

# THE BATTLE OF KING'S MOUNTAIN

To the Editor of the New-York Times:

I wish to offer a few reflections suggested by a perusal of Gen. De Peyster's article entitled "The Affair at King's Mountain," published in the December number of the *Magazine of American History*, and noticed in a late issue of THE TIMES. I would ask, first, why is "a delineation novel, although authentic, because contrary to narratives hitherto given as correct?" What does this mean? The importance of the battle of King's Mountain "as decisive of the Revolutionary war South, and perhaps everywhere," is at one point strongly urged, and later on it is described as not a battle but a *battue*. How are these conflicting terms to be reconciled, either with one another or with the later accounts of Ferguson's gallantry in charge and rally, in riding up and down his line encouraging his men, and De Peyster's prolonged resistance after his fall? Where is the parallel to Roland and Roncesvalles? Is it intended to liken Ferguson's little whistle to the blast of Roland's horn, which pierced the rivers, hills, and startled slumbering Charlemagne? If I remember aright Roland and his peers died to a man in the fatal valley. Ferguson's swashbucklers surrendered with unanimity and alacrity.

It is said that at the Brandywine the men armed with Ferguson's rifle astonished the American sharpshooters by the superiority of their aim and the rapidity of their fire, and that he had 100 of these redoubtable marksmen with his force, besides from 1,500 to 2,000 native Militia, the latter spoken of in terms of the utmost contempt, and yet a little later on it is asserted that the whole of his command was exposed to the fire of the best marksmen in the world, who shunned a hand-to-hand conflict with the British, who depended on their discipline, their manhood, and the bayonet. As great stress is laid upon the assertion that there were no regular troops in the fight, where is all this discipline, manhood, and reliance on the bayonet to be found in a force which so fluctuated in numbers from day to day that Ferguson never knew how many men he commanded? I have given up all hope of comprehending the account of the movements of Ferguson. The Elbows of the Mincio is plain in comparison. The battle, or *battue*, it is asserted, took place in a locality as to the relative position of the combatants, as though Ferguson and his men had been penned up in Madison-square, and the Americans, from the safe shelter of the surrounding houses, had potted them at leisure, while in the next sentence I read of the summit of the ridge, and of Ferguson's gallantry in twice driving the Americans down the slope of the hill, up which they had advanced to the attack; that the elevation occupied by the British exposed them to a cross fire, and no little exultation is expressed at the fact that the loss of the Americans exceeded that of the British, which is singular, to say the least, if it be true, that the former avoided a hand-to-hand conflict. Ferguson is represented as taking an active part in the contest, that he personally led the repulse of two attacks, and rode up and down his line encouraging his men. As the fight only lasted an hour and five minutes, it becomes necessary to the success in this attempt to canonize Abraham De Peyster, to kill off Ferguson early in the action, that the credit of prolonging the action may be given to a De Peyster. If the second in command did not himself raise the white flag, he accepted it speedily. I will not undertake to draw the line between Gen. De Peyster and the veracious Judge Jones, but as the former had selected Ferguson as a hero, let Jones, his contemporary, speak: "Upon the Barnegat expedition a Capt. Ferguson had the command. \* \* \* He plundered the inhabitants, burned their houses, their churches, and their barns; ruined their farms; stole their cattle, hogs, horses, and sheep, and then triumphantly returned to New-York." ("History of New-York," by Thomas Jones, vol. 1, pp. 286-7.)

No doubt his reputation had preceded him to South Carolina. When he called for recruits there flocked to his standard all the refuse of the State, who, allured by his offers of bounty, uniform, and rations, seized the opportunity offered by the flag of King George to satisfy their lust for plunder, their appetite for revenge, and the chance to pay off old scores on their Whig neighbors, under leaders of congenial tastes and habits, relying for immunity on the vicinity of the army of Cornwallis and the ubiquity of the butcher Tarleton. The mountaineers, who provided their own horses and food, rose as one man, and halting neither by day or night, corraled the marauders at King's Mountain, where they met a fate richly deserved.

A STUDENT OF HISTORY.

The New York Times

Published: December 30, 1880

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