

FIGHTING AND RUNNING.

He that fights and runs away
Lives to fight another day;
He that is in battle slain
Never lives to fight again.

—Old Rhyme.

It is not often that, in time of war, the army that "fights and runs away" comes in for any share of admiration for its bravery. Yet there are instances in the history of our own nation where maneuvers of this nature have called for sublime courage and determination, and where a preference for being "in battle slain" rather than to beat a hasty retreat would have been looked upon as anything but wisely courageous. One such occasion is found in the experience of the revolutionary hero, General Nathaniel Greene.

Just one hundred and twelve years ago this month—in the dead of winter—the American army of the south, poorly equipped and numerically weak, passed through its dark days in the allotted task of preserving the Carolinas from complete subjection to British rule. To risk a decisive engagement and place itself within reach of the powerful force under Lord Cornwallis meant never "to fight again," and consequently dismal failure. To retire and leave the foe undisturbed would have been an abandonment almost as disastrous and less glorious. There was only one course—uncertain as to its practicability—and that was to keep up the fight, retiring meanwhile, if need be, into Virginia, and still preserve itself intact to harass and eventually beat back the enemy.

In the month of January—the 17th—1781, Colonel Morgan had routed the forces of the dashing British Colonel Tarleton; and Lord Cornwallis, determined to punish the victors and recapture the prisoners, burned his baggage, put his troops into light marching order, and started in hot haste after the Americans, who were on their way to join the main army under General Greene, now crossing the Catawba.

Three large rivers rise in the northwestern parts of North and South Carolina, and flow southeasterly toward the Atlantic. The first, or most southern one, is the Catawba, which empties into the Santee; next is the Yadkin, flowing into the Pedee; and the most northern is the Dan, winding back and forth over the Virginia line, and emptying into the Roanoke. A retreating army between a deep river and a powerful antagonist is in a very perilous situation; while one between two armies effectually separates them for some time. Morgan having joined Greene, and passed safely over the Catawba, the great effort of Lord Cornwallis was now to overtake his weak adversary somewhere between the great rivers; while General Greene was making every effort to keep a stream dividing him and his foe. Heavy rain storms had swollen the river so as to prevent the British commander from crossing. But after a couple of days' delay he decided, by a night march to a private ford, to deceive the patriots and cross the river without opposition. In this, however, he was disappointed, for the ever-vigilant Greene had stationed a body of militia there to dispute the passage.

Before daybreak the British column had reached the river. The rain was falling in torrents, and the turbid, foaming stream, whose roaring broke the solemn stillness of all else around, seemed indeed uninviting in the gloom. Cornwallis reined his steed on the bank, and gazed long and anxiously through the misty darkness. All seemed quiet, but the soldier's keen eye detected occasional flashes of camp fires in the forest, showing too well that his foe was not to be caught napping. The order to advance was given, and the troops boldly entered the channel, holding their muskets above their heads, and steadying each other on the slippery bottom. The cavalry plunged through, though many a horse and rider was borne down by the rapid stream.

The head of the column had scarcely reached the center of the river when the sentinels on the opposite shore gave a warning signal, and a few moments later five hundred Americans poured in a destructive volley, thinning the ranks of the advancing foe. Cornwallis' horse was shot under him, but the noble animal struggled onward, bringing his rider safe to shore. The intrepid troops moved quickly forward, and the militia were compelled to give way before superior force. The British commander was now on the same side as his adversary, and determined to follow him up and crush him at a blow. Greene had no sooner learned of his enemy's successful movement than he was on his way to the Yadkin. For three days the worn and ragged patriots dragged themselves through deep mud and drenching rain, stopping but a few hours to eat and rest.

By midnight on the evening of February 3rd, the last of the American army were embarked, the British advance guard being so close as to give them a parting volley. Not a boat was left behind, and the heavy rains had made the river unfordable, compelling the British to halt. Next morning saw the two armies encamped within view of each other, the Yadkin surging and threatening between, as if guarding the patriots and bidding defiance to the invader. Furious at this second escape of their enemy, the British planted their artillery along the banks of the river, and began a heavy cannonade on the American camp; but the latter rested in security behind an elevated ridge. A small cabin, almost hidden by the rocks, was chosen by Greene as his headquarters. This was a special object for the British marksmen, and it was not long before the roof of the cabin was struck; but the stern warrior within wrote on peacefully, while his troops were enjoying the repose so hardly won.

Four days passed before Cornwallis was able to move forward. Crossing the river a few miles below, he advanced to where the Americans had encamped, only to find them on the march for Guilford Court House, where Greene had directed a large body of troops to meet him, and where he had determined to turn on his pursuer. But to his great disappointment, on reaching Guilford he learned that the reinforcements promised had not arrived. Here was now a serious difficulty. The English army was composed almost entirely

of well-disciplined veterans, and numbered nearly double that of the Americans, who, at best, were but raw troops. Under such circumstances it would be madness for the patriot forces to risk a battle, while retreat was now next to impossible. In the hope of obtaining sufficient additions to his army to enable him to hold the foe in check, Greene had suffered Cornwallis to approach so close that there seemed scarce a hope of escape, and the British commander deemed his prey at last secure.

But Greene was not to be daunted. On the 10th of February the Americans were again in motion. The armies were now about twenty-five miles apart. The next river—the Dan—was deep, and had to be ferried over, except at a ford a considerable distance up the stream. This Cornwallis knew and expected Greene to make for the ford. He therefore placed his army—which could move more rapidly than the Americans, who had their baggage to carry—in a position to assure a complete victory. Greene at once divined the intention of his wily antagonist, and gave orders for all the boats to be congregated on the lower Dan, where he expected to meet the reinforcements from Virginia, and at the same place his army in safety. It was now necessary to deceive the British in order to follow out this plan. For this purpose, and to better cover the retreat, Colonel Williams, with a large detachment of chosen troops, was sent to keep the foe in check. Williams immediately marched boldly against the entire British army, with the evident intention of giving battle. Cornwallis, believing this to be the advance guard of the American army resolved on a desperate struggle to escape, formed his troops in line of battle, and made preparations for a determined resistance.

This successful ruse detained the British long enough for the patriots to get a start on their road, without which they must have failed. The roads, which a few days ago were deep mud, were now frozen hard and rough, and over these the weary, half clothed and almost barefooted soldiers were compelled to drag themselves to avoid destruction.

Cornwallis, discovering his error, again began the pursuit in good earnest. But there were now obstacles in his path, for Williams, with his gallant rearguard, kept between the two armies, slowly retreating, and striking a blow at every opportunity. The fate of the patriot army depended on their skill and courage, and every officer and man realized this fact. There were Lee's gallant legion and Washington's heavy-mounted horsemen, heroes every one. With increasing vigilance, these brave men hovered around the advancing columns so close as to compel them to keep in close marching order to protect themselves from attack. The least negligence and the blow would come like a thunderbolt. No rearguard could behave better than this one. The men were allowed but one meal a day, and three hours' sleep out of the twenty-four. By starting three hours before daylight and pushing forward, they obtained rest for breakfast—the last food until the next morning. Yet these brave fellows bore all without