

TO PRINCETON BATTLEFIELD, A FINE DAY'S TRIP

By Sarah Comstock.

HERE are a few historic spots—only a few, perhaps—in our country which send away the casual visitor both chastened and uplifted in soul. One approaches nonchalantly, aiming a kodak and a flippant remark—and departs hushed. Not Stony Point, for one—that produces a riot of victorious emotions. Not Monmouth—Molly Pitcher is far too gayly colored a figure in tradition, for all her private tragedy, against that background. Fort Lee saddens one, as one seems to watch that rain-beaten band tramping over the miles of defeat back toward Hackensack.

But Princeton! There we find a triumph so splendid as to be inspiring, but so hardly won, at such a cost, that it hushes us, awes us, while we glory in it. There is a sombre splendor in the story of Princeton.

In a day's journey from New York one may retrace the steps of our own army over that battle which ushered in the New Year of 1777—a new year in very truth, for the war of the Revolution had reached its critical hour, and without the victory at Princeton many historians agree that the ultimate triumph of Britain might have been secured.

The trip is not an easy one unless you cover the ground in a vehicle of some sort, or unless you are a true pedestrian, from the poise of your head to the broad sole of your low-heeled shoe. But there are vehicles a-plenty to be obtained, or, if you really long for a hike over roads that are beautiful with Jersey Summer and full of historic traditions, a treat lies in store for you. For the whole-hearted hiker not a finger stretch of miles could be found than those which lead on from the scene of the first conflict, out past the old stone bridge over the Millstone where Washington led his conquering men to a point where they could fall exhausted on the frozen ground, a weary little band of victors.

It doesn't fall to every one's lot to have the great good fortune of being personally conducted over this history-charged ground by such an authority as A. W. Callisen, who has steeped himself so thoroughly in the traditions of the region that he can fairly wave you back into 1777 with one skillful motion of his remarkable wand. He has studied the various phases of the Father of Our Country until he calls him to life at a moment's notice for the visitor's benefit. But at least the wayfarer can have the benefit of following Mr. Callisen's chart for the journey, and herewith it follows:

Suppose you rise early on the morning of this trip, for it's a longer one than usual, and betake yourself to the Pennsylvania Station in time for the 8:30 train. Purchase a ticket for Princeton, change cars at Princeton Junction, and find yourself under the stately nose of Old Nassau, within the very paws of the Tiger, at about 10 o'clock. Even as T. R. is not the only occurrence that ever took place at Oyster Bay, so likewise have there been happenings at Princeton other than Woodrow Wilson, and it will consume a good day and a long one to hunt them out.

The train delivers you at the university buildings, but you may pass them for the present and go directly to the battlefield. You will find automobiles ready for your patronage; if you are for the road, then a mile of excellent walking will bring you to the spot. Go up to Nassau Street, turn west, then south, to Mercer Street, and if there should be any confusion as to direction not a Princetonian but can tell you the way.

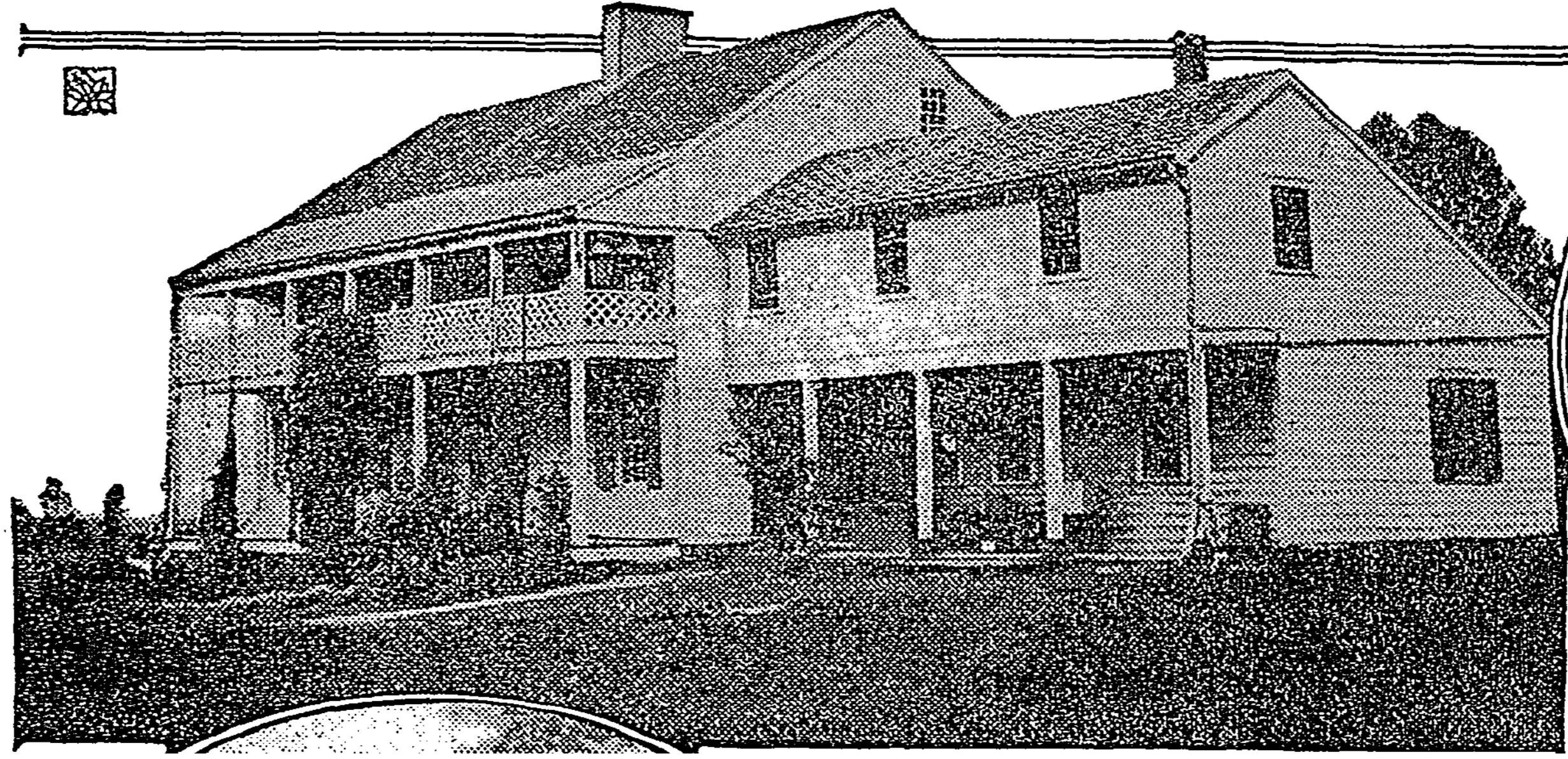
The site of the first conflict is marked by a simple monument of cannon balls piled, the pyramid surmounted by a fine, alert eagle, which seems to be declaring itself vigorously for preparedness. You will see it at your left in a field, surmounting the slope up which the two forces rushed. You recall the situation.

The overwhelming defeat at Forts Mifflin and Red Bank, and Washington's retreat through the Jerseys, had been followed by the victory at Trenton, which put new spirit into the Americans, but they were in so reduced a condition, both in numbers and in supplies, that their case was desperate. It would take far more than Trenton to save the day. On Dec. 23, 1776, Washington wrote for the watchword, "Victory or Death," and every one knew that a crisis had been reached.

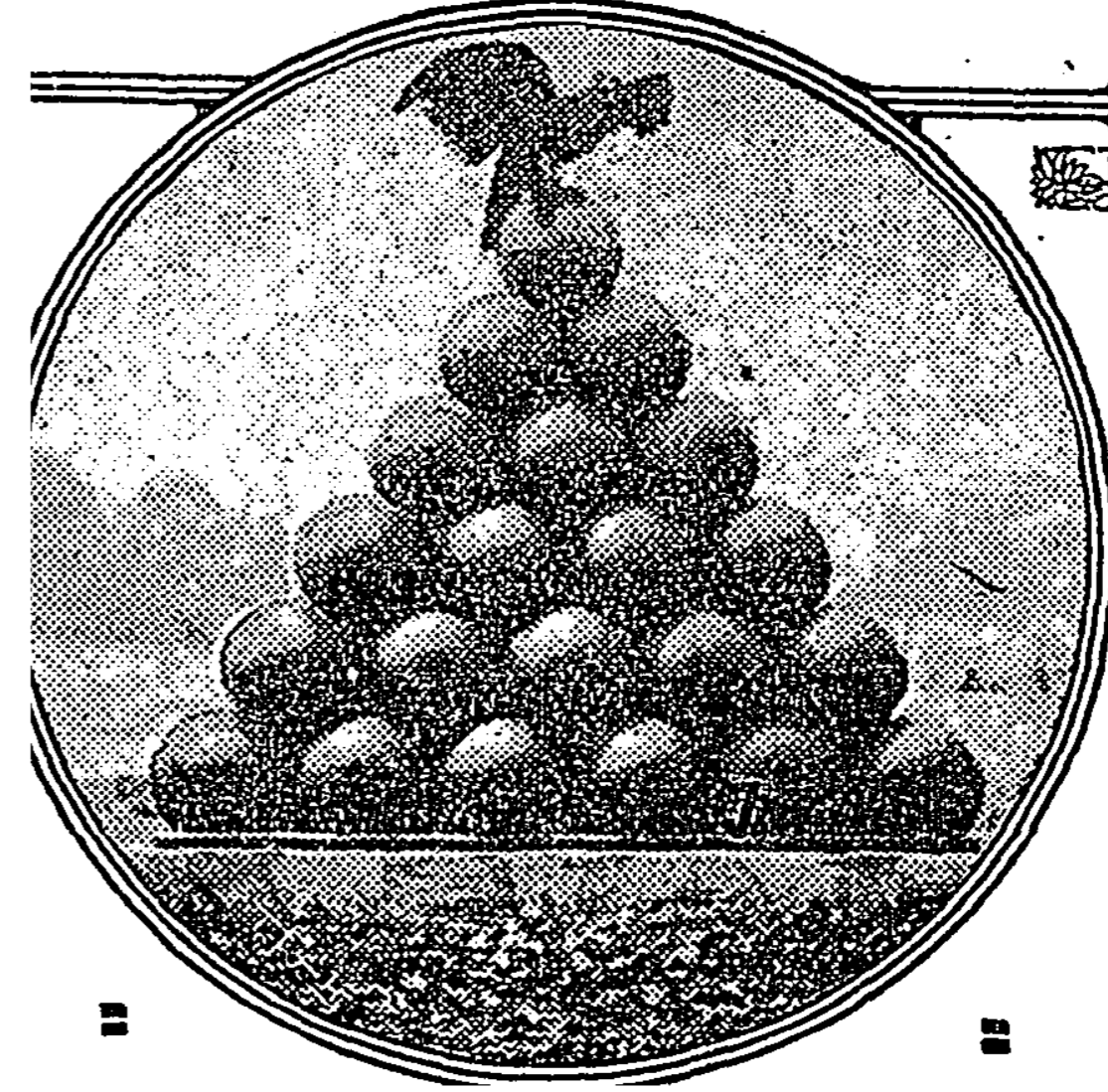
So easy had the British victories been that Cornwallis was already counted conqueror, and he had arranged to leave for Europe. But this amazing turn of affairs, achieved through Washington's crossing of the Delaware, evidently stirred him to recognition of the annoying fact that the "damned rebels" were not yet quite beaten, and he delayed his embarkation and went to Princeton to take command of the many troops which were gathered there. Bancroft adds that "the sluggish Sir William Howe nestled lazily in his warm quarters at New York," where he remained for six months, and this nesting did not abet the British cause, now in a far more serious situation than either side guessed. Outwardly, the enemy appeared to have little to do but complete its conquest. Inwardly, there was undermining going on, both from the American mettle and from the self-indulgent habits of luxurious British officers.

It was on the second of January, 1777, that Cornwallis set out to meet Washington, who was near Trenton. He led forth from Princeton the best troops he could command; the American forces were small, undisciplined, and worn by hardships. Small American parties were sent out to lie in wait and harass the enemy in its advance, but if it came to an open conflict, Washington realized that his chances would be slim. At Five Mile Run, Hand made trouble for the ap-

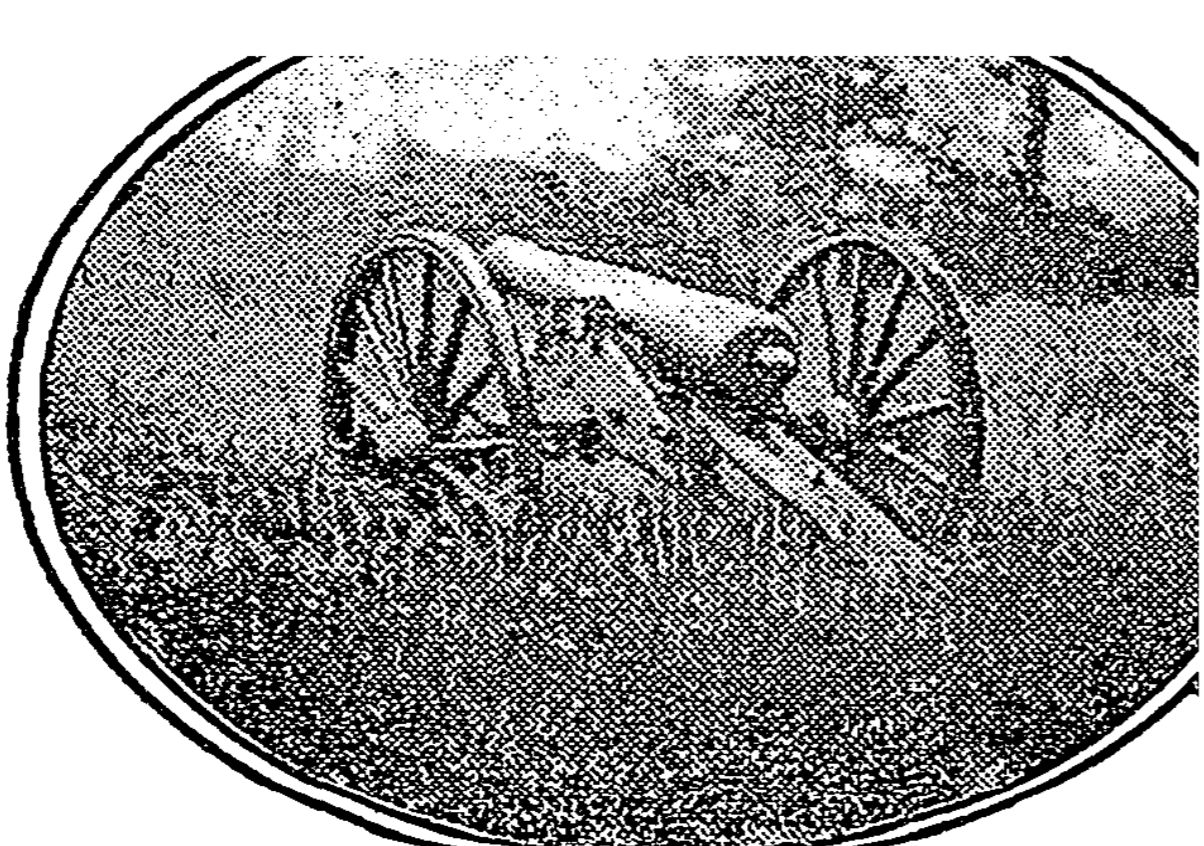
Historic Landmarks and Lovely Scenery Abound in Region Where Washington's Strategy and Courage Turned the Tables Against Cornwallis In the Darkest Days of Our Revolution



Washington Headquarters at Rocky Hill



Monument of cannon balls, surmounted by eagle, marking site of Battle of Princeton



Revolutionary cannon at Washington Headquarters, Rocky Hill



"Beehive Tavern," now a ruin, where Washington stopped for dinner

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Pennsylvania Railroad to Princeton. Train leaves at 8:30. Fare, round trip, \$2.48. Arrive about 10 o'clock. Walk out Mercer Street to battlefield. See monument marking battle site, "old Clark house" where Mercer died, monument to Mercer. Return to Nassau Street, see Nassau Hall. Continue on same street, which leads to Kingston Bridge. See old bridge, cemetery, Beehive Tavern. Turn left, continue to Stone House, turn right, continue to Rose and Crown Farm. Return by same route, or by way of Rocky Hill, where see Washington Headquarters. Train at Rocky Hill to Monmouth Junction, there change for New York. Fare over the short Rocky Hill branch, 17 cents.

proaching army, and at several other points they were much disturbed, but they marched on securely and Washington wisely withdrew, while Cornwallis, sending for reinforcements, drew up to camp for the night and waited for daylight before making a clean sweep of the rebel band. Fiske reports that he went to bed in high spirits, observing, "At last we have run down the old fox and we will bag him in the morning."

Then followed that "famous little game of Washington's, which made the name of 'old fox' seem rather flattering than otherwise. It stands with some of his wildest moves, among them that secret withdrawal from Brooklyn across the river in silent boats. On this occasion he caused campfires to be built along the shore of the Assanpink, while the work of making intrenchments apparently went on through the night. Even the sound of the axes reached British ears, and they fell asleep lulled by what they believed to be full knowledge of the rebels' movements and intentions. While a few remained to keep campfires burning and the work progressing noisily, the main part of the troops quietly withdrew from the Assanpink and strolled lightly off toward Princeton, and the British bivouacked and slept with comfortable snores. One of the most remarkable qualities possessed by Washington appears to have been the ability to omit sleep on every occasion when it paid to stay awake.

His plans were complete. He knew every road and crossroad on the way to Princeton. He had made sure that the way to that town was unguarded. He knew that most of the British troops had been removed from Princeton, and he made the clear deduction that only a few, moreover, could be remaining at Brunswick, where the enemy had rich magazines. His maximum ambition, then, was to take Princeton, and push on to Brunswick and avail himself of all he found there. This, however, he knew to be a somewhat extravagant hope. But he felt that he could achieve Princeton, at least, and then withdraw to the heights of Morristown to recuperate, and we shall follow him over this course.

As usual, he gathered his officers together and laid the plan before them before making his start, and agreement was unanimous. Mercer, it is said, was one of the most enthusiastic over the plan. Mercer, who was to carry it out and pay the price with his life. Soon after midnight, when the 3d of January had not yet dawned, the march began, in a new, sudden wave of bitter cold which followed the days of thaw.

Bancroft tells us that it was about sunrise when the troops arrived at the southeastern outskirts of Princeton, and the main body wheeled by a back road to the colleges. Mercer was detached and went toward the west with about three hundred and fifty men. There were already about two British regiments on the march to join Cornwallis, leaving far behind them the very town where they

were needed, while Cornwallis peacefully awaited them to help overwhelm the Americans whom he supposed to be behind those delusive campfires.

But Mawhood, with a number about equal to Mercer's, saw the approach of the Americans and returned to the conflict which you have now placed. Here where the eagle surmounts the cannon balls, the two forces rushed—Mawhood leading a body of men trained, fresh, armed with bayonets; Mercer in command of a group poorly trained, ill-equipped, almost exhausted with a night march of eighteen miles through bitter cold, and almost entirely rifleless, bearing scarcely any bayonets to meet the hostile charge. A terrific, swift encounter took place, at the end of which the Americans gave way and fled, abandoning their cannon, while their officers remained on the field, calling the men back. Haslet, Neal, Fleming, were among those who fell, and Mercer dropped to the ground, wounded.

Return to the road from the field where the monument stands, walk on a little further, and you will see at your left a frame building known as the "old Clark house." It is now the Hale house, but its tradition is too persistent for the old name to be lost. Here Thomas Clark lived in Revolutionary days, and here Mercer was dragged to die. The story goes that his gray horse was disabled, and that he fell to fighting afoot; that a musket blow from a British soldier felled him, and that other British then fell upon him, some mistaking him for Washington. At any rate, his wounds were so serious that he lived only until Jan. 12, when he died in a room which you may visit today.

Not only is it associated with the story of one of our bravest Generals, but there is an interesting collection of weapons and other relics picked up on the battlefield. In front of the house you will find a monument to Mercer, a simple and dignified memorial of heavy stone. Lossing relates that Mercer "was tenderly nursed by the late Miss Sarah Clark of the Society of Friends and a colored woman belonging to the family," and that "he expired in the arms of Major George Lewis, a nephew of Washington."

It was about the time when Mercer fell that Washington heard the sound of conflict in this orchard land where you now are, and returned as fast as possible. Seeing his scattering troops, he rode straight to the front himself, summoning them to follow. It was one of his most drastic and gallant acts. Straight toward the enemy he rode, did not stop until he was within thirty yards of them and face to face, commanded every American to follow, and stood swathed in smoke while a simultaneous volley arose from both sides. When the smoke cleared away he stood unharmed. The British were overwhelmed. The entire action, from the moment when Mercer's first shot was fired, had occupied just twenty minutes. Mawhood with his men was pursued by the patriots for three or four miles and lost many on the way as prisoners to the conquering Americans.

On the slope which you are facing as you look forth from the old Clark house this triumph of Washington took place. Go back now to the heart of the university town, and visit old Nassau Hall, where a few final touches put a neat end to the Ameri-

can victory. It is the original college building, fronting on Nassau Street, and a fine pair of tigers will welcome you to its door. Here the British had their barracks, using the old Presbyterian church as well. Washington drew up some cannon near these buildings, and opened fire. An attempt at resistance was made; Trevolyan tells us that there was "little bloodshed but some profanation; young Alexander Hamilton, with the irreverence of a student fresh from a rival place of education, planted his guns on the sacred grass of the academical campus and fired a six-pound shot which is said to have passed through the head of King George the Second's portrait in the chapel." The American force was too great, and the garrison soon surrendered.

It was at about this time that Cornwallis awoke. He heard the sound of distant firing, thought it must be thunder, but was informed by Erskine of the sensational fact that "Washington has outgeneraled us!" His speed was put forth to reach Princeton, where he found his troops thoroughly chastised, and Washington, with his men, safely out of harm's way, en route to the Morristown Heights.

Follow Nassau Street, after you have spent an hour, perhaps, in visiting historic Princeton University—not that you couldn't spend much more time—and you will be proceeding along the old turnpike toward Kingston Bridge. Picture that very weary, very threadbare, but very proud army which preceded you by more than a hundred and thirty-nine years. The walk is long—two or three miles, perhaps—but you are fresh and fit, and

your country is free. Perhaps the walk is a bit easier than it was to those soldiers of 1777.

At last you will reach the Millstone River, and your path will lead you across an old stone bridge in the masonry of which is set a stone inscribed:

KINGSTON BRIDGE,
45 MILES TO PHILA.
50 MILES TO N. Y.
1798.

This is the bridge which Washington broke up as he crossed and which was soon restored. He planted his artillery in the cemetery above to guard the point.

Just beyond it, at the turn of the road, you will find a marker stating that "by this route Washington with his army retired to Morristown [Heights] after his victory at Princeton, January, 1777." Across the road, at the opposite corner, stands a defunct old building, almost gone to ruin, but once a flourishing tavern proudly displaying its popular sign, known to all the country round—a beehive. Here, runs the story, Washington stopped for dinner to give him new strength for the rest of the march, and if the hostelry lived up to its reputation, he found it.

Turning toward the highlands, he halted for the night, while his men sank upon the frozen ground in the woods. They were so overcome that Cornwallis would have found them easy prey had he undertaken pursuit. His failure to do so stands as one of the most serious mistakes in the history of the British side.

One of the most delightful of Jersey's historic houses lies beyond the tavern, perhaps another mile's walk, through a stretch of the State's most luxuriant farmland. The building is full of tradition, besides being a charming home of the present day. It is the old Rose and Crown Farmhouse, now belonging to A. W. Callisen—a fine old white dwelling of the colonial period, said to have housed Cornwallis more than once, besides having been a stopping place for some of Washington's officers.

In Revolutionary days it was known by its present very picturesque name, but the name was dropped for long years, being replaced by some rather colorless modern appellation. When Callisen took possession, he excavated the house's history, and found that, by a remarkable coincidence, it was identical with the name of his family's old farm in Kent, England. These names arose during the wars of the Roses, when farms were called "Red Rose and Crown," for instance, or "White Rose and Crown," the color having faded with time, and the mere "Rose" being left.

It is said that a closet in this house once concealed Lieutenant Hayward, who made into it through an interesting trapdoor. Moreover, the house possesses a delightful ghost who walks upstairs with creaky footsteps of a windy night. What tales of the Revolution this ghost could tell are still unknown, for it has never yet been led into conversation. The house is a treasure trove of wonderful heirlooms long treasured through generations of the owner's family, from the most exquisitely wrought snuffboxes and pocket sundials to magnificent old mahogany pieces that would adorn a palace.

Betake yourself back by way of Rocky Hill, where one of the least known and best preserved "Washington Headquarters" is cared for under the auspices of the Daughters of the Revolution. Its guardian spirit is a retired clergyman of the Episcopal Church, by name Mr. Pray, who will give you a most interesting hour with his appreciative accounts of the relics displayed here. The old house is broad and white, a most inviting retreat, as it must have been in the days when Mrs. John Berrian offered it to the great Chief for a resting spot from Aug. 18 to Nov. 9, 1783. Upstairs you may see his living room and bedroom, while all through are quaint pieces of furniture—a cellarette of Lord Baltimore's, a harpsichord of Lord Stirling's, charming old wallpapers, pieces of old china. A glowing old-time flowerbed, all gay with larkspur, sweet-williams, and stocks, welcomes you at the door—but close beside it stands the revolutionary cannon which brings back the memory of grave days.