more than fifty feet.

Around the face of this huge column, and between the clefts he now moved backward and forward, still ascending, as he found convenient foot hold. When he had ascended about one hundred and seventy feet from the earth, and had reached the point where the pillar overhangs the ravine, his heart seemed to fail. He stopped; and seemed to us to be balancing midway between heaven and earth. We were in dread suspense, expecting every moment to see him dashed to atoms at our feet. We had already exhausted our powers of entreaty, in persuading him to return, but all to no purpose.—Now, it was perilous even to speak to him, and very difficult to carry on conversation at all, from the immense height to which he had ascended, and the noise made by the bubbling of the little brook, as it tumbled in tiny cascades over its rocky bed, at our feet. At length he seemed to discover that one of the clefts before mentioned, retreated backward from the overhanging position of the Pillar. Into this he sprang at once, and was soon out of sight and out of danger.

There is not a word of truth in all that story about our hauling him up with ropes, and his fainting away so soon as he landed on the summit. Those acquainted with the localities, will at once perceive its absurdity, for we were beneath the arch, and it is half a mile round to the top, and for the most part up a rugged mountain. Instead of fainting away, Mr. Piper proceeded at once down the hill to meet us, and obtain his hat and shoes. We met about half way, and there he laid down for a few moments, to recover himself from his fatigue.

We dined at the tavern of Mr. Donihoo, half way between the Bridge and Lexington, and there we related the whole matter at the dinner table. Mr. Donihoo has since removed to the St. Clair, in Michigan. Mr. Piper was preparing himself for the ministry, in the Presbyterian church, and the President of the college was his spiritual preceptor, as well as his teacher in college. Accordingly he called him up next morning, to inquire into it, thinking, perhaps, that it was not a very proper exhibition for a student of theology. The Rev'd. President is still alive, and will corroborate my testimony. I mean the Rev. Geo. A. Baxter, D. D., at present at the head of the Theological Seminary in Virginia. As to the other witnesses, Mr. Revely afterwards became a member of the Legislature of Virginia, and somewhat distinguished; I believe, for a young man; but he unfortunately fell a victim to poison, as I have been informed. Mr. Wallace was then of Richmond, but a native of Scotland, whither he returned soon after. It strikes me that I once heard of his death, but of this I am not certain. He may be still alive, and able to substantiate my statement.

Mr. Piper himself afterwards married a daughter of General Alexander Smyth, of Wythe, and was afterwards appointed principal of some academy in the West, which he abandoned, however, as he had done the ministry before. The last I heard of him, was during the last summer, when I saw his name registered at one of the Virginia Springs. I was told he had become an engineer, and was then engaged in surveying a road between some two of the Springs.

I have thus briefly and hastily related every thing about the exploit, which I have any reason to believe will be interesting to the public, either now or hereafter.

WM. A. CARUTHERS.

THE CORN CROP.

We have reason to believe that the crop of our most necessary, if not our principal staple, Corn, will be extremely short this year. We have made a very general inquiry of the farmers in this section of Virginia, and with the exception of a few neighborhoods, find the prospects of a most gloomy character. The principal cause of failure, is owing to the severe drought which has prevailed with little intermission since the 4th of July—the chinch-bug is also committing its accustomed ravages in many neighborhoods. The consequences of a short corn crop will be serious to a large portion of our population.—With many, it is the sole reliance for bread, as well as for raising and fattening their scanty stock of Hogs. In the enhanced prices of Bread-stuffs, Pork, and Bacon, &c., all classes will feel it more or less—the poor will inevitably suffer unless relief be extended by their more wealthy and abundantly supplied neighbors.

Raeburg Constellation.