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THE
BATTLE
OF
TRENTON:

BY HENRY K. HOW.

NEW-BRUNSWICK, NEW-JERSEY.

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THE BATTLE OF TRENTON.



This land is ours, and we are free !
We dwell in peace and calm security :
For this our sires strove long and wearily,
And with their blood gained our dear liberty.

For when oppressor's o'er the waves
Doomed us to die a race of slaves,
And sent their fleets and armies here
To frighten men who felt no fear,
Our fathers saw the gathering storm—

They watched the clouds,

But feared no harm.

Uprising in their might, they stood
To breast the strong invading flood,
And like firm rocks that guard the shore
Where lofty billows dash and roar,
Though most o'erwhelmed by rising woes,
They stood the storm, beat back their foes.

On Jersey's soil that tempest broke
With thunder's roar and lightning's stroke.
The wasteful waves washed wild and high,
Destructive, towering to the sky.
On Trenton's plain that tide was turned—
On Princeton's field hope's bright star burned ;
Old Monmouth's sands drank up that flood—
Destructive, dark, and dyed with blood.

Upon thy banks, majestic Delaware—
Now calm, now peaceful, now serenely fair—
The crash, the carnage, and the cry of war
Burst on the air, and rang from shore to shore.
Where by the moonlight, 'neath the woodland's shade,
Now strolls the lover with his bright-eyed maid ;
Where by the roadside, wandering from their home,
The bleating sheep run grazing as they roam—
Far different acts in other days were done,
Far different sights lay open to the sun.

For two long years the clouds of bloody war
Had driven peace and plenty from our shore ;
Where bloomed the rose, and white wheat waved its
head,
There grew the thistle and the tare instead ;
Where stood the cottage on the hill's green brow,
(There 's nothing left to mark that cottage now ;)

And he who reared it for a happy home,
Was turned a wanderer on the world to roam.
The Indian scalping-knife had gone
Through hamlet and through frontier town;
The Hessian's sabre reeked with blood
From old and young, the brave and good;
The British bayonet was wet
With brother's blood—we can't forget—
The outcast tory's hellish crew
Did what the savage scorned to do—
No mercy shown to silvery hairs,
To maiden's tears, or woman's prayers;
The infant sleeping on its bed
Must die, because from rebel's bred.

Our little band had slowly fled—
Half clothed, half disciplined, half fed—
Before the exulting British foe,
Marching with pomp and royal show;
And they who pledged their lives and honor
To shield our cause—protect our banner—
In that dark hour and night of gloom
“That tried men's souls,” feared for their doom.
Unshaken in that band was one—
The great the glorious WASHINGTON;
He to the God of armies cried,
“In thee we trust, in thee confide.

Jehovah, stretch thy mighty arm,
And shield our righteous cause from harm."
The Almighty, from his throne on high,
Looked on our land with pitying eye ;
He interposed his matchless power,
And saved us in that trying hour.

THE MARCH ON TRENTON.

In Trenton when the sun was set,
The Hessians at their quarters met ;
And while the brilliant candles shine,
They pass along the sparkling wine :
For Christmas day had come and gone,
The joyful hours were nearly flown ;
With a merry laugh our country's foe
Enjoy the minutes as they flow,
And many a soldier sang with glee
Of blue-eyed maids in Germany.

On Pennsylvania's wintry shore
The chilling blast howled loud and sore ;
When lulled the winds, there echoed then
The heavy tramp of armed men.
Columbia's sons haste to the strife,
To strike for liberty and life.

GEORGE WASHINGTON was at their head !
A gallant band, and nobly led ;
Then wheeling down, rank pressing rank,
They eager crowd the river's bank :
Dark Delaware's wide, wasteful wave
Washed wild and high, a watery grave ;
The rushing ice, with crash and roar,
Dashed madly past the stormy shore :
Quick to the boats the soldiers leap,
To breast the waves and cross the deep ;
They brave the storm and blast of heaven,
Dash through the ice though madly driven ;
Each sturdy oar is strongly plied
To gain the river's distant side ;
The helmsmen strive with eager eye
To pierce the gloom, and white shore spy ;
And soon they see the snow clad banks,
Soon reach the shore with joy and thanks.
Each soldier casts aside his oar,
And leaps upon the Jersey shore ;
Then wheeling into line, they go
Struggling with wind and pelting snow.
They come from hills and rivers far,
In freedom's cause to brave the war :
There 's one from " Susquehanna's side,"
He's left his home and youthful bride ;
And there are men brave 'mid the brave,
Whose farms o'erlook the Hudson's wave,

And in that band of men so true
Is many a gallant Jersey blue ;
And Pennsylvania's sons are there,
And gallant men from Delaware.
Brave old Virginia's riflemen
Come from their homes and native glen ;
New England's sons, her boast and pride,
Leaving their homes and fireside,
Stood to support Columbia's war,
Upon the banks of Delaware.
Chilled with the blast and wintry snow—
Half naked, weary, filled with woe—
But with undaunted hearts they stand,
Impatient—waiting the command.
Then rang the voice of WASHINGTON—
“ My noble men ! press onward ! On ! ”
Upon the word the bugle rings,
And forward every soldier springs.

THE SURPRISE AND ATTACK.

And darker then the black night grew,
And louder then the wild wind blew,
And faster fell the flakes of snow,
And higher still the snow drifts grow.

No rattling drum nor shrieking fife
Was heard amid the tempests strife.
The struggling horse and staggering men
Press on the march with toil and pain,
Staining the snow with bloody feet,
Battling the blast, the cold and sleet.
In Trenton, sheltered from the storm,
The Hessians slept, nor dreamed of harm ;
The sentries at the outposts placed,
With sullen steps their watches paced ;
No watch dog's bark disturbed the night,
No cock's shrill clarion challenged fight—
The whirlwind's blast and tempest's moan
Fell on the sentry's ear alone.
When suddenly a signal gun
Told to our men the march was done,
And to the sleeping Hessian host
Of danger near and battle lost.
As angry bees protect their hive,
And from their store the plunderers drive,
So turned the Hessians out in force
To check our columns onward course.
But Sullivan went thundering on,
And onward charged GEORGE WASHINGTON ;
They charged on men who firmly stood
Waiting the shock, with burning blood ;
For they had fought on foreign field,
And they were used to conquer, not to yield.

But they were struggling with the free—
Men who had drawn for liberty,
Men who had braved the torrents force,
Men who had watched the whirlwind's course,
Men who had laid the forest low,
Had fought and quelled the savage foe ;
Men who had looked from mountain height
And seen their homes and wheat fields white,
Their cattle grazing on the plain,
Then turned unto the chase again ;
And when at evening they returned,
Their children gone, their cottage burned,
Paused not to weep in vain, distressed
With sorrow, weighing down their breast,
But to the rescue of their young,
With manly hearts they nobly sprung ;
And struggling desperately alone,
No mercy asked, no mercy shown,
Amid the forest's gloomy shade
Avenge'd their wrongs with bloody blade.
Rescued from harm and savage grasp,
With joy again their young they clasp.
In column now these men advanced,
Their serried ranks terrific glanced,
Their gallant hearts beat high and fast—
Upon that charge the die was cast.
Then Death rode riot through the bloody street ;
For Death holds revels when stern warriors meet.

Heaps upon heaps the hireling Hessians fall,
 Poor purchased private and brave General Rahl.
 "Hurrah! Hurrah!! Hurrah!!!" our gallant soldiers
 shout,
 "The foemen falter, flee—it is a rout, a rout!"
 Then forward pressed our fast prevailing ranks,
 Drove in their front and chased their scattered flanks.
 As forest leaves the wild winds blow,
 As edding wheels the drifting snow—
 So fled the Hessian force before
 The onward course our column bore.
 No refuge could the foemen find;
 Beset in front, pursued behind,
 They yield unto the fate of war,
 Upon the banks of Delaware.
 Proud hour was that for freedom's cause,
 Foretelling peace and equal laws:
 For Bethlehem's star on Palestine
 On Christmas Eve did brightly shine,—
 The stars and stripes on Trenton's plain
 Gave freedom to the world again.

And shall no column mark this spot?
 And shall these heroes be forgot?—
 No! while the race of men shall last,
 While memory recalls the past,
 Although no monumental pile
 May mark the field for mile on mile,

The glory of that day will be
As lasting as eternity.
Yet rear a monument of stone
Before the last, lone, lingering one,
Who shared the dangers of that day,
By the stern reaper Death is called away.

Not that with him the race of heroes die,
"Oh, no!" the streets of Monterey reply.
Our brothers' blood as nobly now does flow,
Witness ye hills, ye plains, ye vales, ye dales of Mexico.
We fear not that the memory of one name
Of those who gave a lustre to our country's fame
Will fade. From childhood's lisping lips we hear
Of Knox, Monroe, and Stark, the mountaineer,
And many names of those who dared
Rush on the foe, when half the land despaired;
And from that field sent up a victor's shout,
When fled the foe in hurried headlong rout.
They well deserve our homage and our praise,
Those daring men of dark and gloomy days;
Nations have deemed those worthy of proud
 monuments,
Who conquered in the breach--scaled lofty battlements.
These conquered famine, foes, and traitor plot!
Build high their column on this hallowed spot,
That here the thanks of "millions yet to be"
May rise a grateful tribute to their memory.

Shall we who dwell in peace and calm security,
For which our sires strove long and wearily ;
Whose bright swords saved us from the chains of
slaves—

Live sluggard lives and fill ungrateful graves ?
No ! Jerseymen are brave, and honor mighty deeds,
In every foremost rank of war New-Jersey leads.
Long ere this nineteenth century's onward course runs
out,

Uprear their column with a mighty shout :
Yes, found it deep, and rear it t'wards the sky,
That its fair form may catch the traveler's eye ;
And strangers ask with wonder all the while,
What means this column—who built up this pile ?
Then with a generous pride we well can say,
Here fought our fathers—here they gained the day ;
Our liberty was won by those who fought and bled,
And we their children reverence them now dead ;
And in their footprints follow, follow true,
And rallying round our flag, the red, the white, the
blue—

No stripe obscured—no single star erased—
Will never see our much loved soil disgraced—
True to our rights—the people's sovereignty—
Freedom of conscience, and no bigotry.
Sons of New-Jersey guard the mighty dead ;
For you they fought, for you they freely bled.

Their ashes now repose beneath your sod,
Their spirits gone to glory and to God.
We have held converse face to face
With the last relics of that noble race :
With rapt ear listened, as we heard them tell
Our nation's history, and have marked it well.
Those of a future day will only know
From us the story of their toil and woe,
Their valor, victory, wisdom, prudence, all.
Plain as the writing on Belshazzar's wall,
Let us inscribe it high on blocks of stone,
That men may read not hear of it alone.
Let tyrants read it and their thrones o'erthrow,
Let traitors read it and their plots forego ;
Let patriots mark it—and their spirits long
Like them to live, in marble and in song:
 For their great deeds will last till endless days,
 The statesman's model and the poet's praise.
Long may their valor, virtue and their truth,
Inspire the bosoms of our generous youth ;
To heed their bright example, and revere
Their noble deeds and hold their memory dear.
Then for our country's future we need dread
No sad mishap, virtue by valor led
Will ever win. We fear no monarch's frown, God is
 our king,
To Him we bow—to Him our praises sing.

Then let us pray to heaven with one accord,
For Israel's God, Jehovah, is our Lord.
Oh ! God protect us, and our country's cause,
Our Constitution and our equal laws.

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