

XV.

CAPT. JAMES RYAN.

Captain James Ryan was a native of Virginia, but at an early age removed to South Carolina. He was one of the first settlers of Edgefield District—a pioneer in the wilderness—and was soon called into service as a soldier against the Cherokees. In the war of 1768 against that nation, he was appointed a Lieutenant in one of the companies and distinguished himself. He always volunteered in the most dangerous enterprises and was frequently engaged in hand to hand conflicts with the Indians. He was under Williamson, fighting against the Cherokees, when the Declaration of Independence was made in Charleston, August, 1776.

He took his stand upon the principles of that declaration, and never changed. He served as Captain under Le Roy Hammond, (Colonel) and was engaged in many bloody skirmishes of which there is no record. When the State was overrun in 1780, after the fall of Charleston, and was considered a conquered province, he, with many other true patriots, asked for his parole and took what is known as British protection. But when the British afterwards pronounced him a British subject, as a consequence of this act, and called upon him to bear arms against his countrymen, he refused, was arrested, and thrown into prison at Ninety-Six. From this place he was sent in irons with Captain James Butler, James Caldwell, Daniel Duff, and some others, to the great prison in Charleston, where he was confined in the same cells with all sorts and descriptions of evil doers—British culprits. The prison was crowded—the weather hot—the temper of the parties not very amiable, and they soon began to quarrel and fight. Captain Ryan afterwards related that the Americans were beating their opponents soundly when assistance was sent to them from without. Ryan and his Whig companions were then placed on board a prison ship, which has always been regarded as a brief epitome, or condensed edition of hell. From this ship some were delivered by death, some were exchanged, and some few escaped. Captain Ryan was one of

these, but for some time he was not able to get out of the city. At length one day he quarrelled with some soldiers in the street. After the soldiers left him and passed on, a lady who had been listening called Captain Ryan to her door. She, being a good Whig and wishing to assist him to escape, advised him to go to a sentinel on the lines and pretend that he was a rebel deserter—had been badly treated, and wished to enlist under some British officer whom he knew at Monck's Corner—an officer of reputation. Ryan at once assumed the character, and after a few visits to the sentinel he let him pass. Ryan did not go to Monck's Corner, nor did he return to Charleston, but made the best of his way to the home of Colonel Thomas Taylor, an old friend and schoolmate. Before he reached Granby at the Congaree he was joined by three others, brothers in misfortune. There was neither flat nor canoe in which they could cross, and two of the party could not swim. They made a raft, and placing upon it the two who could not swim, Ryan and the other swam and towed them over. Colonel Taylor, who had just returned from a scouting expedition, received Ryan with great kindness and loaned him a horse to help him on his way home. On the way, near the Edisto, he unexpectedly met three men whom he believed to be Tories. These men stopped him and asked him who he was. He gave the name of Rambo, a well-known Tory in the neighborhood; but Holley, one of the party, doubted the truth of what he said. They searched and found his commission. Holley immediately seized his gun to shoot him, but Ryan, with entire self-possession, asked him to wait a moment; and then appealed to his feelings as a Christian and a man against such doings. Holley yielded, but took him to a Tory camp not far off where he said he knew he would be put to death. The Captain of the party, who was an old man, would not permit them to kill him; but when Ryan left the camp, Holley and a few others followed him until out of sight of those at the camp, stripped off his coat, hat, and boots, took his horse and dismissed him barefooted. He got home, however, collected some of his company, and returned to the Tory camp to look for his horse and clothes.

The Tories were absent, but an old woman, the Captain's wife, was there in great distress, who begged Ryan not to

injure her, but to give her some food. He immediately had a beef killed, cut up, and salted away for her to live upon. Soon after leaving the old woman, he fell in with the Tory party and captured Holley and a few others. Holley was put to death, but I believe no other.

While part of Lord Rawdon's army was on the retreat from Ninety-Six through the fork of Edisto, Captain Ryan, with his company of fifty ragged militia, resolved to attack the rear guard and capture their baggage. He sent all, except three or four, to make the attack. These three or four sounded their bugles and beat two or three drums, as though a much larger party were advancing to battle. The rear succeeded. After a sharp skirmish the wagons were captured, with a good supply of arms, ammunition, and clothing. Every man was able to take something of a prize home to his family. The captured wagons were immediately burned and the Whigs dispersed. Unfortunately for their complete success, some of them overloaded themselves with plunder and with rum, especially rum, were overtaken, and captured. Ryan's men, who had gone from home almost destitute, returned to their families well armed, well clothed, well mounted, and in high spirits.

In the fall of 1782, while advancing upon a party of Tories in camp with great ardor, as he always did, he received a ball in his shoulder which he carried to his grave. Unable to proceed himself, he ordered his First Lieutenant, Wm. Butler, to lead on and continue the pursuit. This skirmish took place near Orangeburg, and was Captain Ryan's last battle, as his wound was too painful and dangerous for him to keep the field. He was carried home and took no more active part in the war, but he continued to issue orders and to plan operations against the Tories.

At the close of the war, he retired to his plantation on Horse Creek, where he remained, cultivating the soil, seeking no office, loved and respected by all who knew him. He was a man who never refused to face an enemy and never turned his back on a friend. He left a large and valuable estate, which was distributed among his relations and kinsfolk, as he had no children of his own.