ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

THE CELEBRATION

OF THE

Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge,

FEBRUARY 27th, 1857,

BY

Joshua G. Wright, Esq.

REPUBLISHED BY

Moore's Creek Monumental Association.

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WILMINGTON, N. C.:
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CORRESPONDENCE.

WILMINGTON, April 20th, 1857.

DEAR SIR:—The undersigned respectfully request for publication, a copy of the eloquent and interesting Address delivered by you upon the occasion of the late celebration of the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge.

In making this request, the undersigned but express the unanimous wish of all who had the pleasure of hearing you, and the great desire of numbers who were not so fortunate, And adding their own personal solicitations that you will consent to the publication.

They are, very respectfully,
Your Ob't Serv'ts,

WM. S. ASHE,
JOHN L. HOLMES,
F. J. HILL,
GEORGE DAVIS,
Committee.

J. G. WRIGHT, Esq.

WILMINGTON, April 21st, 1857.

GENTLEMEN:—Your note soliciting a copy of my recent Address for publication, has been recived. I very cheerfully comply with your request, and only regret that the Address was not more worthy of the occasion on which it was delivered.

With my thanks for the opinion you express of its merits, and with a grateful appreciation of your kindness,

I am very truly,
Your Ob't Serv't,
JOSHUA G. WRIGHT.

Messrs. WM. S. ASHE, JOHN L. HOLMES, F. J. HILL, GEO. DAVIS, Committee.

ADDRESS.

The pilgrimage of patriotism is accomplished! The pious purpose which has ruled the hearts of this vast multitude is fulfilled, and we stand on hollowed ground. Again we gather around that alter of freedom long since erected by our gallant forefathers in this temple made by God's own hands, and again we give to that altar the offerings of our filial devotion.

I bid you welcome, my countrymen, thrice welcome to a scene so rich in its traditionary renown, and around which still lingers the glory of a feat of arms, which nobly heralded the greater glory of your country's freedom. I congratulate you on the advent of another anniversary of a day long canonized in the historic calendar, and which should ever be hailed with the proudest memories that can swell the heart of the patriot. I rejoice, men of North Carolina, to meet you here to-day, for my mission is to speak of the virtue, the valor and the fame of those with whom you claim lineage, and to kindle alike your gratitude and your pride by rehearsing the deeds of that high heroic ancestry of which you were born.

Well does it become us thus to assemble to do honor to a day and a deed so eminently worthy of our commemorative homage. For full four-score years has this spot, early consecrated to patriotism, rested amid these woods in undistinguished repose, unhonoured by any formal festivity, untrodden by any pilgrim crowd; and seldom has the deed which hallows it, been made the theme of patriotic encomium. It may be that the departed brave of the olden time need no such celebration as we have recently inaugurated and is now repeated on the ground which soaked their gore—it may be that their valor and their virtues are so framed in our memories that we never can forget them. But they *deserve* to be honored

otherwise and elsewhere than in our hearts, and to those who have given signal blessings to their country, signal honours ever have been and ever should be rendered. Hence it is, that in all ages and in all climes, alike the heathen shrouded in his dark mythology and the christain rejoicing in the light of the true God, have caused the column and the cenotaph to ascend in honour of their illustrious dead. In song and story, with ceremonial celebration and with monumental marble, they have appealed to the national heart and made it the sanctuary to enshrine the memory of their heroes and the great events of their history. Prompted by a kindred feeling and guided by the fires of patriotism, erewhile kindled among these sacred precincts, we are again assembled to indulge in grateful recollections of an event which has given renown to the scene on which we gaze, and undying fame to those whose deeds have made it classic ground. And now that I stand before you, how impotent do I feel on the threshold of that great theme on which you have commissioned me to speak. Would that I could address myself to it in a manner worthy of the exploit you celebrate. Would that I could strike "the harp of this celebration," with such expressive power as to exalt your souls to the loftiest harmonies with that great event which it commemorates. But why should I fear. Aided as I am by the sustaining power of such a theme, I doubt not but that you will "hear me for my cause," and addressing as I do those who are no bastards to the blood here shed for the land they live in, I know that blood itself will speak for me.

I open to you the volume of my country's history, wherein is written the story of the tyrannies and trials which were practiced and endured, before those great battles of liberty were fought, which made that country gloriously free and independent. From its pages I learn how the minions of royalty made our own North Carolina alike their vassal and their victim, until, by reiterated aggression on her dearest rights, she was goaded to rebellion. For ten long years we had

remonstrated against the ungenerous and unconstitutional legislation of that power which claimed the right to rule us, and which sent its edicts over the water to degrade and destory us. But our appeal and our protest, though armed with all the force which justice and humanity could impart to them, failed to reach the inexorable ear of tyranny. Not enough was it that the tyrannous tax was imposed—that appropriations were refused for the relief of the colony—that the courts of justice were closed against our citizens in the assertion of their legitimate rights—that flagitious extortions were practiced by the official lacqueys of the representatives of royalty, nor yet enough that standing armies were quartered among us to overawe and despoil us; but even the sanctity of our homes was invaded, and alike in person and in property, we were made to feel that we were the victims of an oppression, from which no deliverance could come to us but such as our own stout hearts and strong arms could accomplish. Time rolled on, and with it came the avenging spirit of an indignant people. Already had it blazed out brilliantly in the streets of Wilmington in the famous Stamp Act Sedition, and lighted the beacons of rebellion not only on the waters of the Cape Fear, but in every town and hamlet, and homestead, in the Province. Already had it withstood the tyrannous Tryon of execrable memory, and well named the Wolf of North Carolina, when he licked his red chops, as he thought of his prey, and made them redder in the blood of complaining citizens on the corpse-covered field of Alamance. Everywhere this spirit was defiantly developed; the blood of the patriots was up, and bravely did their hearts beat to arms.

It is not for me however, nor is this the occasion to indulge in an elaborate detail of the events which marked the revolutionary progress of our country, though it would be no difficult matter to dwell on them until the shadows of evening had lengthened around us. I am not here to usurp the province of the annalist, whose more appropriate task it is to tell the story of our wrongs, and to recite the deeds which

emblazoned our national escutcheon with a splendor that time can never dim. I invite your attention, as more particularly connected with this occasion, to that great epoch in our history known as the invasion of 1776—an invasion designed to quell the rebellious spirit of the colonists, and to give back to him who claimed to be by divine right their master, a renewed and undisputed dominion over their liberties.

In the month of January of the year just named, a gallant vessel might have been seen proudly riding at her anchorage on the tranquil bosom of the river Cape Fear. The flag that floated from her mast head—the garb worn by those who manned her, and the bristling cannon that looked out ominously from either side of her gundeck, would soon have told an attenive observer, that her character was such as boded no good, in the then excited condition of the Province, to the dwellers on the shores of that stream on which she now reposed. And with truthful conjecture might he so have thought. That vessel was His Majesty's sloop of war Cruiser, alike the home and the refuge of Josiah Martin, the last of the Royal Governors of North Carolina. Having fled from his Palace in Newbern, which he had vainly endeavored to fortify, he at once sought the better protection which he supposed was to be found behind the guns of Fort Johnston.—While here, however, the eagle-eyed vigilance of the patriots of the Cape Fear marked well his movements, and soon they detected him not only engaged in his former work of erecting fortifications, to hedge about the divinity which attached to himself as the representative of the Lord's anointed whom he served, but also in a barbarously flagitious effort to excite and arm the servile portion of our people against their masters. At once the bold resolution was taken to dislodge him from his "forted fastness."—And now there appeared on the stage of action one who perhaps did more to kindle and keep ever burning the fires of freedom, than any other man of that perilous period. That man was Col. John Ashe, afterwards

known as Gen. Ashe, and for him I challenge the admiration and gratitude of the men of New Hanover and of all North Carolina. As the thunderbolt is said to be the child of the storm, so he may well be considered as the most chivalric spirit born of the Revolution, and appropriately named the Percy of his day. As eloquent as he was patriotic, he "wielded at will the fierce democracy" of his times, and when at an earlier period he had made the tyrant Tryon tremble in the war waged against the Stamp Act, he fixed his fame as one of the most gallant souls that ever defied and conquered tyranny. At the time of which I speak, he held the rank of Colonel under the Royal Government, but as soon as the guilty machinations of Martin were discovered he resigned his commission. Instantly, by popular election, he was elevated to the same rank, and was the first man who had boldly brave the Royal favour, by taking a commision from the people whom he deemed the rightful sovereigns of the country. So commissioned he at once led on a regiment raised on his own responsibility, and for the payment of which he had pledged his private estate, to the attack of Fort Johnston; and soon was the work of demolition accomplished by the torch which he applied with his own hand, while the routed Governor fled precipitately from the invasion of the foe, to the receiving embrace of the Cruiser. From this last strong hold of Royalty, he sent forth, on the 10th day of January, 1776, a Proclamation declaring as unnatural the rebellion then existing, and announcing his intention "to erect His Majesty's standard, and to collect and unite his Majesty's people under the same, with a free tender of forgiveness, however, of past offences to all who would join heart and hand to restore the Government."

Simultaneously with this Proclamation, and as auxiliary to its purpose, there went forth a commission to Allan McDonald, Donald McDonald, Alexander McLeod, and numerous other leading men in a continuous chain of counties from Cumberland to Rowan, to erect the King's standard and to muster and array in arms His Majesty's loyal subjects, with

instuctions to meet His Excellency at Brunswick, on the 15th of the following February, where he designed effecting a union with the forces of Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Cornwallis. And right speedily was the behest obeyed. It came joyously to the ears of those Highland clans who were anxious to signalize their devotion to the House of Hanover and regain the Royal favor, lost when they fought for the Pretender, Scotland's "rightful sovereign," on the bloody field of Culloden. Strangers to our soil, little did they feel of that inbred love of country which glowed so warmly in the breasts of our people; and little did they know how that feeling would nerve the arms and animate the hearts of the sons of Carolina, when in the approaching day of battle they should call upon each other to

"Strike till the last armed foe expires,
Strike for their altars and their fires,
Strike for the green graves of their sires,
God and their native land."

Aided then as was the Royal cause, not only by the alien origin of the clans and their hopes of pardon for the past, but by kindred sympathies, such as only the clannish spirit can engender, we may well suppose that their commissioned leaders found but little difficulty in mustering them beneath the unfurled banner of King George. When called upon to step forward and draw their broad swords as their forefathers had often done in defence of their King—when in addition to the appeals of their chieftains, the loyal lady—Flora McDonald—whose blended beauty and historic fame gave her such magic mastery over men as to make her almost irresistible, wooed them as she did to the cause of her sovereign—when the martial strains of the pibroch thrilled upon their ears and waked to extacy the chivalrous memories of their Highland homes, they started at the summons as if it had been a bugle blast blown by their Wallace or their Bruce, in the cause of their own dear Caledonia.

"They came as the winds come when forests are rended,
They came as the waves come when navies are stranded."

Nor was this all, for with them came the rascal tory—traitor to the holy cause of liberty—traitor to his country and traitor to the God who gave that country.

Let it not be supposed, however, that the Patriots of the Province were meanwhile listless observers of these movements. It is true the the bold spirits of the Cape Fear and the Neuse caught but little alarm from the Proclamation of the Governor, and they were no longer intimidated by the edicts of tyranny, whether they issued from the Royal Palace, or bore the imprimatur of His Excellency when protected by the guns of His Majesty's sloop of war Cruiser. No sooner, however, was the organization of the Highland host and their base confederates on the banks of Cross Creek, in the County of Cumberland, known to the country than her patriotic sons sprang to the rescue. The plough was left in the unfinished furrow—the wife girded the sword on her husband, and the boy who had scarce put on the "*toga virilis*" of freedom, first took his mother's farewell blessing, and then went forth with mature manhood to resist the coming foe. Led on by Brigadier Gen'l James Moore, whose heroic heart and consummate skill as a strategist well qualified him for the leadership of such forces, they at once moved forward to the rendervous of the Royalists, and being reinforced by Colonels Lillington, Ashe and Kenan, with their respective commands, they encamped at Rockfish, about eight miles from the enemy. While here, a letter bearing date the 19th of February, 1776, was received by Gen'l Moore from Gen'l Donald McDonald, the chosen leader of the Royalists, informing him that unless his forces joined the Royal standard by 12 o'clock on the ensuing day, they would be regarded as enemies, while at the same time the royal clemency was promised to all who would accept it. Promptly was the answer returned, that the patriots were engaged "in a cause the most glorious and honorable in the world, and in support of which they were determined to sacrifice every thing that was dear and valuable."

When the morning of the 20th of February rose on that modest stream on the banks of which rested the Highland forces and their traitorous allies, it looked down on an army of near two thousand men, and ere that sun had gone on its westering way beneath the horizon, that army was on its march against the defenders of liberty. Unquestionably its purpose was to force the encampment of Gen'l Moore and move onward to Wilmington. But few miles, however, did they proceed in the execution of this design ere they discovered his strenght, and retracing their steps, crossed at Campbelton to the eastern side of the river. They had found the lion in their way, and they left him in his lair. No sooner, however, was this retrograde movement known to Gen. Moore, than he hurried an express to Col. Caswell, who was maching to his aid with about eight hundred men, directing him to return and take posession of Corbet's Ferry, on Black River, for the purpose of intercepting the enemy, while at the same time Colonels Martin and Thackston were ordered to occupy Cross Creek and prevent their return in that way. Then ordering Colonels Lillington and Ashe to make a forced march, and if possible reinforce Caswell, or failing in that, to possess themselves of Moore's Creek Bridge, he at once proceeded with the residue of his army to cross the river at Elizabethtown, with the hope that he might aid in arresting the progress of the Royalists. While here information was received from Col. Caswell, that the enemy had crossed Black River about five miles above him, and near the same time Col. Lillington. with his brave comrades, had taken position on the south side of Moore's Creek Bridge—that glorious field of fame which we now occupy—and on which he was joined the next day by Col. Caswell and his battalion of eight hundred men. Meanwhile the Royalists had, with almost equal celerity, hurried on their way, and on the same day paused in their march about two miles from the bridge.

And so pausing, doubtless their leader who was a veteran in arms, and the flashing of whose claymore had been seen

on the ill-fated field of Culloden, felt as strong an assurance of success in any contest he might have with those whom he calumniously called rebels, as at a subsequent day the more wily and bloodthirsty Scotchman, Ferguson, experienced and expressed, when he held his position on King's Mountain, which rises so gloriously on your border, and sent from its summit his memorable despatch to Cornwallis, saying to him, "I hold a position on the King's Mountain, and all the rebels out of hell shall not drive me from it"—a despatch, however, which was arrested on its way by those brave mountaineers who had just rallied to the rescue of their country in the lovely valley of the Watauga, and which only served the more to strengthen their arms and to fire their hearts, for that contest which in the next hour, made red the sides of that mountain with the blood of their enemies, and gave to their country a victory of imperishable renown—a contest in which the sword of liberty lopped off the right arm and secured the defeat and capture of one-fourth of Cornwallis' army.

As soon as the union of the forces of Lillington and Caswell was effected, active preparations were made for the reception of the enemy. Look around you, my countrymen, and your eyes will rest upon the still lingering mementoes of that day's work of preparation, and take in a scene, the cardinal features of which are now exhibited to your view, just as they met the gaze of those chivalric champions of your country, who here resolved to do or die in the defence of that country's outraged rights and freedom. There is the same stream that went murmuringly on its way to that ocean which had been crossed by your invaders—there are the vestiges of the hasty breastwork thrown up as a shield against the onslaught of the foe—and there is the peninsula on which Lillington and his corps of minute men were posted, and where they lay on their arms throughout the night which preceded the battle. Such then was their condition, and it was all they desired.

And now the day of the 26th had closed over that embattled band of patriots—their camp-fires are lighted—"the sentinel

stars have set their watch in the sky," and the bivouac of that night is made busy on all sides with the note of preparation for the foreseen fight of the morrow. That morrow comes, and at its earliest dawn the bugle and the bag-pipe sounded the summons to the field, and as their war notes were borne on the morning breeze through these primeval woods, until the sounding shades of every dale and thicket caught the inspiring air, each Highland heart grew braver and bloodier in its impulses to the conflict. With quick but steady step a serried column of seventy-five stalwart Highlanders, "all plaided and plumed in their tartan array," moves forward in the advance, led on by their belted chiefts, McLeod and Campbell, in the absence of their leader, Donald McDonald, whose sickness witheld him from the field. And now when they are seen descending yonder slope, a louder bugle blast is blown, and in a moment more they crowd the bridge made treacherous by the removal of its covering, and press with eagerness to the attack. By some the difficult passage is accomplished, and as they near the American lines not a sound is heard, nor is scarce a soldier seen, crouched as our forces were behind the breastwork. It was the silence of the storm ere the thunderbolt is sped—it was the crouching of the lion ere he leaps to his prey. A moment more and the destiny of death is upon them. From right to left a blinding blaze of fire is poured in upon the advancing column, while the cannon commanding the bridge sweeps the crowd that throngs it, like an avalanche of remorseless ruin. Their commander, McLeod, falls with a score of balls in his body, but even as he dies, his voice is heard distinct above the dim of battle, cheering on his men, and assuring them that America never would be free. Campbell, his companion in command, shares his fate, but still the bloody contest goes on. In the front of the conflict where the storm of war rages fiercest, the gallant form of Lillington is seen rising in all its native loftiness of proportions above all around him, while the trumpet tones of his voice are ever ringing out the cheer and the charge to the

brave competitors for glory in the cause of their country, who follow him. At length the creek is crossed by a portion of the American forces, and an attack being made on the rear of the enemy, they were soon hemmed in by a circle of fire.—Thus begirt and thus bereft of their commanders, a general panic soon pervades that army of eighteen hundred men—terror. stricken they fly from the field, and England's glory is in the dust. The war cloud rolls away, and as the morning sun looks down again upon that sanguinary plain, there lay the plaided warrior and the traitor tory, who had gone down in the encounter of death, and their only requiem was the jubilant shout of joy that went proudly, but gratefully to Heaven from the victorious sons of liberty.

Thus was fought and thus was won, on the 27th day of February, 1776, that momentous and memorable battle, the anniversary of which we this day celebrate, and the commemoration of which should ever be the perpetual memorial of the triumph here achieved. The slain of the enemy is computed at fifty men, though doubtless many more fell from the bridge in its then condition, and received from the avenging tide, that death which the ball or bullet would have dealt, and though many on the American side were wounded, but one man is known to have been lost to the Patriots. That man was John Grady of Duplin, a private in Caswell's regiment, who won his gallant death by an intrepidity which scorned the shield of the breastwork intended for the protection of himself and his comrades. His body was here committed to the earth, and from this the field of his fame his spirit went up to the God who gave it.

"Disdaining fear and deeming light the cost
Of life itself, in glorious battle lost."

The trophies of the day were fifteen hundred excellent rifles—three hundred and fifty guns—one hundred and fifty swords and dirks—two medicine chests, one of which was valued at $1,500—thirteen wagons with complete equipments of harness and horses—a box of English guineas, worth seventy-five thousand dollars, and eight hundred aud fifty soldiers, with their General, Donald McDonald, were taken prisoners of war.

And now, my countrymen, you may ask who was the leader of the American forces in this memorable engagement. Would that I, could so interrogate history as to give you a satisfactory answer to this much vexed question. I will not pretend to deny that the veil of doubt overhangs it, but involving as it does the fame of a gallant soldier of New Hanover, and believing as I do, that alike history and tradition point to him as the leading actor in the drama of that day, I shall not hesitate in the endeavor to vindicate the claims of Col. Alexander Lillington to the first honors of the field. It is admitted by the ablest advocates of the antagonistic claim of Col. Caswell, that they both were Colonels of the recently organized battalions of minute men, one of which had been raised in the Newbern, and the other in the New Hanover district, and that both were appointed on the same day, by the same authority, to the rank which they held. It is said, however, that Col. Caswell must have assumed the command on the day of the battle, for the reason that he carried upon the field eight hundred men, while Col. Lillington commanded the much inferior number of two hundred minute men. I know of no principle of military precedence, however, which entitles officers of equal grade to outrank each other simply because the one may be in command of a force numerically superior to the other. No such rule has been shown to have existed at this period, and if any such did exist, I am yet to be informed what fixed difference in numbers created this superior claim to command in any given case. We are told, however, that Col. Purviance, of Brunswick, wrote to the Wilmington committee three days before the battle, apprizing them of what had been done, and what was to be done on the Cape Fear, and adds: "I have acquainted Col. Caswell with what I have done, and requested his assistance." Granted—but this, to my mind, fails to prove the superiority in command of Col. Caswell; and indeed shows nothing more than the communication to him of important intelligence, doubtless already known to Col. Lillington, and the desire that the former

would come to the assistance of the latter, as an engagement with the enemy was then anticipated. We are futhermore told that Gen. Moore, in a letter written the day after the battle, remarks that "the tories, led on by McLeod, advanced with intrepidity to attack Col. Caswell. who was entrenched on advantageous ground;" and that in a subsequent letter of the same date, he states that Farquard Campbell, a notable tory, "was carried a prisoner to the camp of Col. Caswell."—But what do statements, such as these, establish? Surely it will not be denied that an attack was made on the forces led on by Lillington, as well as on those commanded by Caswell; and if a prominent tory or traitor was carried to the camp of the latter, may not this have been an accidental circumstance, wholly unconnected with the superiority in command of the one over the other? But superadded to all this, the records of the Provincial Congress. which convened in April, 1776, are cited to show, that on the 12th of that month, a resolution was passed in these words: "*Resolved*, That the thanks of this Congress be given to Col. Caswell and the brave officers and soldiers under his command, for the very essential service by them rendered the country at the battle of Moore's Creek." It is true that this resolution was passed, but we know not by what influence its passage was accomplished. I hesitate not to aver, however, that it was ungenerously unjust to Col. Lillington, thus to have omitted the mention of his name, and thought it has been said that he never complained of this, it has been well answered, that "he never complained, because he was a patriot and not a soldier of fortune; because he fought for the freedom of his country, and not for his personal renown." Moreover, Col. Caswell officially reported the battle on the 29th of February, to Cornelius Harnett, President of the Council appointed to administer the affairs of the Province, and his conduct in so doing would seem to involve a breach of military etiquette and discipline, as that report should have been properly made to Gen. Moore, who was the admitted superior in command of both himself and Col. Lillington. It

may be, however, that this circumstance had its effect with Congress, and when we blend with this the fact that Caswell had been elected to the same Congress, though not at that time a member, to say nothing of his more extended and national reputation, it is not difficult to understand this seeming recognition of his superiority over Col. Lillington.

Thus, then, I have frankly presented the prominent points of the claim preferred in behalf of Col. Caswell, and in so doing, have endeavored to show that the reasons advanced for its support are insufficient to sustain it. But in further answer to the argument urged in his favor, I state that Col. Lillington was in his own district, and the rule was, that commanders of equal grade ranked their peers in their respective districts. If this is denied, I challenge proof to the contrary, and in corroboration of what is said, I adopt the argument of analogy, and point you to the historical fact that, when at a subsequent day, the armament of Sir Peter Parker was in the Cape Fear, Gen. Ashe, of this district, ranked Gen. Bryan, who led the Newbern forces on their march to Wilmington. Nor let it be forgotten that the unwritten history of this battle hereabouts, and the truthful tradition of New Hanover award to Col. Lillington the chief glory of the conflict. From the lips of one known to many around me—whose patriotic valor and varied virtues endeared him to all who knew him—who was near fourteen years of age when this battle was fought, and who gave himself to the revolutionary service of his country—who was ever revered as the Bayard of his day, "without fear and without reproach;" aye, even from the lips of the late Col. Samuel Ashe, we have it that Lillington was the Great Leader of the contest.

But whatever may be said in support of this counter claim, the recorded fact can never be disproved, that when Col. Caswell came upon the ground, he found it pre-occupied by Col. Lillington, with the Wilmington battalion of minute men: there he had taken his position, in the front of the foe, alike the post of honor and of danger, and there he had resolved

with the spirit of Leonidas of old, to make another Thermopylæ, if necessary. by the immolation of himself and his comrades in arms, on the altar of his country. Here, too, it was, that he wore so gallantly that livery of liberty, a portion of which I this day exhibit to you. With this weapon of war, a cherished memento of the field, he went into the fight resolved upon "liberty or death," the heroic motto of this crescent which he wore in his hat, like a guiding star on the dark day of battle, and knowing, as he did, the power of example, we may well imagine him calling on his brave volunteers to follow where their commander might lead, and like Henry the IV., at Ivry, saying to them:

> "And if my standard bearer fall, as fall full well he may,
> For never saw I promise yet of such a bloody fray,—
> Press where you see my white plume shine amid the ranks of war,
> And be your oriflamme to-day, the helmet of Navarre."

But, my countrymen, I forbear to press this point, and let it not be supposed from aught that I have said, that I am inclined to disparage the character of Richard Caswell, or impair his claims on your gratitude as citizens of North Carolina. Far be it from me to do the slightest injustice to a man who so gloriously distinguished himself in the service of his country, and of whom from the day of his opposition to the Stamp Act in 1765, to the hour when, with the helmet unloosed from his brow, he fell in the Senate Chamber with his robes of office around him, it might ever be said, "the State has no worthier son than he." In the toils of war, and in the councils of peace, he ever shone forth like a "steadfast planet" to guide and to cheer the onward progress of his country; and what matters it, whether he commanded at the great battle of the Bridge or not, when none will deny that he won by his gallantry here, such laurels as any soldier might be proud to wear?

But while I speak thus of heroes such as these, let me not forget to do deserved justice to the merits and the memory of Gen. James Moore—the commander-in-chief of all the American forces then in the field. It is true that, owing to una-

voidable delays attendant on his descent of the river, he was not present at the battle; but to him belongs the cardinal merit of having given such directions to the movements of the army, as greatly conduced to the ultimate success which attended us in the contest. He, it was, who posted Lillington at the Bridge, and it was his sagacity as a strategist, which discerned the importance of occupying this position. By all he was admitted to be more eminent in the profession of arms than any man of his day in North Carolina; and when we remember his uniform bold advocacy of the cause of his country, and the promptness with which he moved against the forces of McDonald, and turned him from his line of march, surely none will dispute his commanding claims upon the grateful homage of our hearts.

And now, my friends, that the storm of battle which once raged so wildly on this field has passed away, let us yield to the generous impulses of that magnanimity which so well becomes the victor, and forebear to sit in judgment too sternly upon the early errors of the clans of Caledonia. Let us remember that aliens, as they were, to our soil and our language, well might they be strangers to our feelings; and educated, as they were, in a faith which inculcated loyalty to their monarch as a part of their religion, it was but natural that they should rally to the support of King George, the Great Chief of the clans. Let us remember how, in many battles since, waged for the rights and honor of our country, they have stood shoulder to shoulder with the sons of our soil, breasting "with hearts of controversy," the crimson currents that have flowed over many a bloody field, and aided in securing to the banner of the Republic, the most glorious victories.

And let us not forget that, to the efforts of a son of this same Caledonia, a Scotchman, good and true, as ever fought for "kirk or covenant," but whose heart is as loyal to his adopted mother as any son who treads her soil, we are, perhaps, as much indebted for this celebration, as to any other cause

whatever. His pen but recently pointed your attention to this bright page in your history, and evoking, as it did, from the past, the spirit of your sires, your hearts at once caught the inspiration of that grateful patriotism which has prompted your presence here.

But, my countrymen, let us not fail in a proper comprehension and appreciation of the blessings which resulted to our country from the battle at Moore's Creek Bridge. The mere military success of this achievment, though altogether glorious in itself, was but as the small dust in the balance when weighed against other and better benefits which accrued to the suffering cause of freedom. Among the grand results which followed the event, we at once discover that it prevented the union of the Royalists with the English forces that were soon to concentrate themselves in the river Cape Fear, and thereby give the death blow to the planned invasion of the State—an invasion projected by Martin, approved by the Earl of Dartmouth, and which was to be consummated by the bloody hands of Cornwallis and Clinton. But not only was this invasion and the consequent subjugation of North Carolina, if not of the whole South, prevented; but the ranks of the Royalists were thinned—the clans were dispersed, and toryism was taught a lesson from which it learnt how impotent are all the combinations of tyranny in a contest with those who strike for liberty. Nor was this all, it gave courage, confidence and military experience to that brave phalanx of patriots who triumphed here, and who had never come under fire before in their lives. Its moral influence told like an electric shock on the heart of the whole country—with commanding power it sped over the land, imparting a resolute spirit of resistance to the desponding and ofttimes dismayed hearts of the patriots, and reaching the councils of the State, developed itself in the first legislative recommendation of a Declaration of Independence by the National Congress, which was made on the continent of America! It flashed out upon the darkness of that period with the cheering brightness of a new-risen

sun, and wreathed the cloud that overhung us with a brilliant bow of promise. From that day the banner of our country went forward, until its ample folds were "fanned by conquest's conquering wing," and the eagle of the Republic soared aloft in his flight, until that banner and that bird became the proudest symbol of freedom the sun in all his course ever looked upon. The struggle here made was truly "*pro aris et focis*" for our altars and our firesides, and if the mercenary foe against whom we waged that war had triumphed, the dread tidings of our defeat would have swept like a moral sirocco over the State, withering and blasting its every energy—the combined forces of the enemy would have marched like another Gothic scourge of God over the heart of Carolina, hunting the life-blood from its every vein, and a triumphant shout would have gone up from their ranks—

"As though the fiends from Heaven that fell,
Had pealed the banner cry of hell."

This was the pioneer struggle with our gigantic enemy, and as the oak is born of the acorn, so this battle was the germ of a series of glorious events. Signalized, as it was, as the first victory over the Goliah of tyranny, it inaugurated that series of triumphs which came upon the world, in gradually unfolding grandeur until they found their culmination in that event which sent up the proud hurrah of victory from the memorable plains of Yorktown. Glory, undying glory, my countrymen, to the brave men who here fought the first victorious fight for freedom.

"Their bosoms they bared to the glorious strife,
Their oath, 'twas recorded on high,
To prevail in a cause that was dearer than life,
Or crushed in its ruins to die."

But, my countrymen, while we bring our oblations of gratitude to this shrine of freedom, and stand, as is were, upon the dust of those who here so nobly fought, let us not forget in this hour of reverent patriotism, to breathe the names of other ascended patriots, who struck redeeming blows for the land we live in. The serpent of tyranny which had stolen into our Eden was here "scotched, not killed," and it was

necessary that other men at other times should place their armed heel upon the reptile, and crush out its venom and its strength. Such men, God in his mercy, ever raised up for your country in the hour of her exigency, and no where were they found more numerously, or did they bear themselves more gallantly, than in the Cape Fear country, well worthy of being called the Gibraltar of North Carolina. Fain would I speak of those partisan warriors who, though attended with but little of the "pride and pomp, and circumstances of glorious war," were ever striking stalwart blows for the rescue of their country, and in their frequent brilliant skirmishes with the marauding tory, were exhibiting acts of heroism, which, if known to the world, would have given them the readiest passports to fame. Time would fail me to tell their names, or to blazon and to amplify their deeds.

Go with me at least, however, to one of their fields of fame—that field where a battle was fought at the close of the Revolution, second only in importance to the Cape Fear region—to that conflict which stood out so gloriously on the threshold of that Revolution, and which we now commemorate. I point you to the battle of Elizabethtown, fought in July, 1781, the gloomiest period of the war, when Wilmington was calamitously cursed by the presence of the British under Major Craige, and when her sister town of Fayetteville was beleaguered by the tories, more than three hundred of whom had also occupied Elizabethtown, and sent the Whigs of that section as plundered fugitives from their homes. It was at a time like this, that a Spartan band of sixty high-souled patriots, among whom were Owen and Morehead, and Robeson and Ervin, of Bladen, marched under their chosen commander, Col. Thomas Brown, of the same county, to the attack of this stronghold of toryism, then held by Col. Slingsby, who had formerly been taken prisoner at the battle of Moore's Creek Bridge. Their temporary refuge had been on this side of the river, and when at night they reached it and found no means of transportation at hand, promptly and boldly they

plunged into the stream. With difficulty and with danger it is crossed, and now that the Rubicon is passed, they move with stealthy step upon the foe. With no drums beating, with no banners flying, and with naught but the slogan war cry of "victory or death" to stir their heroic hearts, they storm his well defended outposts, drive in his sentinels, and then they fought like brave men, long and well. They conquered, and in that midnight hour, with no light to guide them but the flashing of their swords, and the blaze of their musketry, they wreaked their righteous vengeance upon the the offending head of their enemy, who fled "like a rabble rout," leaving upon the field their slaughtered leaders—Godden and Slingsby. Thus was achieved a victory which shattered the strength of the tories—thrilled the whig heart of the Cape Fear with joy—and exhibited a degree of skill and valor only surpassed by the patriotism which called them into action. But I pursue this historic episode no further, nor would I have invoked your attention to this event in our history, but for my desire to give prominence to the merits of those whose intrepid patriotism accomplished an achievement in arms which, like the battle of the Bridge, is much too little known, and to which no adequate appreciation has ever been extended.

And more especially do I desire to do something of justice to the memory of Col. Thomas Brown, the uniform and unterrified soldier of this country during the dark days of the Revolution. Here is that loved and trusty sword, left as a rich legacy to his worthy descendants, which he bore from the field of his renown, wet with the blood of the enemies of his country. Look on it, ye countrymen of his, and you will find—

> "There's blood upon that dinted sword,
> A stain its steel can never lose."

He was every inch a nobleman of nature, and among all that high priesthood of patriots who worshipped at the altar of our country's freedom, there came none of more unselfish aims or more heroic courage than he—he who lived beloved

and honored by all who knew him, and who died leaving no stain or shade to darken the fair field of his unsullied escutcheon.

And now, my countrymen, my mission is well nigh accomplished. I have read to you from that bright but bloody page in our country's history, which tells of the trials and the triumphs of those who made the tented field the scene of their glory. Gladly would I turn the leaf and pass to that page whereon is written the not less glorious story of those civic heroes, who, in the Revolutionary councils of the State, gave form and texture to our government, and have made our annals radiant with their wisdom and their gallantry. Right gladly would I present to your admiring gaze, your Hooper and your Harnett, and other "bright particular stars" of your section and of your State, who shone out so brilliantly from the darkness which then brooded over our political firmament. But the waning hour which your kindness has allowed me, warns me to forbear.

Suffice it, then, to say that even such as I have feebly sketched to you, were the men who lived in the heroic age of our land—an age illustrated by deeds worthy of the proudest epic the historic muse can chant. Standing, as we do, far removed from that day of doubt and danger, and reaping, as we are, a rich harvest of blessings from that tree of liberty which they planted in this good land, and watered by their blood, little do we know of the terrors and the trials which they braved and bore in upholding the holy cause of liberty. I tell you, my countrymen, that if such men had lived in the far gone ages of antiquity, their deeds would have made them demigods, and their fame would have carried them to the proudest places in the Pantheon of history. Should we, then, dishonor by forgetfulness that "breed of noble bloods," who alike in camp and council so gloriously championed the cause of our country? Shall we, like degenerate sons, bastardise the blood of such sires by the disloyalty of ingratitude? One by one they have gone down to the dust they rescued from oppression, but from every sepulchral sod which covers their ashes, methinks I hear a voice calling upon us to commemorate their deeds, and to cheerish their memories. I catch that call and bear it to you this day, my countrymen. By all the glorious memories of the past, by all the cheering an-

ticipations of the futnre, I conjure you to perpetuate the renown of your illustrious dead, and to make classic the scenes of their toils and their triumps.

Let us, then, this day draw aside that veil of oblivion which has too long shrouded their worth and their fame. Let us build high, at least, that monument, the foundation stone of which we this day lay, in honor of a victory "ennobled by a noble cause."

In the colder clime of the North, they erect the monument to the pilgrim and the patriot, and from the soil of Bunker Hill, a grateful memorial of those who there went through the baptism of blood in the service of their country, now rises to Heaven. But upon that soil the banner of King George triumphed. And shall we of the sunnier South, not rear a like memorial on the ground where that banner drooped, and was down-trodden in defeat? Shall we refuse the poor pittance of our treasure to those who gave us their blood, and were ready to give us their martyred lives? Shame, eternal shame upon us, my countrymen, if we are guilty of such ingratitude. Let, then, that structure which we this day give to this hallowed earth, rise in sublime simplicity to tell of the glory of the past, and the gratitude of the present, and as we often write the virtues of the departed on the urns which hold their ashes, so let this monumental tablet be inscribed with the names of our heroes, and the record of an achievement, which Rome, in her palmiest day, would have written high in the chronicles of glory. On the summit of the mountain which overlooks that world-renowned defile where the brave Grecian withstood the myrmidons of Persia, the eye of the traveler looks upon a monument on which these words are written:—"Go, stranger, tell the Lacedemonians we have obeyed their law, and we are *here*." So let that monument which on this spot we build, proclaim to all the world the prompt obedience which our brave forefathers yielded to their country's bidding, and show how—

> "When their country called, and called in wild despair,
> The patriots came, and all their soul was here."

Let us, my countrymen, ever hallow in our hearts, the spot on which we stand,—let the monument we build on it be an altar of freedom where we may ever rekindle the expiring fires of patriotism; and hither, like Hamilcar of old, let us come with our children, and make them swear, even on such an altar, undying hostility to the enemies of our country.