

SCENE IX

(Pantomime)

(The light comes up on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR

But the burning of old Pat Jack's Tavern only added to the difficulties of Cornwallis. And day by day his position was becoming more precarious. Every rock and tree seemed to shelter a rebel eager to fire upon his foraging parties. His hospital in Liberty Hall was overflowing, the mounds behind it were fast increasing. Instead of finding friends, men willing to join him in the support of His Majesty's cause, the British general actually had pushed his way into a veritable hornets' nest. And from all sides the angry hornets were stinging his harried troops.

And still no word can he obtain of the progress of Patrick Ferguson over in the west. The Mecklenburgers shoot down his couriers seeking Ferguson and Ferguson's couriers trying to communicate with him. Communication has been completely lost. Cornwallis, cut off from his supporting wing, harried, his own forces dwindling, is becoming alarmed. If he could only have word of Pat Ferguson...

Today is October 7. Cornwallis has been in Charlottetown one week and four days. Today is a day of great significance in American history, indeed, in world history. But Cornwallis cannot know this. The British general cannot know that at this moment young Patrick Ferguson, established upon the rounded summit of a high hill called King's Mountain, from which, he has boasted, even the devil himself won't be able to drive him, is in even more serious difficulty.

For at this moment, up the sides of King's Mountain some thirty miles west of Charlottetown, the patriots--farmers, mountain men,

Carolínians, Virginians, tenants and landed gentry--are stealthily climbing, from tree to tree and rock to rock----

(The light fades upon the Narrator and slowly comes up on the hillside across the lake and far out beyond the sets in the foreground. The light grows strong enough to reveal men creeping up the slope toward a hastily improvised camp near the top about which may be seen, including a number in the uniforms of the British army and others in the plain pioneer garb of the countryside. In an instant the crackle of musketry is heard and soon firing becomes general along the side of the hill as the patriots struggle toward the crest and the forces of Ferguson attempt to drive them off. The orchestra joins in to add to the din of battle.)

NARRATOR

(In complete darkness.)

And now time itself has about run out for the gallant Ferguson. Too late, he has realized that King's Mountain instead of being an unassailable fortress has become a trap from which there is no escape. But he will not surrender. He mounts his white horse, though one arm is useless, and charges along the hill in a vain attempt to rally his already defeated forces---

(Across on the hillside the British leader, resplendently dressed, waving his sword in his left hand, comes racing on a white horse.)

But the keen eye of an American backwoodsman has seen him, has drawn a bead, and a steady finger squeezes a trigger ---

(Pat Ferguson across on the hillside drops his sword, twists in his saddle, sways, and falls to the ground, as the white horse races through the smoke of the battle.)

And a young Scotchman, far from home in a lonely wilderness, has come to the end of his adventuring.

(The light dies slowly across on the hillside and the firing drags out to a spattering of shots, and all is quiet as the light goes out on King's Mountain and comes up again on the Narrator.)

NARRATOR

The victory at King's Mountain was complete. It marked the turning point of the war in the South. It fixed the boundary of the northward surge of unchecked British and Tory aggression. Upon the rounded heights of King's Mountain a new nation was to begin.

But this Cornwallis did not know, could not foresee. He was still to act out his role in a losing drama. And panic seized him when he did learn of the disaster in the west, and he gave orders to retreat quickly from Charlottetown, from the red soil of hated Mecklenburg, and southward along the Nation's Ford Road and westward toward the Catawba his wagon trains and his weary troops began their dreary journeying.

(The light fading upon the Narrator and coming up on the set reveals the British in undisciplined retreat off toward the right along Tryon Street, with Cornwallis, Tarleton, Hanger and other British officers riding in the rear, and a small group of soldiers riding behind them as a rear guard. As he nears the end of street Cornwallis turns on his horse for a last look at Charlottetown, then moves slowly off. The light fades, comes up again on Narrator.)

So Charlottetown was rid of the invader. And as the British troops passed her home down near the river, Jane Parks McDowell picked up her two-year-old son John from his crib, wrapped him in a blanket, and mounting her horse, rode through the darkness of the night over many a weary and dangerous mile, through Charlottetown, and out the Salisbury road to Sugaw Creek to notify her husband and other Americans encamped there that the hated Redcoats were in retreat.

(Now the light pales upon the Narrator and comes up on the Charlottetown set until it is revealed in hazy moonlight. A woman mounted upon a horse and with a baby wrapped in a blanket and supported on the saddle in front of her comes in from

the right and rides at a slow jog across the
set to go off left. The light pales and goes
out.)