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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Two Literary Societies

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH-CAROLINA,

June 6, 1855,

BY

GEORGE DAVIS, ESQ.,

OF WILMINGTON.

RALEIGH:

HOLDEN & WILSON, "STANDARD" OFFICE.

1855.



DIALECTIC HALL, *June 8, 1855.*

SIR.

We beg leave, in behalf of the Dialectic Society, to tender the sincere thanks of that body for your very able and interesting Address before the two Literary Societies; and we hereby respectfully request a copy of the same for publication.

Permit us, Sir, to add our personal solicitations to those of the Society we represent, with the hope that you will not deny our State so patriotic a sketch of some of her noblest sons.

Very respectfully,

WM. BINGHAM, }
A. H. MERRITT, } *Committee.*
J. C. WADDILL, }

GEO. DAVIS, Esq.

WILMINGTON, *June 16, 1855.*

GENTLEMEN:

I cheerfully comply with your request in furnishing for publication a copy of the Address delivered by me before the two Literary Societies of the University. Be pleased to express to the Dialectic Society my cordial thanks for their kind appreciation of my humble attempt to illuminate a dark page of our history, and to accept for yourselves the expression of my high respect and esteem.

Very respectfully yours,

GEO. DAVIS.

Messrs. WM. BINGHAM, }
A. H. MERRITT, } *Committee.*
J. C. WADDILL, }



ADDRESS.

Gentlemen of the Philanthropic and Dialectic Societies:

To stand here as a teacher, while so profoundly feeling how much I need to be taught—to offer light from my own darkness—and to attempt the paths which have already been impressed and adorned by the footprints of Murphy, Gaston, Badger, and so many other distinguished men—this is the difficult task which your partiality has assigned to me. And if I had accepted it in a vainglorious spirit of self-esteem, or from any motive but an honest desire towards the performance of a duty, I could not easily have pardoned my own rashness. But, born a son of North-Carolina, reared a child of this noble old college, and cherishing the fondest affection for them both, and the deepest interest in all which concerns their welfare and advancement, I have not felt at liberty to consult my own inclination. And I have returned, at your bidding, to this shrine of learning, as a child to its mother, bringing my simple tribute with a loving heart; and trusting to disarm your criticism by the ready candor with which its worthlessness is acknowledged.

The historian of the United States* has complained of the carelessness with which the history of North-Carolina has been written. The reproach is but too just. As Colony and State not yet two centuries old, the story of her infancy and early progress is a sealed book to the many, and to the curious few is more imperfectly known than that of nations which flourished and decayed thousands of years ago. And if this is true of the State at large, it is eminently so of that section of it in which I live. The Cape Fear country has never had a historian. Its public records were always meagre and barren. Its private records, once rich and fruitful sources of history, have become much mutilated and impaired in the lapse of time by accident, and by the division and emigration of families. Its traditions are perishing, and are buried daily with

* Bancroft 2—135. Note.

our dead, as the old are passing away. And the little which has been preserved by the pen of the historian is scattered through volumes, most of which are rare, and some of them entirely out of print. I have thought, therefore, that, instead of sermonizing upon themes which were long ago threadbare, I could not better employ my allotted hour, than in giving you a sketch, imperfect as it may be, of the early Times and Men of the lower Cape Fear. I shall not aspire to the dignity of history. My time and opportunities for research have been too limited, and the subject is too full for the compass of an ordinary address. I assume the humbler, but still pious, duty of connecting recorded facts, of perpetuating traditions, and of plucking away the mosses which have gathered on the tombs of some of our illustrious dead. In so doing, I may be accused of sectional pride. But I can afford to brave such a charge; for I feel that the motive is higher and purer; that it springs from a loyal devotion to the honor of my whole State, and a sincere admiration for the character of her whole people, and especially of her good and great that are now no more. My single desire is to awaken a new interest in her history, by assuring you that you will find there her amplest vindication from the taunts and aspersions which are so freely flung against her. And I would fain hope that I need offer no apology for my subject, since I come to speak to North-Carolinians of things that touch nearly the fame of the good old State, and the memory of her noble dead.

I begin, now, my sketch with some passages from English history, extracting first from Hume's account of the Irish Rebellion of 1641.* "There was a gentleman called Roger More, who, though of a narrow fortune, was descended from an ancient Irish family, and was much celebrated among his countrymen for valor and capacity. This man first formed the project of expelling the English, and asserting the independency of his native country. He secretly went from chieftain to chieftain, and roused up every latent principle of discontent. He maintained a close correspondence with Lord Maguire and Sir Phelim O'Neale, the most powerful of the old Irish. By conversation, by letters, by his emissaries, he represented to his countrymen the motives of a revolt," &c.

* Hist. Eng., ch. 55,

“By these considerations, More engaged all the heads of the native Irish in the conspiracy.”

It is not my purpose to pursue the history of this rebellion. It was disastrous to the Irish; and deservedly so, for they disgraced themselves by barbarities which shock humanity. With these, however, it is certain that More and Maguire had nothing to do. For Maguire was taken in the outset of the revolt at the unsuccessful attack upon the Castle of Dublin, and was condemned and executed.* And of More, Hume himself says:—“The generous nature of More was shocked at the recital of such enormous cruelties. He flew to O’Neale’s camp; but found that his authority, which was sufficient to excite the Irish to insurrection, was too feeble to restrain their inhumanity. Soon after he abandoned a cause polluted by so many crimes; and he retired into Flanders.”

He must have been a man of no ordinary character, and justly entitled to the admiration of all lovers of freedom, who, though driven into exile, and branded as a rebel and a traitor, could yet draw forth language like the foregoing from the apologist and defender of the Stuarts! Fortunately, the world will not now take its definition of treason from those who bow to the divine right of kings.

Two years later another event occurred, of minor importance in English history, but worthy of notice here. In 1643, the city of Bristol was captured by the forces of the Parliament. At that time Robert Yeoman, or Yeamans, was sheriff, or as some say, an alderman of the city, and active and zealous in the service of the king; and after its surrender, he was condemned and executed for his loyalty.† It may not be amiss to add here, as a historical curiosity, the following extract from the 7th volume of the *Edinburg Annual Register*:—“March 16th, 1814. On opening a vault at St. Maryport Church, Bristol, the workmen discovered, very deeply concealed, a coffin of great antiquity. It is generally supposed that the corpse it contained was that of — Yeoman, sheriff of Bristol in 1643, when the city was surrendered to the parliamentary army by Prince Rupert. Mr. Yeoman was hanged in Wine-street, opposite his own house, by order of Fairfax, for his attachment to the royal cause.

* *Hist. Eng.*, ch. 55. Note K. 3. † Hewitt, in *Carr. Coll.*, 1—52.

The body was in the highest state of preservation, handsomely accoutred in the costume of the day, with gloves similar to those which the sheriffs at present wear. And there were considerable tumors visible in the neck, which inclined several medical gentlemen who inspected the body, to be of opinion that they were occasioned by strangulation."

It will appear hereafter how these two events—the rebellion and exile of More, and the execution of Yeamans—so entirely disconnected in history, have a very important bearing upon the subject of this sketch.

The earliest settlement upon the Cape Fear was made by a band of emigrants from New England, principally from Massachusetts, about the period of the Restoration. The precise date is not known, but it was in 1660 or 1661.* They settled on the western side of the river, on the borders of Old Town Creek, or, as it is now commonly called, Town Creek, about nine miles below Wilmington, and attempted to establish grazing farms. But the country was unsuited to that purpose, the low lands upon the river being fitted only for the cultivation of rice, which had not then been introduced into America; and the high lands being principally pine barrens. The settlers, too, neglected to secure the good will of the Indians; and they soon fell into the greatest distress. Massachusetts, "the young mother of colonies," heard the cry of her children in the wilderness, "listened to their prayer for some relief in their distress, and ministered to their wants by a general contribution through her settlements."† One hundred and ten years afterwards, when the Boston Port Bill had spread a pall of gloom and distress over New England, the people of the Cape Fear remembered the generous succor of Massachusetts. With one voice they declared that "the cause of Boston was the cause of all." Their Committees determined that all goods imported contrary to the resolve of the Continental Congress, should be seized and sold; and the proceeds, after deducting the first cost, should be sent to the poor of Boston.‡ They did more. They chartered a vessel, loaded her with provisions at a cost of eight hundred pounds, and sent her to the relief of the sufferers by the Boston Port Bill.§ It were well if the people of New England would

* Banc., U. S., 2—131; Martin, 1—137; Williamson, 1—95. † Banc., 2—132.
‡ Letter of Wm. Hill, Un. Mag. May, 1853. § Jones Def. No. Ca. 126.

pause in their career of fanaticism, to ponder and remember things like these!

The timely aid thus received from Massachusetts was not sufficient, however, for the relief of the colonists; and unable to endure their many difficulties and privations; they abandoned their settlement in a short time, and returned to New England.*

By the Great Charter of 1663, King Charles II, granted to the Lords Proprietors all the country from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, between the parallels of thirty-one and thirty-six degrees of north latitude. Truly a most magnificent domain! And for what was it given? We know well his obligations to Monk. We might even suppose, in an excess of charity, that he was not ungrateful to Clarendon for his fidelity to his house. But was such the consideration? The grant expresses that they had manifested "a pious and laudable zeal for the propagation of the gospel;"—the careless, dissolute, profligate Charles, moved by a pious zeal, and that zeal emanating from the covetous and king-worshipping Clarendon—the artful dissimulator, Monk—"the passionate, ignorant, and not too honest Sir George Carteret,"† and the facile Shaftesbury, who, according to Pepys, "would not scruple to rob the devil or the altar!"‡ We are tempted to believe it a solemn jest of the witty monarch.

But whatever we may think of the Proprietors' zeal for the gospel, we cannot doubt the extent of their zeal for their private fortunes. They immediately began to devise measures for encouraging emigration. The civil wars in England and Ireland had broken down many ancient families, and ruined their estates. Numbers of these had already gone to the new world in the hope of bettering their fortunes, and many others were ready to follow. They spread everywhere the most glowing accounts of the splendors of their new domain. They offered large bounties of land at trifling quit rents. They procured the celebrated John Locke to devise a scheme of government which they deemed the perfection of human wisdom, and proudly decreed to be "sacred and unalterable." With its high-sounding titles of honor, and its far more precious guaranty of religious freedom, it captivated the imagi-

* Martin 1—117; Banc. 2—132. † Banc. 2—129. ‡ Pepys 1—219.

nations of men; and they did not stop to question its adaptation to the condition of the people and the country it was to govern. In 1666 there was published by Robert Horne, in London, with the approval, if not at the instigation of the Proprietors, "A brief description of the Province of Carolina," "wherein is set forth the healthfulness of the air, the fertility of the earth and waters, and the great pleasure and profit will accrue to those that shall go thither to enjoy the same." After displaying in the most attractive colors the riches of this new Canaan, it appeals thus to the youth of both sexes—"Is there therefore any younger Brother who is born of Gentle blood, and whose spirit is elevated above the common sort, and yet the hard usage of our Country hath not allowed suitable fortune; he will not surely be afraid to leave his Native Soil to advance his Fortune equal to his Blood and Spirit." "If any Maid or Single Woman have a desire to go over, they will think themselves in the Golden Age, when Men paid a Dowry for their Wives; for if they be but Civil, and under 50 years of Age, some honest Man or other will purchase them for wives."*

Thus praised and painted, the Province of Carolina showed golden visions to all sorts of men. Pious Puritans, weary of persecution, and yearning for freedom of conscience—sons of Cavaliers who had squandered their estates for the smiles of a worthless king—adventurous merchants, and humble artisans—quiet Quakers, who loved the law of peace, and turbulent spirits who loved no law—all looked to it alike as a land which was to bless them, each with their peculiar desires, and all with a common wealth. The already settled portions of the new world first caught the infection; as men who have once abandoned the homes of their youth are ever ready for further change. Soon after the proposals of the Proprietors were first published, some gentlemen of Barbadoes, dissatisfied with their condition, and tempted by the liberal offers which those proposals held out, in September 1663, dispatched a vessel under command of Capt. Hilton to reconnoitre the country along the Cape Fear river.† They explored both branches of the river for many miles; and it is remarkable that two noted places, named by them Stag Park, and Rocky

* Printed in Carr. Coll. † Martin 1—130; Williamson 1—96.

Point, are so called and known at this day. Returning to Barbadoes in February, 1664, they published an agreeable account of their voyage and of the country which they had been sent to examine. Among the planters who had fitted out this expedition was John Yeamans, eldest son of Robert Yeamans, the sheriff of Bristol, who had been hanged at the taking of that city in 1643.* He had emigrated to Barbadoes with the view of mending his fortunes; and being pleased with the report of the expedition, he determined to remove to Carolina. He went to England to negotiate with the Proprietors, and received from them a grant of large tracts of land; and at the same time he was knighted by the king in reward for the loyalty and misfortunes of his family.† Returning from England, in the autumn of 1665, he led a band of colonists from Barbadoes to the Cape Fear, and, induced by the traces of civilization which were left by the New England colony, he pitched upon the spot they had inhabited; and purchasing from the Indians a tract of land, thirty two miles square, he laid the foundations of a town which he called Charleston, in honor of the reigning monarch. Martin‡ and Bancroft§ declare that the site of this town is still a matter of uncertainty; but the doubt is only with the historians. Tradition has fixed the spot beyond dispute. It is on the north side of Old Town Creek, at its junction with the river, nine miles below Wilmington, on the plantation now owned by Thomas Cowan, Esq. There have not been any visible traces of the town within the memory of living men. But in the oldest deed for this plantation extant, and which was a conveyance from the great grandson of Yeamans in 1761, it is called the Old Town Plantation. The colony was erected into a County, and called Clarendon; and Sir John Yeamans was appointed Governor, and managed its affairs with prudence and discretion. It prospered for a time, and the emigration from Barbadoes was so great, that the legislature there found it necessary to pass an act to forbid *the spiriting of people off the island.*|| In 1666 the settlement is said to have numbered eight hundred inhabitants.¶ But the same restless spirit of adventure which had brought the colonists over, soon induced many of them to wander farther southward, and settle on the lands along the

* Hewitt in Carr. Coll. 1—52. † Martin 2—142. ‡ 1—142. § 2—137. || Martin 1—143. ¶ Williamsqn 1—100.

Cooper and Ashley rivers. Upon the death of Gov. Sayle in 1671, Sir John Yeamans was appointed Governor of Carteret County, afterwards South-Carolina; and in the same year he removed thither from the Cape Fear, and many of the principal inhabitants went with him. From that time the settlement at Old Town languished, until at length, before the year 1690, it was completely abandoned, and the Indians were again sole masters of the soil.* Thus failed the second well organized effort to settle the County of Clarendon. And here the Cape Fear country is dismissed from history.

It is very remarkable that while these two early and ineffectual efforts to fix civilization there are related by historians with some minuteness of detail, not one records when, how, or by whom, its permanent settlement was effected so many years afterwards. And so vague has even tradition become in the lapse of years, that, though we know the manner and the men, we cannot now fix the time with any precision.

After this second abandonment of the settlements on the Cape Fear, the country along that river fell for a time into great disrepute. The Indians behaved with savage barbarity to all who, by shipwreck, or other accident, were thrown within their reach. And the mouth of the river became the harbor of the noted pirates, Steed Bonnet and Richard Worley, from whence they watched and preyed upon the commerce of Charleston and the West Indies, until they were routed and destroyed by the ships under the command of Gov. Robert Johnson and the brave William Rhett.†

In the last decade of the seventeenth century a name appears in the history of South-Carolina, destined soon to be distinguished there, and near a century later to become still more illustrious in the annals of the Cape Fear. The head of this family was James Moore, the descendant, and it is believed the grandson‡ of Roger More, who led the Irish Rebellion in 1641. In the wreck of his family and fortunes he, too, like so many others, had looked towards the setting sun, and fixed his eyes upon the "summer land" of Carolina. He had inherited all the rebellious blood of his grandsire; his love of freedom, his generous ambition, and his bold and turbulent spirit. He soon acquired great influence in the pro-

* Williamson 1—118. † In 1717.—Carr. Coll. 1—209. ‡ Johnson's Trad. and Rem. of the Revolution, 230.

vince, and upon the death of Gov. Blake in 1700, he was elected Governor by the deputies of the Proprietors. His character is not free from reproach; but his faults were those of the times, and of the country in which he lived. He is represented to have been rapacious; but in the universal spirit of self-aggrandizement which then prevailed, it would have been wonderful if he alone had been modest and self-denying. And although his short administration has been severely censured, it is well to remember that those who speak of him in the harshest terms professedly found their accounts upon the representations of his enemies. If he was ambitious and arbitrary, he was also active, intelligent, brave, true to his friends, and of great influence with the people.

This Governor James Moore married the daughter of Sir John Yeamans; and thus, by a singular fortune, these families, which had suffered from such opposite causes in the old world, became united in the new; and the blood of Robert Yeamans and of Roger More—of the loyalist victim and the exiled rebel—mingled in Carolina to breed some of the noblest champions of her freedom, and the pioneers of permanent civilization upon the Cape Fear.

Of this union there were born ten children. The oldest, James, was a genuine scion of the stock from which he sprung. His character, perhaps, does not appropriately belong to North Carolina history. But it is worthy the contemplation of all; and the people of the Cape Fear, especially, hold it in reverence. He was not of them; but he was of the blood of those who subsequently became their shining exemplars of honor and self-sacrificing patriotism. He acquired military renown in the campaigns against the Indians; but he is chiefly known and loved as the champion of the people, and the zealous defender of their rights against the encroachments of arbitrary power. In 1719, when the quarrel of the people with the government had proceeded to an open rupture, true to the instincts of his race, he was with the people, and against the government. And when they met in convention and resolved to have a governor of their own choosing, "they elected the brave James Moore, whom all the country allowed to be the fittest person for undertaking its defence."* "He was a man

* Banc. 3—329.

of turbulent disposition, and excellently qualified for being a popular leader in perilous adventures. To Governor Johnston he was no friend, having been by him removed from the command of the militia, for warmly espousing the cause of the people; to the Proprietors he was an inveterate enemy. In every enterprise he had been a volunteer, and in whatever he engaged he continued to his purpose, steady and inflexible.* They proclaimed him Governor; and, with the proclamation went up the expiring sigh of the Proprietary government, and peacefully, and without bloodshed, palatines, landgraves, and caciques vanished from Carolina.†

In 1711, 1712 and 1713, occurred the celebrated Indian wars, which you will find fully detailed in history; in the beginning of which the first historian of North-Carolina‡ fell the earliest victim of savage cruelty. In 1713, the second James Moore commanded the forces which were sent by Gov. Craven to the succor of the North-Carolinians; and after a severe engagement near the site of the present village of Snow Hill, in Greene county,§ he succeeded in entirely breaking the power, and subduing the spirit of the warlike Tuscaroras. He remained in North-Carolina seven months. History makes no mention of any of his family but himself in this expedition; but tradition relates that he was accompanied by his younger brother, Maurice. And two years later, in 1715, this brother commanded a troop of horse in the service of Gov. Eden, and marched to the Cape Fear to subdue the Indians there,|| “which were reckoned the most barbarous of any in the Colony.”¶ To this gentleman, Col. Maurice Moore, the permanent settlement and civilization of the Cape Fear are principally due. He had been favorably impressed with the aspect of the country in his expedition against the Indians; and perhaps he cherished some pious regard for it as the first American home of his grandfather, Sir John Yeamans. And soon after his return to South-Carolina he determined to remove to the northern Province. I infer that he went first to the Chowan, from the fact that in 1718, three years after his expedition against the Cape Fear Indians, he was concerned with Edward Mosely and four or five other gentlemen of that precinct, the old adherents of

* Hewit in Carr. Coll. 1—238. † Banc 3—330. ‡ Lawson. § Martin, 1—261. ¶ Martin, 1—274. ¶ Old mixon in Carr. Coll., 2—446.

President Cary, in forcibly taking possession of the public records in the office of John Lovick, the Deputy Secretary,* and from the additional fact, that when he removed to the Cape Fear, his second daughter was then married to John Porter, who had long been a resident of Chowan. He is supposed to have settled upon the Cape Fear about the year 1723.† His are the earliest grants for land upon that river now extant; and the first of them are dated in 1725. He came not alone, but brought with him the germ of a noble colony. His brothers, Roger and Nathaniel, and the family of his brother John, then dead—his son-in-law, John Porter, and his mother, Mrs. Sarah Porter, the daughter of Maj. Alexander Lillington—his sister, Mrs. Clifford, who had formerly been the wife of his father's staunch friend and supporter, Job Howe,‡ and who was the grandmother of the afterwards celebrated Gen. Robert Howe—his nephews Job and Joseph Howe, and the family of the brave Col. Robt. Daniel, his father's old comrade in arms—these, and others of a like stamp, came with him. They were no needy adventurers, driven by necessity—no unlettered boors, ill at ease in the haunts of civilization, and seeking their proper sphere amidst the barbarism of the savages. They were gentlemen of birth and education, bred in the refinements of polished society, and bringing with them ample fortunes, gentle manners, and cultivated minds. Most of them united by the ties of blood, and all by those of friendship, they came as one household, sufficient to themselves, and reared their family altars in love and peace. To the brothers Maurice and Roger Moore, especially, I would here render an humble tribute of respect and veneration. Their characters are unknown to history. Roger is not named in the annals of North-Carolina; and Col. Maurice Moore is mentioned, and only mentioned, as the father of his illustrious sons, Judge Maurice, and General James Moore. If history immortalizes those who, with the cannon and the bayonet, through blood and carnage, establish a dynasty or found a state, surely something more than mere oblivion is due to those, who, forsaking all that is attractive to the civilized mind, lead a colony, and plant it successfully in harmony and peace, amid the dangers of the

* Williamson, 2—10; Martin, 1—285. † Martin, 1—294. ‡ Carr. Coll., 2—421.

wilderness, and under the war-whoop of the savage. Every schoolboy has read of Cadmus, who, thousands of years ago, brought letters into Greece. Few, very few, even of the intelligent men of the Cape Fear, have ever heard the names of those, to whom, but little more than a century since, they owe the civilization of their country. These brothers were not cast in the common mould of men. They were of "the breed of noble bloods." Of kingly descent,* and proud of their name which brave deeds had made illustrious, they dwelt upon their magnificent estates of Rocky Point, and Orton, with much of the dignity, and something of the state of the ancient feudal barons, surrounded by their sons and kinsmen, who looked up to them for counsel, and were devoted to their will. Proud and stately, somewhat haughty and overbearing perhaps, but honorable, brave, highminded and generous; they lived for many years the fathers of the Cape Fear, dispensing a noble hospitality to all the worthy, and a terror to the mean and lawless. This picture may seem overdrawn, perhaps; but it is truly painted from family traditions. And Roger Moore is, to this day, always called on the Cape Fear by his soubriquet of "Old King Roger." They possessed the entire respect and confidence of all; and the early books of the Register's Office of New Hanover county are full of letters of attorney from all sorts of men, giving them an absolute discretion in managing the varied affairs of their many constituents.

Such were the pioneers of the Cape Fear. And it is needless to say how great is the reproach of the people who have left their names to die. In a grove of noble oaks upon the slope of the hill at Orton, facing the river, and nearly opposite the Sugar Loaf Hill which is pointed out by the old as the scene of one of his fearless exploits with the Indians, "King Roger" sleeps, surrounded by his family, without a stone to record his virtues, or even to tell his name!

The earliest grant of land upon the Cape Fear was one, (of which I have seen a recital in a later deed) from the Proprietors to Landgrave Thomas Smith, in 1691, for forty-eight thousand acres. If this grant was ever surveyed and located, (of which there is now no evidence,) it is certain that it was

* Leland, Hist. Ireland says their ancestor, Roger, was descended from the ancient Kings of Leix.

never occupied prior to the year 1723. The next oldest, as far as I have been able to ascertain, was one from the Proprietors to Col. Maurice Moore, the 3d of June, 1725, for fifteen hundred acres, on the west bank of the river. Of this tract, in the same year,* he laid off three hundred and sixty acres upon the river, sixteen miles below Wilmington, into half-acre lots for a town, which he named in honor of the reigning family. This was the old borough of Brunswick, subsequently so distinguished under the administrations of Tryon and Martin for its enlightened patriotism, and its bold and active zeal in the cause of liberty—the home of Howe, of Hill, of Harnett and of Dry—the cynosure of the refinement of the day—where generous wealth built stately mansions, and delighted in elegant hospitality—where hightoned honor and chivalrous courage, and gentle courtesy and social harmony, wit, education and refinement, met to make themselves a home. The voyager upon the Cape Fear now looks in vain for the traces of its ancient state. Ichabod was written on its walls, and desolation reigns. Its lordly mansions are in the dust, and its glad voices gone. The bat and the owl are its only dwellers; and nothing remains to mark its site but the solid walls of the old Anglican church, and the silent monuments of the dead.

Begun under auspices such as I have mentioned, the success of this colony “followed as the night the day;” and men of note from all quarters soon came to swell its numbers. Here, from the Chowan, came the distinguished lawyer, Samuel Swann and his brother John, Edward Moseley, President of the Council, and his kinsman young Alexander Lillington, John Baptista Ashe, and Cornelius Harnett the elder. Here, from Boston, came the elegant gentlemen, Wm. Hill, Wm. Hooper, and Gen. Thomas Clark—from South Carolina, Chief Justice Allen, and William Dry the elder—from Ireland, Archibald Maclaine—from Liverpool, the Eagles—from London, the Quinces—and here came James Hasell and Robert Halton, and Armand DeRosset, and Benj. Heron, Capt. Edward Hyrne, Cpl. James Innes, Col. Thos. Merrick, the Claytons, the Rutherfords, the Rices, the Rowans, the Watters, the Strudwicks, and a host of others. Here, in 1736, came the Rev. Richard Marsden, bringing with him

* Deed from M. Moore to C. Harnett, Reg. Of. N. H. Co. Book A. 71.

the sacred offices of religion. Here, in 1724, the Governor, George Burrington, came on a visit to the young colony;* and soon afterwards he purchased and settled a plantation five miles below Brunswick, on a creek which is called after him to this day Governor's Creek, and resided there for many years. As everything pertaining to our early history is important, it may not be amiss to correct an error into which history has fallen in relation to Gov. Burrington's death. Williamson says† that soon after his abdication of the government, in 1734, he was rioting one night, and was found murdered the next morning in the Bird Cage Walk, in St. James' Park, in London. The manner of his death may be true; but there is certainly an error of at least twenty years in the date. I have in my possession an original letter of his, dated in 1739. And in 1754 he mortgaged to Samuel Stradwick, of London, his Stag Park plantation upon the river—the same which had been so named by the explorers from Barbadoes, under Capt. Hilton, ninety years before. The deed is recorded in New Hanover county. I cannot but think, too, that history has done him injustice in the delineation of his character. Wheeler attacks him with the sweeping denunciation that "his character is unadorned by a single virtue.‡ Certainly the crimes with which he is charged are not of a heinous magnitude; nor are the proofs very conclusive. They consist mainly of certain indictments against him in the General Court at Edenton, in two of which the gravamen was his having said that Sir Richard Everard was "a noodle and an ape," "a calf-head," "and no more fit to be Governor than Sancho Panza;" (an opinion by the by, fully entertained by better men than George Burrington;) in another, for an assault, he was a co-defendant with Cornelius Harnett the elder, and some others of the first gentlemen in the colony; and there were two others against him for rather riotous assaults. In none of these was he proved guilty. It is true he did not appear to stand his trial. But that may very well have been, because his enemy, Sir Richard Everard, was Governor, and he did not wish to be tried by his creatures and friends. Moreover, he lived in a lawless age, and in a country, where, according to Col. Byrd, of Westover, "every one did what was best in his own eyes; and none paid any tribute to God

* Martin, 1—296. † 2—35. ‡ Address at Davidson College, Un. Mag., Dec. 1852.

or to Cæsar.”* And it is not fair to judge him by the purer morality of later times. That he was a wise, or a prudent Governor, is not pretended by any. But, “he was not chargeable with fraud or corruption; for he despised rogues, whether they were small or great. Nor could he be suspected of cunning; a vice which is more dangerous, because it personates a virtue.”† I believe that he was open, frank, bold, spirited, and generous; but he was also weak, imprudent, dissipated, and reckless. A social and agreeable companion, and a staunch friend; but careless of his personal dignity, and regardless of law or authority. His virtues were his own; and his vices were but too common in the times in which he lived.

Among the emigrants to the Cape Fear there was one about whose history hangs a melancholy shade of romance. Some time about the year 1760 there came thither from Virginia a gentleman of Irish family named Thomas McGuire. Young, gay, and frank, of finished education and winning address, he was warmly welcomed and entertained by the hospitable gentlemen of Brunswick; and, among others, by Col. Wm. Dry, whose mansion was afterwards celebrated in the Journal of Josiah Quincy as “the house of universal hospitality.”‡ Rebecca, the daughter of Col. Dry, and great niece of Col. Maurice Moore, a gentle and lovely young girl, was won by the attractions of the handsome stranger, and bestowed on him her hand. She lived but a little while, and died in 1766 at the early age of seventeen, universally loved and regretted. Her tombstone stands in the churchyard of Old Brunswick, bearing a finished tribute to her memory from the hand of her husband, which concludes with this genuine Irish sentiment:

“Quisquis hoc marmor sustulerit,
Ultimus suorum moriatur.”

Tradition says that this Thomas McGuire was the lineal descendant of the Lord McGuire, who was the friend and associate of his wife’s ancestor in the Irish Rebellion of 1641, and who was condemned and executed after the attack upon the Castle of Dublin. I know not how this may be. But it is certainly true, and strange as true, that the names of Roger Moore and McGuire, which nowhere appear together but in the history of that rebellion, and which disappear together

* Journal of the Boundary Commission, Westover, M.SS. † Williamson, 2—14.

‡ 1773.

when that was quelled, should be found, more than a century later, united by friendship and marriage, on the banks of the Cape Fear. And sadly McGuire's curse returned upon him. For the marble still stands above the dust of his wife; and he himself "died the last of his race," and left no memorial of his life or death.

About the year 1730 or 1731, some habitations began to be built on the sandhill bluff opposite the junction of the northeast and northwest branches of the Cape Fear river. Soon they increased to a little village without order or regularity, which received the name of New Liverpool. In 1733 it was regularly surveyed into lots for a town; but the inhabitants had still no title to the land but by occupation. In 1735 a grant issued to John Watson for 640 acres, including the village, and styling it Newton; and for several years afterwards it was indiscriminately called Newton and New Liverpool. In 1739 its name was changed by legislative enactment to Wilmington, in honor of Spence Compton, Baron of Wilmington, the friend and patron of Gov. Gabriel Johnston. Almost side by side, Wilmington and Brunswick advanced with nearly equal steps until the Revolution, when they were of about the same size and importance. After the Revolution, when peace and good order returned and commerce revived, Brunswick began to decay. The causes which produced its decadence I have not time now to examine. Its principal inhabitants one by one removed to the sister town, which flourished over its decay, and gradually absorbed it altogether; until the one has become a flourishing city, and the other a desolate wilderness.

In all the disputes with the royal government the people of the Cape Fear were from the beginning among the foremost friends of freedom. A distinguished statesman has said that the war of the Revolution "was fought upon a preamble." With them it was as nearly as could be a war upon an abstract principle: They were not a commercial people. They were principally planters, many of them wealthy, and all possessing a comfortable independence, residing upon their estates, and living almost entirely within themselves. Secluded from the world, and delighting chiefly in rural sports and social enjoyment at home, what need they care for a trifling duty on government paper? Why should they hazard their

fortunes, their families, and their lives, for two-pence a pound on tea? But it was not only a war upon an abstract principle, but a war against substantial benefits. They had received extraordinary favors from the government. A fort had been built at the mouth of the river for their protection from enemies and pirates. Their religion had been cared for by legislative aid in the erection of their churches of St. Philip and St. James. In 1745 an act was passed for the declared purpose of building up the town of Brunswick.* And they had long enjoyed a substantial bounty upon their peculiar production of naval stores, in which their capital was principally invested, and from which their chief revenue was derived. Moreover, with most of them the sentiment of loyalty was hereditary. They had never yielded a willing obedience to the government of the Proprietors; but in common with all their compatriots, they had struggled long and arduously against it, until they succeeded in bringing themselves under the authority and protection of the crown. They revered their king; and to rebel against him was to them like raising one's hand against the gray hairs of a father. But all this was nothing when weighed against a single principle. Gov. Dobbs lived there for many years in the constant intercourse of friendship and hospitality with their leading men. But yet, in all his measures for increasing the power and patronage of the government, he could never win from among their representatives a single advocate. Gov. Tryon by turns cajoled and threatened, courted and denounced them. But they despised his blandishments, as they defied his power.

When the Stamp Act was introduced into Parliament, they watched its progress as men watch the storm which they know is to burst in fury on their heads; but they watched without fear and with manly hearts. When the news of its passage came across the water, their Chevalier Bayard, John Ashe, was Speaker of the House. He boldly proclaimed to the Governor that he would resist it unto death; and that his people would stand by him in the sacred cause.† Did he miscalculate the spirit of his people? Had he read them aright? Let us see.

In the first of the year 1766 the sloop of war Diligence arrived in the Cape Fear, bringing the stamps. The procla-

* Davis' Revisal, 93. † Jones' Def. No. Ca. 21.

mation of Gov. Tryon announcing her arrival, and directing all persons authorized to distribute them to apply to her commander, is dated the 6th of January in that year. Now look what shall happen. She floats as gaily up the river as though she came upon an errand of grace, with sails all set, and the cross of St. George flaunting apeak, and her cannon frown upon the rebellious little town of Brunswick, as she yaws to her anchor. People of the Cape Fear, the issue is before you! The paw of the lion is on your heads—the terrible lion of England! Will ye crouch submissively?—or redeem the honor that was pledged for you? Ye have spoken brave words about the rights of the people. Have ye acts as brave?

Ah, gentlemen, there were men in North-Carolina in those days!

Scarcely had the Stamp ship crossed the bar, when Colonel Waddell was watching her from the land. He sent a message to Wilmington to his friend Colonel Ashe. And as she rounded to her anchor opposite the custom house at Brunswick, they stood upon the shore with two companies of friends and gallant yeomen at their backs. Beware John Ashe! Hugh Waddell, take heed! Consider well, brave gentlemen, the perilous issue that you dare. Remember that armed resistance to the King's authority is Treason. In his palace, at Wilmington, but a few miles off, the "Wolf of Carolina"* is already chafing against you. And know you not that yonder, across the water, England still keeps the Tower, the Traitor's Gate, the Scaffold and the Axe? Full well they know. But

"They have set their lives upon the cast,
And now must stand the hazard of the die."

By threats of violence they intimidate the commander of the sloop; and he promises not to land the stamps. They seize the vessel's boat, and hoisting a mast and flag, mount it upon a cart, and march in triumph to Wilmington. Upon their arrival the town is illuminated. Next day, with Colonel Ashe at their head; the people go in crowds to the Governor's house, and demand of him James Houston, the Stamp-master. Upon his refusal to deliver him up, forthwith they set about to burn the house above his head. Terrified, the Governor at length complies, and Houston is conducted to the market house, where, in the presence of the assembled people he is

* Name given to Tryon by the Indians.

made to take a solemn oath never to execute the duties of his office. Three glad hurrahs ring through the old market house, and the Stamp Act falls still-born in North-Carolina.* And this was more than ten years before the Declaration of Independence, and more than nine before the battle of Lexington, and nearly eight years before the Boston Tea Party. The destruction of the tea was done in the night, by men in disguise. And history blazons it, and New England boasts of it, and the fame of it is world-wide. But this other act, more gallant and daring, done in open day, by well known men, with arms in their hands, and under the king's flag—who remembers, or who tells of it? When will history do justice to North-Carolina? Never, until some faithful and loving son of her own shall gird his loins to the task, with unwearied industry and unflinching devotion to the honor of his dear old mother.

Alarmed by the daring opposition of the people, Governor Tryon, who had bullied before, determined to change his policy.

“High reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.”

He began to court the people, and to flatter them with shows and sports. In February of the same year there was a muster of the militia of the county in Wilmington. The Governor, in his amiable condescension, caused a fine repast to be prepared for them at a considerable expense. But when the feast was ready, the people rushed to the spot, poured the liquor into the streets, and threw the viands, untasted, into the river.† He forgot that he was in the home of John Ashe, and that the people whom he led could neither be bought nor intimidated.

The repeal of the Stamp Act, which happened soon after, though joyfully received, was not viewed as an act of grace, but as one of tardy repentance for an unjustifiable wrong. It was far from allaying the jealousies of the people; but it produced a spirit of greater forbearance towards the Governor. And the rest of his administration was principally concerned with the erection of his splendid palace at New Bern, and his difficulties with the Regulators; both of which are foreign to my subject.

Upon the accession of Gov. Martin, he had not the prudence to avoid the errors and follies of his predecessor. He

* Jones, 24—25; Wheeler, 1—51. † Jones, 29; Wheeler, 1—52.

attempted, by frequent prorogations of the Assembly, and by leaving the people without the protection of the courts of justice, to weary out their representatives, and reduce them to submission. But they grew bolder and bolder. They refused to pass his relief bills. They bearded him upon the Southern Boundary Question. Time and again they bullied him upon the Attachment Law. Until at length, on the 24th of April, 1775, when the daring Whigs of New Bern seized his artillery in his very palace yard, he fled to the Cape Fear. But he found no comfort there. If Mecklenburg was the "Hornet's Nest," of the Revolution, truly the Cape Fear was a nest of Yellow Jackets to Tryon and Martin. He took refuge in Fort Johnston, at the mouth of the river. On the 15th June he issued thence a proclamation, in which he denounced the Committees of the Province, and attempted to destroy their influence with the people. On the 20th of the same month the Committee of the Wilmington District fired back a bulletin, in which they declared him "an enemy to the colony," more than hinted that he had endeavored "to gloss over the most palpable violations of truth with plausibility," and denounced his proclamation as "a poor artifice to seduce, mislead and betray the ignorant and incautious into ruin and destruction, by inducing them to forfeit the inestimable blessings of freedom."* "A certain John Ashe," too, as he afterwards called him in his proclamation of 8th August, was then at home; and he had not forgotten his old style of hospitality to the royal governors. Throwing up the commission which he held from the government, and accepting a colonelcy, by election from the people, he collected a body of five hundred troops, marched to Fort Johnston, and on the 18th July drove the Governor on board the ship of war, *Cruiser*, and burnt and destroyed the fort under her very guns.

Thus nobly, upon the Cape Fear, closed the first act of the drama. And when the curtain rose again, George, by the grace of God, king, was king no longer; but the Constitution reigned, and the free people of North-Carolina governed themselves.

I said there were men in North-Carolina in those days. I would that I had the time and the ability to portray, in fitting colors, their claims upon the gratitude and remembrance of

* Proceedings of the Wil. Committee, 32—33—34.

their countrymen. But a brief allusion to some of the most distinguished of those who adorned the Cape Fear, is all that I dare now attempt.

And I mention first the noble family of Ashe, which gave every grown male of the name, nine fighting men, to the service of their country, in the darkest hour of her cause. And yet, so modestly have their claims upon the State been pressed, or rather, so little have they been asserted at all, that the commonly received account of the origin of the family is entirely erroneous. It is generally said,* that the founder of the family in North-Carolina emigrated from England in 1727, under the patronage of the Earl of Craven. This is incorrect. The name of Ashe was distinguished in Carolina at least as early as the year 1700.† Under the administration of Sir Nathaniel Johnson, in South-Carolina, an effort was made to make the religion of the Church of England the established religion of the colony; and an act of conformity was passed, the effect of which was, to exclude dissenters altogether from the Assembly. The inhabitants of Colleton county, who were mostly dissenters, were justly incensed at this injustice; and they sent John Ashe, who was one of their leading men, to England, as their agent, to lay their case before the Proprietors, and seek redress.‡ This was in 1703. John Ashe died while in England on this mission; and soon afterwards his family emigrated to the Albemarle settlement in North-Carolina. From thence his son,§ John Baptista Ashe, about the year 1727, removed to the Cape Fear. He had two sons, the John Ashe of whom I have made frequent mention—"the most chivalrous hero of our Revolution"||—and who is usually distinguished by his subsequent title as General Ashe, and Samuel, afterwards Governor of the State. "The Ashe family," says Jones,|| "contributed more than any other to the success of the revolution in the State. Gen. Ashe's son, Capt. Sam'l Ashe, served two campaigns in the Northern States, with the rank of captain in the light-horse, and although he resigned his commission, yet he continued to serve in the militia expeditions of the State. So that there were five officers of that family all actively engaged in the war: Gen. John Ashe, and his son Capt. Sam'l

* Wheeler, 2—279; Caruthers, 126. † Oldmixon in Carr, Coll., 2—421. ‡ Carr, Coll., 1—148; Id., 2—431; Martin, 1—219. § Martin, 1—219. || Jones' Def. of No. Ca., 209. ¶ Def. of No. Ca., 211.

Ashe; Gov. Samuel Ashe, and his sons, Colonels John Baptist and Samuel Ashe." True so far. And he might have added, that Gen. Ashe's son John—"Mad Jack Ashe," as he was called—served nearly throughout the war with the rank of captain; and that the boys, William, Acourt, and Cincinnati Ashe, though too young to hold command, were old enough to follow the example of their sires, and march against the enemies of their country.

It was not my good fortune to know but one of these distinguished men. In my early youth I remember an old man, bowed by age and infirmities, but of a noble front, and most commanding presence. Old and young gathered around him in love and veneration, to listen to his stories of the olden time. And as he spake of his country's trials, and of the deeds and sufferings of her sons, his eye flashed with the ardor of youth, and his voice rang like the battle charge of a bugle. He was the soul of truth and honor, with the ripe wisdom of a man, and the guileless simplicity of a child. He won strangers to him with a look, and those who knew him loved him with a most filial affection. None ever lived more honored and revered; none ever died leaving a purer or more cherished memory. This was Colonel Samuel Ashe, "the last of all the Romans."

I must speak also, briefly, of the family of the Moores—Judge Maurice Moore, and his brother Gen. James Moore, sons of Col. Maurice Moore, the pioneer of the Cape Fear; and Judge Alfred Moore, son of Judge Maurice Moore. They, too, had inherited the rebellious blood of their race, and were genuine scions of the old stock. It was not in their name or blood to be other than patriots, or to shrink from any sacrifice at the call of their country. Judge Maurice Moore was the elder brother, and had been bred to the profession of the law. He, with Martin Howard and Richard Henderson, composed the judiciary of the State when the Revolution silenced the laws. He sympathized with the Regulators, though called by his office to sit in judgment upon them. And when, in the great riot at Hillsboro' in 1770, Howard was driven from the bench, and Edmund Fanning severely chastised, the character of Judge Moore was respected by the rioters. He was a member of the popular house in 1771, and introduced the bill extending a general pardon to all who

had been concerned in the Regulation. He was an active and influential member of the Convention of 1776, which formed the constitution of the State. In 1766 he had published an able argument against the constitutionality of the Stamp Act, the motto on the title page of which was the true index to his own character.

“Non sibi, sed patriæ.”

He was also the author of the celebrated letter to Gov. Tryon, signed “Atticus.” “A learned jurist, an astute advocate, a keen-sighted statesman, Judge Moore also possessed the highest moral qualities. Among these was a devotion to the cause of rational liberty. Amid the conflagration and tumult which precede civil war, he calculated the impending perils, and the distant and precarious blessings which lay hid in the clouds that overhung his country. He meditated on the approaching storm, and determined to stake his life, his fortune, and the destinies of his family, on the side of civil liberty in the dubious issue.”* He did not live to witness the determination of the issue which he so nobly dared.

His brother James was bred a soldier from his youth; and from the first espoused the cause of his country. He was considered the first military genius of the province,† and there can be no better testimonial of his merit, and of the high esteem in which he was held by his countrymen, than the fact that when the Provincial Congress of 1775 undertook the military organization of the State, he was elected colonel of the first regiment, although his competitor was his brother-in-law, the brave John Ashe.‡ For some months after his appointment, he was stationed with his regiment on the Cape Fear to watch the ships of war then in the river, and keep a check on Gov. Martin. In the early part of 1776, when the “clans of Culloden” were gathering at Cross Creek under McDonald and McLeod for the purpose of effecting a junction on the Cape Fear with Sir Henry Clinton, and executing thence a well planned scheme for the subjugation of the State, Gen. Moore marched with his regiment to Cumberland to meet and give them battle. They deemed it prudent, however, to avoid him. And it was while flying from his hot pursuit that they encountered Caswell and Lillington at Moore’s Creek, and lost the battle there, which saved the

* A. M. Hooper, in Un. Mag., Dec. 1853. † Mem. of Gen. Howe by A. M. Hooper, Un. Mag. Dec. 1853. ‡ Un. Mag. May 1853.

State. In the summer of 1776, upon the departure of Gen. Lee, Gen. Moore was appointed by Congress Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Department. And after executing the duties of his office for several months, he was called home on private business, where he was soon after taken ill. The 15th of January, 1777, was a sad day for the Cape Fear, and for the State. For on that day, in the same house in Wilmington, and within an hour of each other, died the brothers Maurice and James Moore, in the prime of life, and in the meridian of their usefulness and fame.

Judge Alfred Moore came nearer to our own times, and is better known than his distinguished father and uncle. He, too, was a soldier, and while not yet of age commanded a company at Charleston in the memorable attack upon Fort Moultrie. But his family misfortunes soon called him from the field. And although he was afterwards active in the militia service of the State, and so incurred the animosity of the British commander, Maj. Craig, that he sent a troop to plunder and destroy his dwelling; yet his principal fame was subsequently acquired in the walks of his profession. The heavy sufferings of himself and his family in the cause of liberty, and the heroic fortitude with which he endured them, so won upon the love and gratitude of the State, that in 1782 he was elected its Attorney General while yet a perfect novice in his profession. He soon rose to eminence, however, and was called to the bench in 1798, and in the next year was appointed an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Of his merits as a lawyer we have the highest evidence. Chief Justice Taylor, himself pre-eminent as a jurist, on the solemn occasion of a capital judgment, declared of him that "he discharged for a series of years the arduous duties of his office," (of Attorney General,) "in a manner which commanded the gratitude and admiration of his cotemporaries. His profound knowledge of the criminal law was kept in continual exercise by a most varied and extensive practice. No one ever doubted his learning and penetration; or that while he enforced the law with an enlightened vigilance and untiring zeal, his energy was seasoned with humanity, leaving the innocent nothing to fear, and the guilty but little to hope."* These things history has preserved of him. But

* State vs Jernagan, 3 Mur. Rep., 12.

tradition alone speaks of the charming traits in private life—his varied accomplishments and brilliant wit, his chivalrous honor and gentle courtesy, his noble hospitality and most winning manners—which won him the love and admiration of all, and have handed down his memory as the finished model of a North-Carolina gentleman.

Of General Robert Howe, the wit, the scholar, and the soldier, it is hardly necessary for me to speak. His fame has received ample justice at the hands of his biographer.* He must have deserved well of his country; for he was feared, and bitterly hated by her enemies. It was at him and his friend Gen. Ashe and Richard Caswell, that the celebrated proclamation of Gov. Martin of the 8th August, 1775, was specially aimed. And upon the arrival of Sir Henry Clinton in the Cape Fear, he called to mind the disgrace which Gen. Howe had inflicted upon his friend Lord Dunmore at Norfolk; and he signalized at the same time his own ignoble character, and the incorruptible patriotism of Gen. Howe, by excepting him from the general pardon which he offered to the people, and by ravaging his plantation and burning his dwelling with circumstances of wanton barbarity.

Alexander Lillington is another name which the people of North-Carolina ought never to forget; for it is associated with one of the brightest pages of their history. His grandfather, Major Alexander Lillington, emigrated from Barbadoes to the County of Albemarle, but at what precise time is not now known. He was early distinguished, however, in the history of the colony. The oldest public record in the State is the commission which issued the 3d of December, 1769, to George Durant, Alex. Lillington, Ralph Fletcher and Caleb Callo- way, to hold the Precinct Courts of Berkeley Precinct. And upon the departure of Gov. Ludwell, in 1693, the administration of affairs in Albemarle devolved upon him as Deputy Governor.† His grandson, Alexander, was left an orphan at an early age; and when Edward Moseley, who had married his father's sister, emigrated to the Cape Fear, about the year 1727, young Lillington went with him. He was early known as an active and leading Whig, and was a prominent and influential member of the Wilmington Committee. Though he served through the war with distinction and attained to the

* A. M. Hooper, Mem. of Gen. Howe, Un. Mag. † Martin, 1—194.

rank of Brigadier General, yet his fame principally rests upon the battle of Moore's Creek. The importance of this battle has never been properly appreciated, and, indeed, was never fully demonstrated until the delivery of the interesting lecture of President Swain before the Historical Society of the University, in 1853. It is not my purpose to discuss it here. But, without the remotest intention of detracting from the well earned fame of Gov. Caswell, whose memory is very dear to me as a North-Carolinian, I must say that if the traditions of the people among whom the battle was fought are to be believed, Gen. Lillington has never yet received the due meed of praise for his part in that day's work. Those traditions agree mainly with Jones' account of the battle; and they tell that he bore by far the hardest brunt of the fight, while he has only been permitted to wear the smallest share of the glory. Whether he commanded in chief or not, he certainly had the post of danger and of honor, in the front of the battle; and leading the daring charge across the bridge, he bore himself like a skilful and gallant officer, while fighting like a common soldier. There was honor enough for all, and all should have shared it alike. It was most unjust that his name was altogether omitted in the vote of thanks which was afterwards passed by the Provincial Congress at Halifax. It has been said that he himself never complained of this.* It is true. 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. His family, who worship his memory, have still the silver crescent which he wore upon his hat that day; and it bears inscribed the words, which were his cry of battle, his prayer by night, and his hope always—"Liberty or Death."

To all the men of whom I have spoken, history has done some justice, more or less partial. But there was yet another who shone like a star in the early troubles of the State, of pure and exalted character, of unsurpassed influence with his countrymen, and the value of whose services was only equalled by the extent of his sufferings and sacrifices in the cause of liberty. And yet, so little is he known, that I doubt not, gentlemen, many of you have not even so much as heard his name. I speak of Cornelius Harnett, the pride of the Cape

* A. M. Hooper, Un. Mag., Sept., 1853.

Fear—"the Samuel Adams of North-Carolina."* To the shame of the State, his birth-place has not heretofore been even conjectured; and meagre as are the accounts of his early history, they are full of errors. He is always spoken of as the first and only one of his family in North Carolina, and is said to have emigrated from England to the Cape Fear; and one historian† makes him to have been one of Gov. Burrington's Council in 1730. This is all wrong. In 1730 he was only seven years old. His father, of the same name, was among the earliest emigrants to the Cape Fear, and was for many years one of its leading inhabitants; and he did not go there from England, but from the county of Albemarle. I think it nearly certain that he himself was born in the Precinct of Chowan, and most probably in the town of Edenton. In the Register's Office of New Hanover county‡ there is the record of a bond from Col. Maurice Moore, of New Hanover Precinct, to Cornelius Harnett, "of the same place," dated 30th June, 1726, and conditioned to make him a title to two lots in the new town of Brunswick, upon his building good habitable houses thereon within eight months. This fixes the period of the father's emigration to the Cape Fear. But where had been his previous residence? There is another public record which gives us the information. At the General Court sitting in Edenton, the 29th of March, 1726, "George Burrington was indicted for that about the 2nd of December, 1725, with Cornelius Harnett of *Chowan*, and others, he assaulted the house of Sir Richard Everard, &c."§ Now, from his abetting Burrington, even with force, in his quarrel with Sir Richard Everard, and from his afterwards being appointed one of his first councillors when he became a second time Governor in 1730, we may fairly infer that Cornelius Harnett the elder was the intimate friend and associate of Gov. Burrington, and a man of distinction in the colony as early as 1725. And to have attained that position, he must have been resident there previously several years at least. If these inferences are correct, his son, the subject of this sketch, was a native born North-Carolinian; for we know that he was born in 1723. From 1765 to 1780, there was scarcely a movement in the patriot cause in which Cornelius Harnett did not bear a conspicuous part. And a bare enumeration of

* Journal of Josiah Quincy. † Wheeler, 2—282. ‡ Book A., page 71. § Williamson 2—229.

the appointments which he filled, and of the men with whom he was associated, would be sufficient to show the influence he exercised, and the estimation in which he was held. He was one of the faithful representatives of the people, who, unawed by power, so fearlessly resisted the government on the Attachment Law. He was the first chairman of the Wilmington Committee, over which he long presided, its very centre and soul, and the life-breathing spirit of liberty among the people. When the Provincial Congress, in 1775, assumed the government, and appointed a Council to administer the affairs of the province at their most critical juncture, he was chosen President of the Council, and virtual Governor of the province; a noble tribute to his worth and abilities. But there is yet a brighter jewel in his crown of glory. A member of the convention which met at Halifax the 4th of April, 1776, he was chairman of the Committee appointed to consider of the usurpations of the king and parliament, and the author of their celebrated report and resolution, "empowering the Delegates for this Colony in the Continental Congress to concur with the Delegates of the other colonies in declaring Independence." This resolution was unanimously adopted by the Convention on the 12th of April, 1776; more than a month before the celebrated resolution of Virginia on the same subject. But yet, it was done in North-Carolina, and the fame of it remains at home; while the other has coursed about the world upon the wings of the wind.

Thus faithfully did Harnett serve the cause of liberty. And the enemies of his country did not forget him for it. In the spring of 1776, Sir Henry Clinton arrived in the Cape Fear; and his first public act was to issue to Cornelius Harnett and Robert Howe a patent of nobility. Here it is, written in British ink, and dated 5th of May, 1776:

"I have it in command to proceed forthwith against all such men, and bodies of men in arms, and against all Congresses and Committees thus unlawfully established, as against open enemies of the State. But considering it a duty inseparable from the principle of humanity first of all to warn the deluded people of the miseries ever attendant upon civil war, I do most earnestly entreat and exhort them, as they tender their own happiness and that of their posterity, to appease the vengeance of a justly incensed nation, by a return to their duty to our common sovereign, and to the blessings of a

free government established by law; hereby offering, in his Majesty's name, free pardon to all such as shall lay down their arms and submit to the laws; *excepting only from the benefit of such pardon Cornelius Harnett and Robert Howe.*"

He little knew how he was immortalizing the men whom he sought to render infamous! Harnett continued active in the service of the State until 1781. In that year a British force occupied Wilmington; and so dangerous to the cause of the king was he esteemed, that the first incursion planned was for the purpose of taking him prisoner. In attempting to escape from his enemies he was taken ill of the gout at the house of his friend Col. Spicer, in Onslow, and was captured there, and carried in triumph to Wilmington. Thus, wrecked in health and fortune in the storms which assailed his country, he died soon after in his imprisonment, childless and forlorn, having first penned, with his own hand, the epitaph which stands above his grave.

"In the northeast corner of the grave yard of St. James' church, in Wilmington, lies the body of one than whom a nobler and purer patriot never lived. The rank grass grows over his grave, and almost hides it from the view, as if it would conceal from the stranger the forgetfulness and ingratitude of the town. Two simple brown stones, discolored by age, mark the spot. On the largest, which is an upright slab, is inscribed,

'CORNELIUS HARNETT,
Died April 20th, 1781,
Aged 58 years.'

'Slave to no sect, he took no private road,
But looked through nature, up to nature's God.'**

These were not all, nor nearly all, the bright names of the Cape Fear in its early times. There were many others; but I cannot now attempt to do them justice. Some of them I will briefly mention.

There was Col. Hugh Waddell, early distinguished in the military annals of the State; a sterling patriot, and a brave and chivalrous gentleman. He commanded a regiment of provincial troops at the defeat of Braddock in 1755. And after that disastrous day, the Indians upon the frontier having become very troublesome to the settlers, he was selected as "an officer of great firmness and integrity" to lead several

* Memoir of Harnett, by G. J. McRee.

expeditions against them, and finally succeeded in overawing them and bringing them to peace.* His conduct and bearing upon the arrival of the Stamp ship, if North-Carolina ever did such things, would have won him a public monument. I regret that some of his descendants have not thought it worth their while to vindicate his claims upon the gratitude of the State.

There was Samuel Swann, "who had filled the Speaker's chair for nearly twenty years, and had given to that station a dignity but little inferior to that of the executive, and much superior to that of a councillor."† He was the reporter of the first Revised Code of the State, familiarly called "Yellow Jacket," from the color of its covering; which was chiefly the work of his hands. It was printed by James Davis, at New Bern, in 1752, and was the first book printed in North-Carolina.

There was Archibald Maclaine, an accomplished lawyer and able debater; a man of talent, learning and probity, and an active and zealous Whig. He was reputed the principal author of the celebrated Court Law of 1777; an act which had for its object the important work of building up a judiciary system for the State, and establishing the process and practice of the Courts. And such was its merit, that it has, perhaps, been less altered or amended than any act of any importance in the Statute Book. He was also a distinguished member of the Convention of 1776, which formed the Constitution of the State, and was one of the eleven commissioners appointed by that Convention to revise the Statutes, "and to prepare such bills to be passed into laws as may be consistent with the genius of a free people, the form of government we have adopted, and our local situation." The result of the labors of this commission may be seen in the act just mentioned, and many others which were passed in the years immediately succeeding—acts which clearly evince the ability, learning, and accuracy of the Commissioners, and which have given shape and tone to our legislation for three quarters of a century.

There was William Hill, whom Josiah Quincy‡ found "a most sensible, polite gentleman, and though a crown officer, replete with sentiments of general liberty, and warmly at-

* Williamson, 2—86—95—95. † Jones, *20. ‡ Journal, 1773.

tached to the cause of American Freedom." We need no guaranty for the patriotism of a man, who as early as the 24th of November, 1774, could write to the Wilmington Committee as follows :*

" * * * The safety of the people is, or ought to be the supreme law. The gentlemen of the Committee will judge whether this law, or an act of parliament, should at this particular time, operate in North-Carolina. I believe that every tea importer will cheerfully submit to their determination. I can answer for, gentlemen,

Your most obedient,

W. HILL."

There was John Walker—"Old Major Jack"—rough and eccentric, but a sturdy patriot, honest, bold and brave.

"A fiery ettercap, a fractious chiel,
As hot as ginger, and as stieve as steel."

It was he who was taken while on a scouting party and severely flogged by the Regulators; the recollection of which treatment made him swear bitter oaths to the day of his death. And it may be as well, for the truth of history, to state, that his brother officer who was taken with him and flogged at the same time, was not Gen. Ashe, as Martin† and, after him, all others relate; but his nephew, Capt. John B. Ashe, son of Gov. Samuel Ashe.

And there was William Hooper, aspersed by Jefferson and defended by Jones, whom all now admit to have been as good a patriot as his defamer, and incomparably a better man. We can scarcely now regret the injustice which was done to Mr. Hooper; since it resulted in the triumphant vindication of him, and of the State, from the pen of the brilliant, but eccentric Jo. Seawell Jones. He, too, has passed from earth; and whatever may have been his errors, North-Carolina owes him a lasting gratitude. Let us bury his faults with the sod which rests upon his heart; and remember only the generous love he cherished, and the stalwart blows he struck, for the honor of his native State.

My task, gentlemen, is accomplished; how feebly and imperfectly, none know better than myself. My theme, though local, has been purely North-Carolinian; and its purpose was, by some striking examples, not solitary in their

* Pro. Com. of Wil., 4. † 2—278.

greatness, but only shining pages of a luminous history, to show you how rich we are in all that makes the just and honorable pride of a people. The moral strength of the true and loyal gentleman, has no ingredient so powerful as an ever present pride of personal character. The man who lacks it may move without discredit on the plane of life's ordinary level; but he can never ascend to mountain tops, nor feast his soul with the glorious contemplation of great temptations nobly fought and conquered. The undefinable spirit of patriotism has no element so powerful as a high and justifiable State pride. The citizen who cannot feel it, may punctually pay his tithe of mint, annise and cummin; but in all the higher duties of citizenship, he will neglect the weightier matters of the law. Ill fares it with the State which can appeal to its children by no nobler tie than a "narrow affection for the spot where they were born."

While rejoicing, as North-Carolinians, that the records of the past entitle you to the most honorable pride, remember, that in so doing they call upon you for the exercise of the noblest patriotism. Keep ever green the memory of your illustrious dead. Let them live and shine in your hearts forever; not prompting you to empty boasting, but quickening every generous impulse, and stirring in you the purest ambition. A rough field of battle awaits you. Arm for it now. Make yourselves strong while yet the evil days come not. And while you stand here upon the threshold of the world, and looking abroad, see nothing but the glad sunshine and the green leaves and the still waters, and hear the singing birds, resolve to-day to be up to the highest mark of the duty which you owe to yourselves, to the State, to God, as men, as citizens, and as enlightened Christian gentlemen.



