Mr. Robt. F. Cope, 27, who was born in Avery county, but went to Gaston in his youth, made a 5 x 7 oil painting of Kings Mountain battle, which was exhibited in the D. A. R. hut at the sesqui-centennial celebration of Kings Mountain, October 7, 1780, where it received much favorable comment, the *Gastonia Gazette* saying: "It is a splendid piece of work."

While studying features for his picture, Mr. Cope collected every publication, great or small, on Kings Mountain that he could find. Not only did he give me a welcome to these, but he furnished without charge the sketch from an old engraving, of Major Ferguson and the miniature of his painting that appear in the book.

"D," in the text, is for Draper, and the figures following it for the page referred to in "Kings Mountain and Its Heroes."

"Backwater Men," the men living on the waters flowing west from the Blue Ridge.

Shepherd M. Dugger

CHAPTER I

THE BATTLE OF KINGS MOUNTAIN

The Battle of Kings Mountain is a high light in our history, since at six thousand feet above sea level, on the 27th day of September, 1780, the Backwater Men crossed on what is now Avery county soil, in the Roan group of mountains, the highest point of land traversed by an invading army since Napoleon crossed the Alps. Another important event to us is that the brother of Colonel John Sevier, Captain Robert Sevier, who was mortally wounded in the battle and died on his return, sleeps in Avery county soil in an unknown grave which a future page of this book may help to reveal.

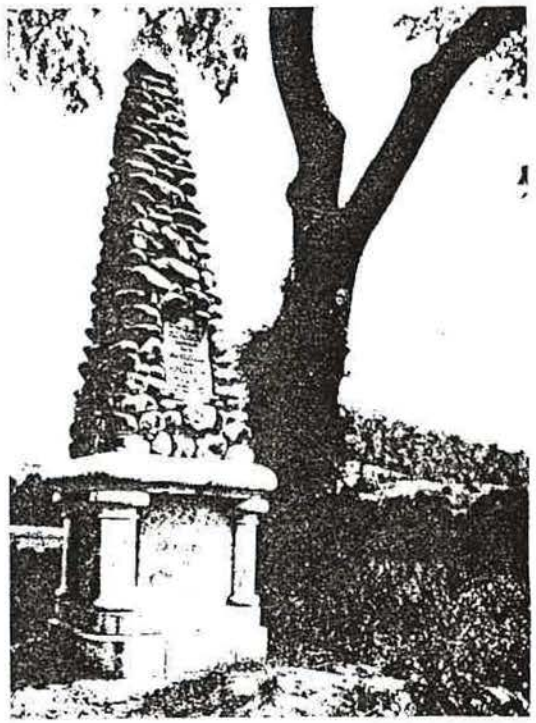
The 26th morning of September, 1780, what Ferguson called the Backwater Men, broke camp at Sycamore Shoals near Elizabethton, Tennessee, 1120 strong, all mounted, and are said to have camped overnight at the shelving rock a mile up Doe river from Roan Mountain Station.

Draper says that on the 27th they dinnered on the bald of Yellow Mountain in which a spring burst out and flowed through it

over into Watauga. This is impossible since there is no spring in or near this bald, and if there had been, the backbone of the range dividing it from Watauga is half a mile north of the timber line.

The misunderstanding grew out of a failure to recognize that the whole Roan group was then spoken of as Yellow Mountain, and the name "Roan" was unknown in officers' diaries.

When Campbell tells us how the military units met on Sycamore Shoals at the foot of Yellow Mountain, on the Watauga, who that knows the mountains and streams will dispute that the foot of the Roan is meant? When he tells us that on the 27th they lunched and rested on the bald of the Yellow Mountain where a spring bursts out and flows through it over into the Watauga, who, that knows the mountains, can say that that was not the grassy bald of the Roan, between the two higher balds to the east and west? And, finally, when he brings us off on the east side of the mountain two miles to the big spring in Elk Hollow, tributary to Roaring Creek, where they camped for the night, we know that the east side of the Roan is meant because that slope leads down to Roaring Creek, and since no trail, ancient or mod-



SYCAMORE SHOALS, WATAUGA

This is where the Kings Mountain men convened before they started off to battle General Ferguson. "Bonnie Kate," Sycamore, and John Sevier Chapters, D.A.R., placed this marker there in 1910. Here is where the first treaty was held in what is now Tennessee, and where "Bonnie Kate," fleeing from the Indians, jumped over the palisade into John Sevier's arms.

ern, ever has led by the spring in Elk Hollow, we know, as we have known for fifty years, that the army camped for the night on Bright's Trail at Bright's Spring, tributary to Roaring Creek. And Avery is not hurt because the point where the troops entered the county on the east high knob of the Roan is higher than any point on the bald of the present Yellow Mountain.

It was during the dinner hour of this day that William Crawford and Samuel Chambers were missed; they had deserted and gone to Ferguson, who was at Gilbert Town, then the county seat of Rutherford County, about a three days' walk for a light equipped soldier.

The 28th they went down Roaring Creek four miles to Toe River, and down that stream one mile they passed Bright's Place where one of their officers, now burning with high hopes, was laid to rest on their return.

They rested at noon at a big spring on the west side of the stream. Toe River is the only stream in question, and though some try to figure it at the Davenport Spring on Three Mile Creek, we fail to see why a rushing army of 1120 men should have gone two miles square off their line to rest when on

the 28th of September water and forage were abundant everywhere.

That evening they got to the spot where Spruce Pine, the present town of commercial minerals, was to be, crossed Toe River to the south side, went two miles over to Catha's Place on Grassy Creek and camped for the night.

Six miles from camp on the morning of the 29th took them to Gillespie Gap in the Blue Ridge between Altapass and Little Switzerland, where the great drop on the south side gave the Backwater Men their first glimpse of distant farms along streams of the Catawba Valley, just beyond which Ferguson was supposed to be.

It was now forty-eight hours since Crawford and Chambers, who had deserted and gone to the enemy, were missed on the Grassy Bald of the Roan. By this time the traitorous deserters had delivered their diabolical message to Ferguson who might lay an ambuscade for their destruction, so they divided in halves and traveled different routes the better to get a smell of Ferguson, on the principle that two turkey buzzards flying some distance apart are more sure to scent a carcass than one.

They were to meet again the second evening at Quaker Meadows on the Catawba, in

Burke county, between the mouths of Linville and John's Rivers. Parting from his comrades at McKinney Gap, Campbell followed the crest of the Blue Ridge westward through a land of wonderful scenery, passing over what is now Washburn Tunnel on the Clinchfield to where he dropped off on the south side and camped in Turkey Cove near the confluence of Armstrong and North Cove Creeks about six miles before their united waters flow into the Catawba.

The other wing camped the same night about six miles up North Cove Creek on one of these prongs, where it is reinforced by Honeycut flowing down from the Blue Ridge. Here Colonel McDowell rejoined his command which he had left at Sycamore Shoals in Tennessee a few days before and gone across the mountains to encourage the people, obtain news from Ferguson, and hasten the march to Quaker Meadows of Colonels Cleveland and Winston with the men from Wilkes and Surry, now camped in Wilkes at Rendezvous Mountain.

All the men were cavalry, some of whom knew the trails and these two camping places, each in a fertile valley, and prolific in corn and water, seem to have been selected in advance for the benefit of the faithful horses of

which some five hundred were at each place.

The morning of the thirtieth, the lower camp mounted and cavalcaded down to the Catawba and followed its winding course, passing out of primitive cornfields into adjoining timbered bottoms, riding between great trees that overshadowed the fishes that sported in the stream, passing cane-brakes where hid the wild deer that drank from its waters, leaving many horseshoe tracks on the bottom of what is now Lake James, as they neared the place of rendezvous for the final march.

The upper camp rode up the stream two miles and parted from the valley on the east side, by the very old Yellow Mountain road that leads down Paddie's Creek to the Catawba, after first crossing the south end of Linville Mountain, and a spur of the same, then called Silvers Mountain, for the Silvers family, in memory of whose sorrowful death it was named.

Forty years ago this story was told me by Cidney Connelley, then old, who had grown up in the nearest valley to these mountains, it having descended to him from his ancestors, who had been raised on the same waters of Paddie's Creek and Linville.

They were caught in a zero blizzard and when the snow and sleet, driven by a strong wind, had beaten their eyes almost to blindness, they huddled together under such cover as they had, where Paddie's Creek is only a large brook between the two mountains, and all froze to death.

The little babe had survived them all, the father and mother having it between them, had protected it with the warmth of their bodies while they survived; then it had crawled out, made its way about eight feet from them and died in the snow.

When I crossed the brook again after hearing this story, I saw in my imagination the ghostly forms of the dead, heard the little baby's weakening cries, and saw with tearful eyes its trembling hands as it froze to silence. Such was the fate of a family no doubt pioneering for a better home.

Friday evening, September 30, our two divisions reached Quaker Meadows and met Colonels Cleveland and Winston with 350 men from Wilkes and Surry, most of them riding good horses well fed on Wilkes corn.

Here Major Joseph and Colonel Charles McDowell, brothers owning a large estate, with corn and wood galore, gave a welcome

buried eight of them in a trench, but friends carried Captain Chitwood half a mile to Benjamin Bickerstaff's and his burial on a hill started a graveyard where he, with a number of companions in the dust, are left to the mercy of the pines.

When Captain Robert Sevier, brother of Colonel John Sevier, stooped to pick up his ram-rod in the battle he was mortally wounded by a buckshot that lodged near his kidneys. This caused Colonel John Sevier's son, Joseph, to misunderstand that it was his father who was shot, and when Campbell was shouting, "For God's sake, cease firing," he exclaimed, "Damn them. They've killed my father and I'll shoot as long as there's a damned son of a ———!" Just then his father rode up and reconciled him.

Dr. Johnson, the British surgeon failed to extract the ball, but said it could be gotten a few days later, and advised that if he failed to stay there and be quiet, his kidneys would inflame about the ninth day and he would die.

Sevier had a double reason for believing the Tories would kill him if he tarried. He had stripped a Tory naked on the Back Waters and tarred and feathered him from head to foot and turned him loose. He was in a bad fix, for if he put on his clothes they would

stick to the tar, and if he tried to go home in his new union suit the women and children along the road would run, and a hunter might shoot him for a baboon that had escaped a show. Backwoods men always grew hair on their persons as help to their thin clothing to protect them from the cold. This was a hairy man and the hair had tangled into the coat of tar and feathers. He put on his clothes, buttoned up his coat, and tied a handkerchief around his neck to conceal his new underwear and went home. His wife heated water in a kettle and poured it on his clothes as hot as he could stand it, to soften the tar, and then peeled them off like skinning a banana, pulling lots of the hair out by the roots while he used many exclamatory expressions, as "Hell fire!" "Be easy!" "You're a-skinnin' me!" "Damn the Rebels!"

She exhausted her soap and wore out her swab rags and still there were fine oases of tar and feathers on the skin. With these he crossed the mountains, exhibited them to Ferguson, offered to pilot him into his country and in this way, helped instigate him to send that obnoxious verbal message: "If you do not desist from opposition to the King's arms and take protection under my standard I will march my army over there and hang

your leaders and lay waste your country with fire and sword."

Sevier knew that his name was known among the Tories in connection with the tar and feather incident, and since, if he stayed he took a great risk of being killed, he preferred to take the chance of dying in an effort to get to his Nolachucky home on horseback.

On the 16th, the ninth day after the wound, while his nephew, James Sevier, was preparing their frugal meal, at Bright's Place, on Yellow Mountain, he was suddenly taken worse and died within an hour, and his remains, wrapped in his blanket, were interred beneath a lofty mountain oak.

About one mile below the mouth of Roaring Creek, on the 28th of September, 1780, as they went to battle, they passed Bright's Place on the river; the 16th of the following October, on their return from battle, Captain Robert Sevier died at Bright's Place on Yellow Mountain and was buried under a lofty mountain oak.

They went and came the same way; the two places are the same; lofty oaks do not grow on high mountains but in low valleys; and Captain Sevier's dust sleeps in an unknown grave near the mouth of Powder Mill Creek.

The following page of important history is not taught in public schools nor known by the average reader.

Preceding the Battle of Kings Mountain, there were deliberations between Congressmen, conversations and correspondence between gentlemen, and a gazette publication touching a compromise between England and the United States by dividing the Provinces.

Following the capitulation of Charleston, Gates' defeat at Camden, Sumpter's at Fishing Creek, and Arnold's treason, Washington wrote Count de Rochambeau, September 8, 1780: "We are tottering on the brink of a precipice." Such were the failing hopes of Congress that one more major victory for the King and they would most probably have succumbed.

In a letter from Mr. Dane, in Congress, to General Schuyler, the 21st of May, 1780, he said: "An opinion has been propagated here that Congress means to sacrifice the three Southern states. We have privately mentioned it to some of the Southern gentlemen, who did not choose, after great deliberation, to have it adopted."

After the fall of Charleston, a gazette was published there, in which the conquerers insinuated that the Northern states had aban-