EASTON GAZETTE.

WHERE THE PRESS IS FREE—"Literature well or ill-conducted, is the Great Engine by which all Popular States must ultimately be supported or overthrown—RELIGION purifies the Heart and teaches us our Duty—Morality refines the Manners—Agriculture makes us Rich, and Politics provides for the enjoyment of all.

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THE BATTLE OF PRINCETON, AND DEATH OF GENERAL MERCER.

[*Communicated for the National Intelligencer from the Custis "Recollections and Private Memoirs of the Life and Character of Washington."*]

The historical records of the War of the American Revolution are all in error as respects the death of General Mercer, who fell at the battle of Princeton January 3, 1777. We offer the homage of our veneration for this martyr's memory, by giving to his adopted country, and the world, authentic particulars of the heroism and devotion that attended his fall.

It was immediately after the sharp conflict, at the fence, between the advanced guard of the American army, led by General Mercer, and the British 17th regiment, and the retreat of the Americans through the orchard near to Clark's house and barn, that General Mercer, while exerting himself to rally his broken troops, was brought to the ground by a blow from the butt of a musket. He was on foot at this time—the gray horse he rode at the beginning of the action having been disabled by a ball in the fore leg.

The British soldiers were not aware of the General's rank, for, the morning being very cold, he wore a surtout over his uniform. So soon as they discovered that he was a General officer, they shouted that they had got the rebel General, and cried, "Call for quarters, you d—d rebel!" Mercer, to the most undaunted courage, united a quick and ardent temperament; he replied with indignation to his enemies, while their bayonets were at his bosom, that he deserved not the name of rebel, and determining to die as he had lived, a true and honored soldier of liberty, lounged with his sword at the nearest man. They then bayoneted him, and left him for dead.

Upon the retreat of the enemy, the wounded General was conveyed to Clark's house, immediately adjoining the field of battle. The information that the Commander-in-Chief first received of the fall of his old companion in arms of the war of 1755, and beloved officer, was that he had expired under numerous wounds; and it was not until the American army was in full march to Morristown, that the Chief was undeceived, and learned, to his great gratification, that Mercer though fearfully wounded, was yet alive.—Upon the first halt at Somerset court-house, Washington despatched the late Major George Lewis, his nephew, and Captain of the Horse Guard, with a flag and a letter to Lord Cornwallis, requesting that every possible attention might be shown to the wounded General, and permission that young Lewis should remain with him to administer to his wants. To both requests his Lordship yielded a willing assent, and ordered his staff-surgeon to attend upon General Mercer. Upon an examination of the wounds the British surgeon remarked, that although they were many and severe, he was disposed to believe that they would not prove dangerous. Mercer bred to the profession of an army surgeon in Europe, said to young Lewis, 'Raise up my right arm, George, and this gentleman will there discover the smallest of my wounds, but which will prove the most fatal. Yes, sir, that is a fellow that will very soon do my business.' He languished till the 12th, and expired in the arms of Lewis, admired and lamented by the whole army. During the period that he languished on the couch of suffering, he exonerated his enemies from the foul accusation which they bore not only in 1777, but for half a century since, viz: of their having bayoneted a General officer after he had surrendered his sword and become a prisoner of war—declaring that he only relinquished his sword when his arm had become powerless to wield it. He paid the homage of his whole heart to the person and character of the Commander-in-Chief, rejoiced with true soldiery pride in the triumphs of Trenton and Princeton, in both of which he had borne a conspicuous part, and offered up his fervant prayers for the final success of the cause of American Independence.

Thus lived and died Hugh Mercer, a name that will forever be associated with momentous events in the history of the War of the Revolution. When a grateful posterity shall bid the trophied memorial rise to the martyrs, who sealed with their blood the character of an empire's liberties, there will not be wanting a monument to him whom Washington mourned as the worthy and brave General Mercer.

We shall give a single anecdote of the subject of the foregoing memoir, to show the pure and high-souled principles that actuated the patriots and soldiers of the days of our country's trial.

Virginia at first organized two regiments for the common cause. When it was determined to raise a third, there were numerous applications for commissions; and these being mostly from men of fortune and family interest, there was scarcely an application for a rank less than a field officer. During the sitting of the House of Burgesses upon this important motion, a plain but soldierly looking individual handed up to the Speaker's chair a scrap of paper, on which was written, 'Hugh Mercer will serve his adopted country and the cause of liberty *in any rank or station* to which he may be appointed.' This, from a veteran soldier, bred in European camps, the associate of Washington in the war of 1755, and known to stand high in his confidence and esteem, was all sufficient for a body of patriots and statesmen such as composed the Virginia House of Burgesses, in the days of the Revolution. The appointment of Mercer to the command of the third Virginia regiment was carried instanter.

It was while the Commander-in-chief reined up his horse, upon approaching the spot in a ploughed field where lay the gallant Colonel Haslet mortally wounded, that he perceived some British soldiers supporting an officer, and upon inquiring his name and rank, was answered, Captain Leslie. Doctor Benj. Rush, who formed a part of the General's suite, earnestly asked, 'A son of the Earl of Leven?' to which the soldier replied in the affirmative. The Doctor then addressed the General-in-chief: 'I beg your excellency to permit this wounded officer to be placed under my care, that I may return, in however small a degree, a part of the obligations I owe to his worthy father for the kindnesses received at his hands while I was a student in Edinburgh.' The request was immediately granted: but, alas! poor Leslie was soon "past all surgery." He died the same evening, after receiving every possible kindness and attention, and was buried the next day at Pluckamin with the honors of war: his soldiers, as they lowered his remains to the soldier's last rest, shedding tears over the grave of a much loved commander.

The battle of Princeton, for the time it lasted and the numbers engaged, was the most fatal to our officers of any action during the whole of the Revolutionary war—the Americans losing one general, two colonels, one major, and three captains, killed—while the martial prowess of our enemy shone not with more brilliant lustre in any one of their conflicts during their long career of arms than did the courage and discipline of the 17th British regiment on the 31 of January, 1777. Indeed, Washington himself, during the height of the conflict, pointed out this gallant corps to his officers, exclaiming, 'See how those noble fellows fight! Ah! gentlemen, when shall we be able to keep an army long enough together to display a discipline equal to our enemies.'

The regular troops that constituted the grand army at the close of the campaign of '76 were the fragments of many regiments, worn down by constant and toilsome marches, and suffering of every sort, in the depth of winter.—The 7th regiment of Smallwood, composed of the flower of the Maryland youth, and which, in the June preceding, marched into Philadelphia seven hundred strong was, on the 31 of January, reduced to scarcely sixty men, and commanded by a captain. In fact the bulk of what was then called the grand army consisted of the Pennsylvania militia and volunteers, citizen soldiers who had left their comfortable homes at the call of their country, and were enduring the rigors of a winter campaign. On the morning of the battle of Princeton, they had been eighteen hours under arms, and harrassed by a long night's march. Was it then to be wondered at, that they should have given way before the veteran bayonet of their fresh and well appointed foe?

The heroic devotion of Washington was not wanting in the exigencies of this memorable day. He was aware that his hour was come, to redeem the pledge he had laid on the alter of his country when first he took up arms in her cause: to win her liberties or perish in the attempt.—Defeat at Princeton would have amounted to the annihilation of America's last hope: for, independent of the enemy's forces in front, Cornwallis, with the flower of the British army, eight thousand strong, was already panting close on the rear.

It was indeed, the very crisis of the struggle. In the hurried and imposing events of little more than one short week, liberty endured her greatest agony.—What, then, is due to the fame and memories of that sacred band who, with the master of liberty at their head breasted the storm at this fearful crisis of their country's destiny?

The heroic devotion of Washington on the field of Princeton; is a matter of history. We have often enjoyed a touching reminiscence of that ever memorable event from the late Col. Fitzgerald, who was aid to the chief, and who never related the story of his General's danger, and almost miraculous preservation, without adding to his tale the homage of a tear.

The aid-de-camp had been ordered to bring up the troops from the rear of the column, when the band under Gen. Mercer became engaged. Upon returning to the spot where he had left the commander-in-chief, he was no longer there, and, upon looking around, the aid discovered him endeavouring to rally the line which had been thrown into disorder by a rapid onset of the foe. Washington, after several ineffectual efforts to restore the fortunes of the fight, is seen to rein up his horse, with head to the enemy and, in that position, to become immovable. It was a last appeal to his soldiers, and seemed to say, Will you give up your General to the foe? Such an appeal was not made in vain. The discomfited Americans rally on the instant, and form into line: the American Chief is between the adverse posts, as though he had been placed there, a target for both. The arms of both lines are levelled. Can escape from death be possible?—Fitzgerald, horror-struck at the danger of his beloved commander, dropped the reins upon his horse's neck and threw his hat over his face, that he might not see him die. A roar of musketry succeeds, and then a shout. It was the shout of victory. The aid-de-camp ventures to raise his eyes, and oh, glorious sight the enemy are broken and flying, while dimly amid the glimpse of the smoke is seen the Chief, safe, unharmed, and without a wound,' waving his hat, and cheering his comrades to the pursuit.

Col. Fitzgerald, celebrated as one of the finest horsemen in the American army, now dashed his rowels in his charger's flanks, and, heedless of the dead dying in his way, flew to the side of his Chief, exclaiming, 'Thank God! your excellency is safe,' while the favorite aid, a gallant and warmhearted son of Erin, a man of thew and sinews, and 'albeit unused to the melting mood,' gave loose to his feelings, and wept, like a child, for joy.

Washington, ever calm amid scenes of the greatest excitement, affectionately grasped the hand of his aid and friend, and then ordered, 'Away, my dear Col. and bring up the troops—the day is our own!'

From the Philadelphia Ledger.

COL. PLUCK.—One of the drollest paragraphs we have lately encountered, is that from the Montreal Herald, in which, after noticing the recent death of Col. Pluck, at the Blockley Almshouse, the writer denounces, with unmitigated severity, the proverbial ingratitude of republics. "Is it not monstrous," he exclaims, "that after fighting the battles of his country, and winning, by his gallantry, numerous laurels this aged and warworn veteran should have been suffered to die in friendless poverty, amid the wrecks of humanity that are clustered in a lazar-house, and without the ordinary decencies that accompany the closing moments of the most abandoned and destitute? Shame upon the government that thus basely neglects its faithful servants—shame upon the people that can thus forget their bravest defenders?"

It is certainly a pity to spoil such a pretty piece of pathos, but historical truth requires us to set our Canadian brother right in the premises. This we shall do by a retrospect of the rise and progress of the military fortunes of the "lamented" deceased. Some time about the year 1824—we are not precise as to the date—in consequence of a dissatisfaction which had long been growing with the then existing militia laws of the Commonwealth, a number of wags residing in the bounds of the 84th regiment, determined, by a practical illustration, to expose the absurdity of the system of annual parades. For this purpose, having quietly made their arrangements, on the day fixed for the election of a Colonel, they repaired to the polls, and as their designs were unsuspected, they succeeded in giving a majority of votes to *John Pluck*, an individual until then comparatively unknown, but who was destined in a short time to become widely famous.

As soon as it was known that an ostler—for such was the occupation of the successful candidate—had been chosen to command a regiment, there was a large outcry against the proceedings among those who regarded the militia as the "bulwark of the nation," and remonstrance was added to remonstrance, to an extent that induced Governor Schultze, the then Executive of the Commonwealth, to withhold the commission from Pluck, and to order a new election. As this was a somewhat violent assumption of authority, and as the original inventors of the scheme had now added to their numbers all who were disaffected to the prevailing law, it turned out at the special election, that notwithstanding strenuous efforts were made in behalf of his opponent, a very respectable and intelligent citizen, Pluck succeeded by a majority that admitted of no dispute or cavil.—There being, therefore, no longer any excuse for denying him his credentials, John Pluck was duly commissioned Colonel of the 84th regiment of Pennsylvania Militia, under the "great and lesser seals of the Commonwealth."

At the time of his election, and a long time afterwards, Pluck was engaged as ostler at the old tavern on the Northwest corner of Third and Callowhill streets. He was an odd looking creature, of low stature, and with a countenance upon which stupidity was stamped with an unmistakeable impress. Nor did his character misseem his appearance, for except in cases of confirmed idiocy, it would have been impossible to find fewer traces of intellect than in him. He had not even the slightest perception of fun, however coarse, but was stolid and imperturable to the last degree. It was partly on this account, and partly from his degraded condition, and partly from the singularity of his name, that he was chosen as a fit instrument to work out certain ends; and in the hands of those who pulled the wires for him, notwithstanding his native imbecility, he proved an efficient agent. Immediately after his election, it was given out that for the purpose of improving the discipline of the men under his command, he would hold evening drills at his own quarters—the tavern abovementioned—and for a long time on one or two nights of the week, many curious persons assembled to witness a display of his tactics.

As the Colonel had not studied Gen. Macomb's book on the subject, and had but little practical experience, it need not be said that his orders, though few, were not very clear or simple. One thing he had sufficiently pat, and that was the "*Forward march!*" but when, in obedience to this direction, his volunteers had posted themselves with their faces against the wall of the bar-room, where the manœuvres were usually performed, it was not so easy to extricate them from their position. In this dilemma the Colonel, whose customary place was behind a table, with a pipe in his mouth, when appealed to for further orders, would scratch his head, and call for gin and water, and having sufficiently screwed up his courage by potent draughts of his favorite beverage, would bid them "go to the d—l," an injunction which they obeyed according to their several interpretations of its meaning, some going to the bar to drink and some surrounding their superior officer. A constant and if it had not been suggested by some of his advisers—an original movement of the Colonel, was to "form a hollow square by kingdoms," a piece of tactics upon which he greatly prided himself, thought it must be confessed it was rather inexplicable to those who were required to accomplish it.

By these night drills, and the notoriety which they naturally produced the Colonel became a sort of lion, and his approaching parade was looked for with no little anxiety. For this important occasion he was provided with a coat of the amplest dimensions, a pair of boots in which his legs were completely encased, and a throe cornered hat that fell upon his shoulders. Thus equipped, with his hair and face covered with white powder, and a sword of portentous length dangling by his side, he was mounted on a high horse, beneath whose belly his legs were tied, to prevent unfortunate accidents. In this guise, at the head of several hundred men, variously armed with clubs, bludgeons, corn stalks and muskets, some without stocks, some without barrels, he marched through the principal streets of the city, halting his ragged regiment at every public house, to take a drink himself, and to enable his followers to do likewise. As might have been expected, the Colonel reached home gloriously drunk, and his legs being unfastened, he was lifted from his horse into the arms of the kitchen maids, who indignantly declared that 'twas a sin and a shame to make such a fool of poor John!"

From that moment Col. Pluck was a man of mark. His picture, setting him forth in all the amplitude of his uniform, was displayed in all the print shops—pamphlets purporting to contain his biography, were hawked about the streets, and crowds repaired to see him. What added not a little to the interest he excited, was the appointments he made and promulgated, or rather those made in his name by his counsellors, for John was guiltless of any thing like ridicule, except what he exhibited in his own person. More than one grave old gentleman was shocked and startled at seeing his name figured in the placards on the corners, in the undesired office of drum or fife major, quarter-master or sergeant, and persons were appointed captains who had a holy horror of arms and armies.

The notoriety acquired by Col. Pluck at home was soon extended abroad, and some of the New York editors, to further the joke, gravely put forth through their columns, an invitation to him to visit that city. Major Noah promised that Col. King of the American newspaper, should do the honors of the tour, and volunteered either the purchase or loan of a sword to be used on the occasion. Acting on these suggestion, some worthless fellows persuaded Pluck to accompany them on a tour, and in New York and other places further east, they actually exhibited him at a shilling a head for spectators. The theatres also, made a case of him, and in this way the poor wretch was carried from place to place, to be stared at and laughed at, nor did he complain so long as his animal wants were satisfied. But the joke, like every other, began at last to grow stale, and the Colonel's keepers, finding the speculation likely to prove unprofitable, restored him to his home and stable, and laying aside the emblems of military authority, he resumed the brush and curry-comb. The outrage upon the military laws which the Colonel had committed, both in his parades and his peregrinations, could not, however, be passed by unnoticed, and a court martial was according summoned to try him for "unofficer and ungentleman-like conduct."

On the day this tribunal was in session, the Colonel, who contumaciously derided its authority, might have been seen sitting on the floor of a small wagon, which was driven through the principal thoroughfares) with his back to the horse, dressed in full regimentals,' a huge red feather surrounding his chapeau &pinned to his breast a placard, which bore in immense capital letters, 'No Court Martials—Liberty forever!' The sentence of the court was, of course, 'guilty,' and John Pluck, sometime Colonel, was duly cashiered from the military service of the State of Pennsylvania, and declared thenceforward incapable of holding any commission in 'the grand army.'

As those who had brought Pluck forward had now achieved their object in throwing odium and contempt on the system of annual militia parades, they did not choose any longer to be encumbered with him, and he very soon relapsed into his proper obscurity. Either his hobby had been spoiled during the term of his renown, or his ambition had been enlarged, for within a year or two of his disgrace he was seen conducting an adsheart and was engaged in making exchanges of candles for soapfat and hickory ashes. He next became a sort of underling at one of the slaughter houses in Spring Garden, and finally, when he became too old or too lazy to work, he found his way into that general receptacle of loafers & vagabonds, the Blockley Almshouse. Here he was employed in various menial occupations, and for the last year or two had assigned to him the business of washing the rags used in the surgical department. In this vocation he continued until the time of his death, which happened in the month of September.

We trust that when our Montreal contemporary reads this true history, he will recall his anathemas against republican ingratitude, and spare any further lamentation over the 'war-worn hero,' whose military achievements we have thus briefly chronicled.

From the New York Star.

PETER SCRIBER.

We should be happy to aid our friend, Mr. Scriber, with the advice he solicits, but we think his own views are as good as any we could point out. All we could say is, that we think the owners of the farms have no very great reason to be thankful to their neighbors in the next county. But so it is. The facts stated show the blighting influence of friendly predictions of evil. It is not the only instance where injury, deep and abiding has followed the prediction of those who having the power to verify their predictions, have not failed to put in practice their best efforts to prove themselves true prophets.

WESTCHESTER, 21st Oct. A. D. 1839.

Mr. Editor—It is seldom I ask advice, but owing to a matter of some little perplexity, (though I have my own notions about it) I should like to know your opinion, and that of your readers regarding it.

A good many of my neighbors about here owned a farm on shares. Some had more and some a less interest in it, and each drew his portion of the earnings of his farm contentedly and profitably. It happened, however, a few years ago, that a set of *folks in the next county* took occasion to pick a quarrel with the workmen on this farm, & tried their best to make every body discontented with the matter, by raising all manner of reports against the farm and the workmen. They went so far as to say that the farm was so badly managed, that the milk was sour, the eggs rotten, the corn musty, the potatoes bitter, and every thing it produced was of the worst kind. Time after time the shareholders were called on to look into the matter, and examine the conduct of the workmen employed, and as often the examination resulted in satisfaction to all parties interested. Yet the folks in the next county insisted that the farm was not well managed; and they were so afraid that the owners of it would lose by it some day or other, that they very kindly continued their efforts to prove the prediction true. The head man on the farm was old Nicholas Fairbanks, said to be one of the most experienced men in farming, and the owners of the farm had found him so for nearly twenty years. But the folks in the next county insisted on it that old Fairbanks was a jackass; though it was thought a little strange they should take so much trouble about it, seeing they had farms of their own to attend to, and had no share in this. But so it was; and they assured every body that their desire to see every body prosper well was the only reason why they took so much pains to persuade every body that things were not right on this particular farm. They worried old Nicholas Fairbanks so much that at last he cleared out thinking that perhaps, if he quit, they would quit interfering; and so he told the owners of the farm that it was in as good order as he could keep it, though, as they knew, he had had some extra trouble in keeping the fences up, and repairing injury to trees and crops, which some evil disposed people had, no doubt, had a hand in breaking down—not so much for mischief, perhaps, but to prove *their opinion* true, that the farm was not well managed. Well, for a time it was supposed that after old Nicholas had quit, all would go well; but this was a mistake. The same folks continued their kind efforts, insisting on it that the farm was badly managed, and 'Old Nick,' (as they called Mr. Fairbanks) had quit it, knowing it was badly off, and every night some strange accidents would recur—sometimes it was found that the fences were pulled down—the corn pulled up—the trees girdled, and all manner of nasty weed seed sown in the wheat fields and gardens—and the cattle sometimes pined away, died, and all manner of difficulties followed, till at last the workmen on the farm told the owners it was no use—that something was wrong—and that future good crops could not be calculated on so long as such strange accidents occurred; and that they must stop ploughing and digging, and let the farm lay quiet. And that is now its present condition.

And now, as a very large number of folks are left dependant, and deprived for years of what they had regularly received—they are a little puzzled to know what course to take for relief. They dont like to blame folks in the next county, because they have no right to believe that any *other motive* but *the good* of the owners of the farm, led them to *predict* so much evil; and some folks, you know, are so cute that what they predict is very apt to come true.

For my part I am puzzled to know what to advise; and all that I have said is, 'keep quiet, and let things work out by time their own cure—it may turn out that the farm was bad and that Nicholas Fairbanks did not know his duty—and it may turn out that for the kind anxiety of the folks in the next county; things would have gone on as they had gone, on for twenty years past—prosperously.—& the only way to get at the truth is to calmly and quietly consider the whole matter and determine how and why it is as it is.' All I know is that the farm was a good and productive one, till other folks, as aforesaid, began to *predict* that it was *not so*, and 'that the owners of it would one day find out that prediction true.' And from the day that prediction was made, every kind of accident began to occur—fences pulled down, trees girdled, cattle sick, corn pulled up, and every kind of devilment—and all I predicted. Now, I know it requires a sharp lookout and much industry to keep a farm straight and things prosperous in common times; but when it comes to work against predictions, I dont know, but I think, it is about as bad as frosts in June, July and August.

Your obedient servant,
PETER SCRIBER.

From the Baltimore Post.

FRESH WATER FROM SALT.

We witnessed a few days since a second trial of the invention for distilling fresh water from salt, which proved in the highest degree successful. As we stand on a former occasion, the invention combines with all the conveniences of a common caboose, or cooking stove for the use of vessels at sea, the advantages of distilling a sufficient supply of fresh water for the use of the vessel's crew.—The caboose is of the ordinary size—is furnished with a large oven, and four copper boilers, and is capable of cooking for forty men. The salt water boiler is so constructed as to occupy but little space, and the worm is placed in a wooden box of some four inches in thickness, attached to the caboose house, the whole requiring but little more space than a common ship's stove. The fire used for cooking is sufficient also for distilling—both operations, if desired, being carried on at the same time. Masters of vessels and other seafaring men who have examined it, consider the improvement one of vast importance; and the experiments which have been made abundantly prove that in every respect it will answer the purposes intended. There can be little question but that it will be brought into very general use. Many a poor mariner, whose supply of water has failed him, would have given a whole ship's cargo for a single draught of what this simple invention can furnish with the utmost facility and in the greatest abundance.

The invention has been seen patented, and orders to any amount can be filled by Messrs A. G. Tenney & Co, of this city. The stove may be seen at the Messrs. Hayward's, Light street.

A MARRIAGE AT FIRST SIGHT.—The Milledgeville Journal States that a marriage took place recently in that city under the following circumstances:

'A lady from an adjoining county

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