

events of this famous siege--the successive lines gradually closing around the hostile army--the bursting of bombs thrown by the enemy both night and ay-- the emulous gallantry with which two British forts were stormed, the one by an American, the other by a French detachment--the tremendous cannonade opened after the completion of the last parallel of the besiegers--the signal of surrender speedily hoisted on the beleaguered entrenchments after this formidable assault--the sudden cessation of the din of war as soon as this overture was descried--the imposing ceremonies of capitulation --the sullen looks of the British soldiers as they marched between the American and French armies drawn up in opposite lines to the field where their arms were to be surrendered--the immense throng assembled to witness this interesting scene--and the exultant feelings of the spectators at this glorious issue of the revolutionary struggle. Indeed such was the enthusiasm that prevailed all classes of men on this great occasion that the American officers and soldiers forgot, in the general jubilee, the restraints of military discipline and, breaking their line as soon as the captive troops had passed, hurried in a confused, disorderly mass to behold the final humiliation of their proud enemies when compelled to relinquish the weapons with which they had so cruelly desolated our country. ¹

The old gentleman's eyes would sparkle when he recalled these stirring reminiscences, and while he spoke you could see that his heart swelled with the same emotions which animated the bosom of the soldier and the patriot at the spectacle of this signal triumph. His descriptions were, indeed, the most vivid, and the impression made on my youthful imagination by his fire-side narratives will never be obliterated. I have endeavored to give you a faint copy in these pages of some of his descriptions, but I should labor in vain to impart to them the freshness, the charm, the fascinating interest, which they possessed when they fell from his lips. . . .

The capitulation at York was admitted on all hands to be decisive of the contest, and the American army was shortly afterwards broken up into detachments, and distributed in different parts of the country. Colonel Dabney was stationed at Hampton when he was charged with the command of the Virginia line, which command he continued to hold until shortly before the ratification of the treaty of peace, when the troops were disbanded by order of the Governor. He remained, therefore, in the public service until the acknowledgement of our national independence was no longer doubtful, and then returned home after having served during seven eventful years in the public cause. His private affairs had, in the meantime, fallen into disorder. In his absence his house and his furniture had been much injured by British troops, who, during Cornwallis's progress through Virginia, had been stationed in that neighborhood. Knowing that he was an officer in the American army, these marauders invaded his house, broke open his desk, destroyed his beds, defaced his furniture, and endeavored to decoy away his slaves. I remember seeing the marks of British swords on an old secretary and book-case, which always stood in his chamber. ²³

¹ With my brother, Samuel B. Dabney and a group of cousins and friends I witnessed with the keenest interest the rehearsal of this surrender in 1934 and recalled this description.C.W.D.

² The secretary descended unchanged to Captain C.W. Dabney of Aldingham and is now in possession of his grandson, Thomas Gregory Dabney of Charleston; W. Va.

³ It is singular that the writer does not tell that Colonel Dabney spent that hard winter with General Washington's Army at Valley Forge. Dabney's Camp site is marked on a stone there.