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THE BATTLE OF "BRADDOCK'S FIELDS."

The historic account of Gen. Braddock's desperate battle with the French-Indian army at "Braddock's Fields," near Pittsburgh, are very meagre and unreliable.

As Braddock and his aide Washington still weak and shattered from his fever, and unable to sit his horse without a pillow—were standing on the river's bluff...

"My God, Major!" cried Braddock, as he leaped to his horse, whose bridle his servant Bishop was holding near him...

Washington delayed not an instant, but springing upon his powerful roan, spurred along under the trees and by the side of the road...

The British rallied again, and opened a dreadful storm of grape and musketry, sweeping away everything living before them...

"Ho! Sir John," exclaimed Washington, as St. John, foaming with rage and excitement, approached to form and urge on the men...

"Fierce as furnace fire and hot as d—n," answered the fiery St. John. "Harry Gordon was in the very front marking out the road when, upon hearing a rushing noise ahead and looking through the trees...

Colonel Burton's command had just come upon the ground, and were forming, as well as could be under such a murderous hail of lead and in such a narrow road...

Then it was that Braddock stormed around with a rage and an indignation which was almost sublime from its intensity. Turning sharply on Gage:

"How's this, craven sir! would ye so basely dishonor your king and the duke? God's wrath! is this the way ye've been taught to fight! By the Eternal, but I'll break your disgraced sword where you sit in saddle!"

Washington, after a few more brief, rapid questions, took in the whole situation and turned his horse's head. He had gone but a few steps when he saw Jack and the Half-King a few yards on one side of the road...

"Halloo! Jack and Scaroooyaddy. You there, my braves? Where are the other Indians? They must scatter in the woods and try and find out where those devils are hiding and what's their force. I'll have Braddock here in a flash!"

"Aha! Major," cried Jack quick as thought, as he raised and fired his rifle, "that's just the chance I've been waiting for. I've watched that skulking Shawnee now for over a minute. I knew he wouldn't let you pass without a shot."

"Killed!" hoarsely roared Braddock, while mounting his second horse. "And why not? Better die with naked front to the foe than blink and skulk like hares in their forms. Get behind trees! Oh, that over I'd live to hear a British officer and a nobleman's son, too, give voice to such dastard words!"

"Retire! retire out of fire, and before a d—d dastardly foe who dare not uncover himself!" shouted Braddock. "Major Washington, you are my aide-de-camp to carry orders, not to give them. Retire in a round, well-picked word! It may suit your American militia, but sir, it is a disgraceful word for an officer holding his Majesty's commission, either to speak or to hear!"

"Na, na, Geordie, but Ise gotten enough. 'Tis jost aboon my baldric. When cud luke to go thro' sicon an awsome day w'out scar or scath? I lu'e fear Ise ta'er a strong grippit o' death. I am sair, sair forfooghten, but ne'er fear, man, but wha the auld Sir Peter will e'er present a heekle to his foes."

you. The men are plainly panic-stricken. If allowed to get behind whatever cover offers, they can pick up heart and reform when the enemy is found. If not, we'll all be killed, officers and men."

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"Well, Colonel," said Washington, "no use to discuss the General now. You need immediate attention. I'll send some soldiers to take you to the rear."

Washington had scarcely gone a hundred paces before a bullet, sped by an Indian rifle from the ravine, struck Halket straight through the heart. Just as he was falling his son James rushed forward and caught him in his arms. He, too, was at the same instant mortally struck, and both fell together, locked in each other's embrace, and this was the last of the old Scotch nobleman.

The two bodies lay, just where they fell, for years, through summer's heat and winter's snow—"mid all the wreck of the spiteful elements." We will hereafter relate how, three years after, two skeletons were found locked together, and in how singular a manner the young Sir Peter Halket identified them as those of his father and brother.

The Provincials—the American militia, of whom Braddock was so contemptuous—were among the last to yield the hill. Among them were Jack, Gist, Waggoner, Scaroooyaddy, and others of the more cool and collected scouts and rangers, who had, wherever they could obtain a "coign of vantage," kept up a desultory fire upon the foe.

It was well that the savages, glutted with blood, laden down with scalps, or having a wholesome fear of Dunbar's army still in the rear, turned aside from the monotony of slaughter to the work of gathering the rich spoils of the disastrous field. Had they chosen to pursue across the river, or had they gone up the same bank and waited at the other ford, two miles above, for the poor, panting, exhausted, and panic-stricken fugitives, as they crossed the stream for the fourth time that day, but few would have been left to tell the sad and disgraceful tale.

"Good! Jack. Give me your hand on't, old hickory! I'm with you till death. I can depend on what is left of my company to a man, and think I can get enough rangers from Dobb's, Dagworthy's, Stevens' and Peyronis' companies to make the attempt. 'Ho!' he shouted, in clear, ringing tones, 'American rangers, stay one moment! We've tried fighting Indians on the British plan, and if we go on one shot half-hour longer, we'll not have a whole scalp left. Captain Jack proposes to run forward and take possession of yonder huge log, which commands the enemy's position, and will give us complete protection, and we'll rout those cursed, yelping, barking devils down there quicker'n you could scratch a nest of rattlesnakes. All who want to redeem this disgraceful day, and strike at least one stout blow for victory, follow me!"

A hearty cheer rang out. About eighty American rangers, including, also, Jack, Scaroooyaddy, Alapiqua's two sons, Gist, Fairfax, and two other friendly Indians, agreed to follow.

"Now, lads, all load up, and sling each man of you around his tree and draw their fire."

"So," as a brisk volley came from the foe. "Now for it," and Jack and Waggoner leading, they darted rapidly forward, rifles cocked, all ready in trail, and losing only three men by the way.

"Now!" shouted Waggoner, "spread yourselves along snug, and fire one volley all together, and then every man load and fire at will, and if we don't have some little to boast of this day my name's not Tom Waggoner. Look, Jack; look! D'ye see the painted, slippery devils wriggling and gliding away? Aha! we've got 'em, every pop! Now for it, boys! Quick! quick! before you lose 'em. Ready! Take aim! Fire!"—and a tremendous volley and red line of flame leaped from their rifles.

"Ha!" yelled Jack, springing to his feet with excitement, as he saw a whole raft of Indians break cover, "one more like that and we'll have scalps enough to buy a farm apiece. Horral! boys; hur—"

His words were drowned by the roar of guns and a general discharge of musketry behind him, and at least forty of the eighty fell killed and wounded by the fire from the mob of British regulars in their rear, who loaded and fired wherever they saw a flash of smoke.

"My God!" gasped Jack, the first to recover from the dreadful shock which seemed to paralyze and hold speechless all that were left. "Shot by our own men, as I'm a living sinner; worse than murder, by heavens! Come, Waggoner and Yaddy, it's no use. The day's lost when British soldiers can thus slaughter their betters."

Another volley was poured on their doomed heads, until fifty out of the gallant little band were either killed or wounded, and the rest were put to a hasty flight. Their rage, disgust and indignation can be imagined but not described.

Braddock, almost all his best officers either killed or wounded, and all the ammunition shot away, found it now almost impossible even to effect a safe or orderly retreat. The Indians, having little more to fear from the army on the hill plain, now worked down the ravines until they appeared on the first "bottom," and commenced to attack the baggage.

The flank parties posted for its security all but one ran in. A great number of horses and some drivers were shot down, while the rest, cutting loose the best horses in the teams, mounted and were off. The cannon did some service, and, commanded and sometimes even served by Washington himself, had for some time kept off the foe, but the spot was so woody that very little execution could be done.

Just at this juncture Braddock himself, who had but few horses killed under him and whose clothes had been riddled with bullets, received a mortal wound while standing beneath a large tree on the brow of the second rise. The ball passed through his right arm, lodging deep in his lungs. The order he was just giving was left unfinished on his lips. Falling from his horse, there the brave but unfortunate General lay, with but a few friends around him and all his drilled veterans flying off in headlong, disgraceful flight. "They ran," wrote Washington in his first letter after the battle, "as sheep pursued by dogs, and it was impossible to rally them."

The fall of the General destroyed all semblance of further opposition. Every aide but Washington and every field officer was struck down. About nine hundred out of the fourteen hundred men, and sixty-three out of the eighty-six officers were either killed or wounded, and the rest scarce waited for the drums to sound the retreat. All, all was abandoned! Horses, cattle, wagons, artillery, military chest, personal baggage, everything—and what was worse, almost every person who was badly wounded.

Down, down the fugitive mob rushed to the ford, over which they had passed with such pagenancy and enthusiasm in the morning. The whole route was strewn with guns, military trappings, and even clothing—all which could impede flight. About fifty Indians pursued even to the Monongahela, tomahawking several in the passage.

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"Waggoner," exclaimed Jack, "'tis a crying shame that we should stay here and be butchered for the mad whims of a man who may be as brave as Julius Caesar, but who's as crazy as a loon. Now, I've been studying the lay of these harking red devils, and from the line of their fire I feel certain their whole position can be turned from that huge fallen tree yonder, lying just on the rise of the hill. What say you? Can you take your men, and let us run for it?"

"This was what both Halket and Washington urged him to do, but to no purpose. He raged along the road like a fury; drove back his men by the sword, and seemed determined to overcome by mere force of drill and obstinacy. Indeed, it is uncertain whether he now could have executed the manoeuvre. No soldiers—not even Cumberland's veterans—could long withstand a deadly and concentrated fire from front and both flanks.

The fact that the fatal flashes and puffs of smoke and volleys seemed to come right out of the ground and from unseen foes, while the whole air and woods around rang full of savage yells and horrible screechings, completed the demoralization. Many afterwards declared that during the whole three hours' contest they had never once seen a foe; while others would not assert that they had seen over half a dozen. It is only a wonder that soldiers so wretchedly posted and so badly commanded could stand it as long as they did.

The provincials suffered as much as the British soldiers. Whenever and wherever they could they took to the trees. It is even asserted, and we think it probable, that some of the officers who, by Braddock's explicit command, attempted to beat back into the road the men who had thus sought shelter behind trees, were shot by their own men.

In one of the pauses of this one-sided conflict, Washington, who had been kept busy carrying the General's orders—the other aides, Orme and Morris, having been wounded—saw Colonel Halket, grim and weary-looking, standing dismounted under a huge oak, and leaning heavily against its massive trunk. Hastening up and out a little from the fire, he anxiously inquired:

"I trust, Sir Peter, you are not very badly hurt?"

"Na, na, Geordie, but Ise gotten enough. 'Tis jost aboon my baldric. When cud luke to go thro' sicon an awsome day w'out scar or scath? I lu'e fear Ise ta'er a strong grippit o' death. I am sair, sair forfooghten, but ne'er fear, man, but wha the auld Sir Peter will e'er present a heekle to his foes."

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