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"WE'LL O'ER THE WATER, WE'LL O'ER THE SEA"

"We'll o'er the water, we'll o'er the sea,
We'll o'er the water to Charlie;
Come weal, come woe, we'll gather and go,
And live and die wi' Charlie."

O'er the Water to Charlie, by James Hogg
(The Ettrick Shepherd), 1770-1835

My paper tonight deals with a minor battle of the mid-18th Century and its subsequent impact upon English history. It was a battle which many believed to be of little significance, for its ultimate outcome was believed to be inevitable.
It decided the fate of the House of Stuart. I write of the Battle of Culloden where on April 16, 1746, the Duke of Cumberland defeated the forces of Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, on a desolate tract of moorland in Invernessshire, Scotland. My thesis is that this battle has for too long been said to stand simply for the failure of the Stuarts to regain the throne they lost in the revolution of 1688. For many, it is no more than a romatntic but ill-conceived adventrue, whereas it is my position that this battle's real significance lies in the fact that it was the event which guaranteed the Hanoverian ascession.

What I shall try to do is give some historical context to the events leading up to the battle; follow the doomed efforts of the Forty-Five (incidentally, the rebellions of 1715 and 1745 are referred to as the "Fifteen" or the "Forty-Five"); and finally, I shall discuss the ultimate consequences.

To understand the conflicting claims of the Stuarts and the House of Hanover, we must trace their respective genealogies. Both descend from James I of England, the son of Mary, Queen of Scots, and nephew of Elizabeth I. James I reigned from Elizabeth's death and was succeeded by Charles I, who was toppled by Cromwell. Charles II ascended the throne following Cromwell's reign, and ruled until 1685. His brother, James II, an ardent Catholic, followed but reigned for less than four years before fleeing to France with his infant son, James Edward. After James II's death in 1701, James Edward's repeated claims to the throne of England earned him the title of the Old Pretender and those that followed his cause became known as Jacobites from the Latin version of his first name. It was James Edward's son, Charles Edward, known as the Young Pretender, whose followers were defeated at Culloden.

After the revolution of 1688 which drove James II to France, the Bill of Rights in 1689 named William of Orange as king, and his sister-in-law Anne as heiress if he left no heirs. He reigned as William III for 13 years and Queen Anne reigned for another 12 years.

Claim of the House Of Hanover

A granddaughter of James I, Sophia married Ernest Augustus, the first Elector of Hanover. By the Act of Settlement of 1701 after the Elector's death, his widow became heiress to the English throne. She died two months before Queen Anne, but her son, George Louis, second Elector of Hanover, was at once proclaimed George I of Great Britain and Ireland in 1714.

George I arrived in England on September 17, 1714, bringing with him his son George Augustus. He was then 54 years old. Lady Mary Montague called him an "honest blockhead," a brave soldier, but unhappy in England. He had in effect been hired by the British oligarchy to forestall a second Stuart restoration. He disliked the English, withdrew into the recesses of the St. James Palace, went to Hanover regularly, and did all he could to divert English money and policy to the protection of his beloved Hanover. George Augustus, the Prince of Wales, hated his father because of the incessant bullying he received and because of the continued imprisonment of his mother. He was banished from the Palace and set up another residence.

As to the elective or legislative government at this time, voting to Parliament was restricted to 160,000 property owners and Voltaire estimated that some 800 men controlled city government, election to Parliament, and the administration of government and the judiciary.

Politicians were either Tory or Whig, depending upon whether they favored the titled nobility or the gentry and commercial interests. Whereas prior administrations had included men from both parties, George I called only Whigs to office and so established government by party through a cabinet. Because he did not understand English, he did not preside over the Cabinet meetings and the dominant member there became "prime minister" and took over some of the functions and the powers of the king.

There was not universal support for the Hanoverians. The Tories hated the Hanoverians as usurpers and boors. The common people secretly longed for a banished dynasty. The upper and lower classes of Scotland, which had given a Scottish king to England, fretted under the Act of Union (1707) which ended the Scottish Parliament, and many were ready to abet an invasion by the young man that Louis XIV said was the only legitimate King of England.

The Fifteen

James Edward was joined in France by Bolingbroke, a former English Cabinet minister who fell from Hanoverian grace. Bolingbroke helped organize the Jacobite rebellion in England and proposed an invasion from France. He urged the Old Pretender to renounce his Catholicism and convert to Protestantism. But James Edward, steeped in the Catholic faith of his monastic teachers and supporters of his father refused, declaring he would rather be a throneless Catholic than a Protestant King. A prophecy

which ultimately came true for both father and son. Bolingbroke quit the service of the Old Pretender in disgust, convinced that his cause was doomed.

Another Jacobite follower, John Erskine, the Earl of Mar, dismissed as Secretary of State for Scotland, rallied eighteen Scottish lords and 10,000 men to the Pretender's standard. His forces met those of the Duke of Argyle, a loyal supporter of the Crown. Had Mar been a more skillful commander, he might well have defeated the Duke of Argyle at Sheriffmuir. Instead, Argyle, a military incompetent, managed to avoid a defeat.

Another Scottish force was surrounded and unconditionally surrendered at Preston. James III, although knowing of these events, landed in Scotland and joined Mars' army at Perth. But the Old Pretender has neither force nor charisma and failed to attract followers to his cause. As Argyle's army approached Montrose, the Jacobite leaders took flight and returned to France. The failure to gain a victory meant the end of the Fifteen as a military affair. However, it was not the end of Jacobite sentiment in Britain.

The Triennial Acts of 1641 and 1694 provided that no Parliament was to last over three year. Hence, by 1717, George I faced the prospect of a Parliament in which a tory and Jacobite majority might be returned. To guard against this possibility, the Parliament in the Septennial Act of 1716 voted itself four more additional years and ruled that thereafter all Parliaments might continue for

seven years. Winston Churchill stated, "This was the boldest and most complete assertion of Parliament's superiority that England had yet seen." George I, fearful of a Tory victory and following a practice of permitting the "prime minister" to run the Cabinet meetings, in effect abdicated in order to protect his crown. Upon his death in 1727 George Augustus became George II.

George II ascended the throne, insecure after years of bullying by his father. He dismissed all who had served his father, including Robert Walpole, who has served as "prime minister." However, his successor, Sir Spencer Compton proved totally inadequate for the task and Walpole, promising the King and Queen even a greater allowance, was asked to head a new ministry. George II worked as a king. Unlike his father, he spoke English but with a thick Westphalian accent, and he observed the limits placed upon his power and income by Parliament. Like his father, he quarreled with the Prince of Wales for, as Walpole put it, "It ran a little in the family to hate the eldest son."

Walpole was perhaps the most corrupt minister that England has ever had, but he also was one of the best. While he lined his own pockets, he built financial stability and security for the country. He saw the danger of foreign entanglements and for years kept England out of Eugopean wars.

During these years power continued to shift to the Cabinet and the "prime minister." It was said that if something needed to be done, first you had to persuade Walpole; he would then persuade the Queen, who would tackle the King, and so a ministerial recommendation came out in the form of a royal command.

However, despite Walpole's admonishments, England became entangled once more in Europe. Spain had boarded English vessels suspected of smuggling in the Spanish possessions of the new world. England retaliated, declaring war on Spain in 1739. Within a few years, England became involved in the war of Austrian succession. Walpole was left behind unheeded and unwanted.

By 1744, it appeared that the Hanoverian dynasty was permanently established on the throne. Yet closer analysis revealed that there were deep dissensions within the government and distrust of it from the public.

the cabinet was split between the Pelhemits led by Newcastle and his brother, on the one hand, and Lord Chancellor Hardwick and the Granvalites, on the other. The public was becoming concerned with the levies and taxes required by European wars and the corruption symbolized by Walpole. Indeed, John Gay's immensely popular Beggar's Opera (first given in 1728), while dealing with highwaymen, was known by all contemporary audiences to refer to Walpole and others in the cabinet as the real robbers.

There were still those who supported the Jacobite cause, feeling a preference fo the House of Stuart based upon ancient loyalties and a distrust of Hanoverians speaking English poorly, if at all.

In Scotland "the association" was formed. They sent emissaries to England to stir up a revolt and appealed to Louis XV for money, arms and troops. In February of 1744 under Marshal Saxe seven French ships of war and twenty-one troop transports with 10,000 men sailed from Dunkirk to invade England. A fateful intervention was repeated. As before, with the Spanish Armada, the wind and waves declared for England and in a terrible storm the French lost much of their fleet and badly hurt by the gales limped back to Brest. Convinced that the time was not appropriate, Louis informed Saxe that the invasion plans must be abandoned.

Although England had been saved from the French invasion by the uncanny interference, the situation was still one where the possible revolt was the wide topic of conversation.

Charles, frustrated by the refusal of the French to again mount an invasion effort, ignoring the warnings of his father and without consulting the French, decided to carry the rebellion to Scotland himself. He would "tempt destiny" and "conquer or die."

Thus it was that the captain of the HMS Lion on July 7, 1745, saw two ships. Approaching them, they raised the French flag and battle commenced. The Lion was disabled

and the larger French ship, the Elisabeth, was unable to continue her voyage and returned to France with 700 men, 1500 muskets, 1800 broadswords and other arms, ammunition and supplies. The smaller ship sailed on, carrying Charles Edward, the Young pretender, and the legendary "seven men or Moidart." They landed on the Outer Hebrides on July 23d. From there they went to Glenfinnan where on August 19th the Young Pretender dismissed his ship, raised his standard, and called all Jacobites to his side. Most clan leaders remained aloof. Of the 2,000 men he gathered, well over half came from just two clans, the Madonalds and the Camerons. George II was at Hanover when the news reached him. The Forty-Five had commenced.

The Forty-Five

Before discussing the ensuing events, let me first turn to the protagonists.

An extraordinarily precocious military leader, William, duke of Cumberland, was born in April 1721. that his was to be a brilliant career became clear when his father, George II, installed him as the first and principal knight companion of the Most Honorable Military Order of Bath in 1725 when he was only four years old. He fought at Dettingen where he was wounded in 1743. He was promoted to Lieutenant General that year and was made Captain General of His Majesty's land forces in March 1745. He was known as the "martial boy." The duke of Richmond commented of Cumberland that "by his love

of the service, by his generosity to and compassion of prisoners and by all the good qualities that ever a young prince was endowed with, he has justly got the love and esteem of everybody." No such tribute was paid to Cumberland as a result of the aftermath at Culloden.

Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender, was known to all as Bonnie Prince Charlie. He had an indifferent education, all the charms of an athletic youth, and all the ardor of a head itching for a crown. The Duke of Liria spoke of his great beauty, his merry brown eyes and light brown hair, a bold rider and a good shot, a body six feet tall and made for war, a mighty golfer, an accomplished musician, and a graceful dancer. This "is altogether the most charming prince I have ever met."

Charles Edward's principal military advisor and the real strategist for the Forty-Five was Lord George Murray, the fifth son of John, the first duke of Atholl, who remained loyal to George II. Lord Murray had participated in the Fifteen and had been at first lukewarm to the Young pretender and did not join his ranks until September. Once committed, however, his contributions were enormous.

Now, back to the rebellion.

In August 1745, Cumberland had about 34,000 British troops under his command in Europe, where his army was already overstretched. He was reluctant to send troops

from his command to deal with the rebels and risk the campaign against the French who now threatened the Dutch Republic. His father and the others in government took the position that the rebels were "a despicable rabble" who could be "crushed with all the ease in the world."

The British troops in Scotland under the command of Sir John Cope were ordered to "march directly to the place where the enemy were to rendevouz; and endeavor to attack and suppress them at once." In London confidence ran high as to the ability to destroy the Young Pretender. It was the prospect of an invasion from France and Spain that caused concern.

However, Cope's efforts to put a stop to the rebellion were a dismal failure. Instead of intercepting and defeating the rebels in the Highlands, they eluded him leaving the way clear for Charles Edward to march through Scotland to Edinburgh.

Cope finally met the rebel army at Prestonpans on September 21st. The battle or, as one onlooker General Wightman put it, "the scuffle began which lasted 4 minutes and no longer." 300 troops were killed, 1500 were taken prisoner, while Cope and the rest fled south. While the armies were approximately evenly matched in manpower, the rapidity of the Highlanders' charge, their blood-curdling cries, and the havoc caused by their broad swords

or claymores unnerved Cope's men and they left the battlefield "one scene of horror" in which "noses, arms, hands and legs were promiscuously strewed." Even surgeons said "they never saw such terrible gashes as the Highlanders made with their broadswords.

The taking of Edinburgh and the defeat at Prestonpans sent shock waves through England. The stock market fell and panic ensued. For the first time the Young Pretender was taken seriously. As one government supporter put it, "When the news of the surrender of the city and the defeat of the army reached them, it spread an universal consternation and concern. It awakened them out of their stupicity. They saw their Religion, Liberty, and Lives, in utmost danger; and Popery and Slavery approaching near to their borders." It was at this time in order to bolster the national confidence the National Anthem made its first appearance: 'God save great George our King.'"

However, the rebels failed to seize the opportunity and retired to Edinburgh not venturing forth for over seven weeks. Thus providing an opportunity for England to prepare itself for the ensuing battle. Parliament raised new regiments, and Marshall Wade was placed in charge. Wade, 72 at the time, was in poor health, having relinquished a command in Flanders because of it. A certain countess, noted for her wit, said upon hearing the news of Wade's appointment: "Since we could not COPE with our present difficulties, we must WADE through them."

Wade then led the newly raised forces and those just arrived from the Continent north to find the rebels. They finally arrived at Newcastle and after several days of indecision decided to meet the rebels there. However, the forces under Bonnie Prince Charlie brilliantly led by Lord Murray kept Wade guessing they were going to Newcastle but instead went down into Cumberland.

On November 8th the Young Pretender crossed the Esk -- England was invaded.

Although Murray advised against the invasion, he nevertheless did all he could to make it a success. The rebels' first obstacle was Carlisle. After successfully conducting the seige of Carlisle, Murray resigned on the 14th of November because he believed his authority was "insufficiently upheld by the prince." He assumed the position of an ordinary volunteer. However, his successor, the duke of Perth, was so inept that the army insisted that he be reinstated.

The rebels then poured through Lancashire, were welcomed in Manchester, and made their way through Derbyshire to Derby which ultimately became the furthest point of the rebel advance. However, the Young Pretender failed to receive any significant support in England. He was not believed when he said that Anglicans and Presbyterians should suffer no harm from him. The old wounds were not

forgotten. England was weary of the fight of the new faith against the old. The English Jacobites played it safe.

In retrospect, such a result was not surprising. Imagine the prospect of such an army of thousands of Highlanders, undisciplined, spilling over the land, taking from those they needed to recruit, and generally having the appeal of a group of Apaches camping on Arizona ranch property.

Cumberland had been unable to leave the Continent until the French army went into winter quarters. He returned to England on October 19th and on November 21st his father appointed him in charge of the English forces.

While Charles Edward urged his followers to make a bold stroke and rush to London, his Scottish chieftains refused to follow him. Despite their apparent success, new recruits were not coming. Disease, desertion, hunger, lack of pay, and the weather were taking their toll. Thus began the long, sad retreat from Derby to Glascow. Again, Lord Murray was brilliant defending the rear guard. In a battle at Clifton Moor against Cumberland, he enabled the army to reach Carlisle safely without a loss of stores or war material.

But the march took its toll. Desertion ran high. The men were cold, hungry, tired, paid only in oatmeal, and harassed by the English two armies, one under General Hawley and the other under Cumberland, the Supreme Commander.

The major battle during the retreat was fought at Falkirk where the rebels defeated Hawley's forces on January 17, 1746. But it was a Pyrhhic victory. The army was further weakened with losses and desertion. The Prince urged a final stand against the English. His leaders argued and indecision set in. The army now turned to the Highlands. Pessimism swept through its ranks. Desertion ran into the thousands. An army was now an undisciplined and disheartened mob.

Cumberland too entered Scotland, took control of the East Coast, turned and marched north into Inverness County.

The Prince finally decided to give battle to Cumberland and selected a site on the left bank of the Nairn River. Murray urged the right side as the far stronger position to defend, but the Prince was was adamant.

On the night of the 15th of April, Murray felt the Duke would be celebrating his 25th birthday and the army would "all be drunk as beggars." The rebels set out at 8 o'clock that night, but at dawn it was clear that the English were prepared and the element of surprise was lost. Instead of gaining advantage, the rebels were exhausted, cold, and faced on disadvantageous ground the avenging army of Cumberland. On April 16, 1746, the Battle of Culloden began.

The outcome of the battle was never in doubt. The superior English forces faced the rebels at bay, an

exhausted group -- poorly armed, poorly fed, poorly led. Artillery fired grape shot. "Bags of balls," said a Scottish poet, "that hewed them down, aye, score by score, as grass does fall before the mower." The Scots were brave but undisciplined. The generals argued, became indecisive, and had their troops stand their ground. The Highland charge was stopped by a new technique. Instead of the English soldier thrusting his bayonet at the rebel before him, who in the past parried the thrust with his leather shield and then struck with his claymore, the soldier thrust at the rebel to his right. It was a tactic that required experienced, disciplined troops and it worked. When the charge failed to break the English ranks, the rebels became disorganized and were slaughtered as they fell back in disarray.

Cumberland pursued his routed foes with orders of "No quarter." Every rebel Scot was killed on sight. Houses were searched. Scots found with arms in their homes were summarily shot. Clans loyal to George II were set loose upon clans that joined the revolt. Hundreds of homes were burned down. The Duke attempted to justify his punitive action upon a battle order of the rebels that they would give"no quarter," but that order was a forgery. The real reason was to break the back of the rebellious clans. "Mild measures will not do, said the Duke, "all the good we have done is but a little blood-letting which has only weakened the madness but not cured it."

Aftermath of the Battle

Turning first to the major participants in the drama.

Cumberland at 25 was no longer referred to as "the martial boy" but for the remainder of his life was known as "the Butcher." He returned to London as England's hero. His brother, the Prince of Wales, commissioned Handel to commemorate the victory at Culloden with an oratorio, Judas Maccabaeus. Cumberland eventually returned to Flanders and was defeated again by Marshal Saxe, lost again in the Seven Year War, and ultimately surrendered in disgrace. He retired to public life and died in 1765.

Bonnie Prince Charlie, failing to rally is men, was taken from the scene of the battle by his aides. Finally, after much desperate wandering in the Highlands, he departed for France in September. A treaty between France and England requried his expulsion from France. Refusing to obey, he was forcibly evicted by French troops. He returned in disguise to Paris. He even went to London to seek to revive the Jacobite cause, promising to give up his Catholic fatih. Finally, he fell into such drunkenness and debauchery that he was repudiated by all major Catholic powers. He died in Rome at the age of 68.

Lord George Murray escaped to the Continent. His oldest son became the third duke of Atholl, the two younger became a Lieutenant General and Vice Admiral in British service. Not just in Scotland, but it has been observed elsewhere as well that often in war there are Atholls to be found on both sides.

There were other / longer range consequences of the final defeat of the Jacobite cause.

First and foremost was the permanency of the Hanoverian ascession. Its reign was unchallenged thereafter, although George I's lack of familiarity with the English language, failure to run his Cabinet meetings, and use of one-party cabinets contributed to the growth and power of government by cabinet and the power of the "prime minister." This gradual transfer of power quite possibly forestalled in England the type of political revolution that occurred elsewhere in Europe in the late 18th and 19th Centures. Indeed, it was only anti-German sentiment that brought about the demise of the House of Hanover. But miraculously in its place, like a phoenix, rose the House of Windsor.

The feudal power of the clans in Scotland were destroyed and there was a great growth in the middle classes. Scotland's industrial and mercantile interests merged with those of England, providing a strong basis for exploiting the forthcoming industrial revolution. The martial spirit of the Highlanders was channeled into service for, not against, the English crown and released for the entire world men who came to conquer not with claymores but with tools of engineers and accountants for whom Scotland is reknowned. Finally, the practice after the battle of putting to death any follower of the Young Pretender caused the migration to Virginia of my ancestors in 1746.

The Jacobite rebellion ended in total failure. Lord Mahon spoke of this period "when the cause of the banished Stuarts flashed with brilliant lustre, then sank into eternal darkness."

But why did it sink? The timing seemed so right, the cause one supported by many. There are a number of reasons which, added together, made the result inevitable. The winds and the waves again played a major role in the defense of England, frustrating the French invasion of 1744; the war of the Austrian succession occupied France, depriving Charles Edward of his strongest support; the loss of the ship Elisabeth deprived the Young Pretender of much needed men and materials; his refusal to give up his Catholicism in face of the still fresh religious wounds of the English people kept those who favored the Stuarts over the House of Hanover from his banner; the long delay between the victory at Prestonpans and the invasion of England permitted Cumerland and some sorely needed troops to return from the Continent; the sad state of Charles' troops and the refusal to give command to Lord Murray; and many more. But the best epitaph of the Forty-Five was given by Voltaire:

"Thus [with the return of Charles to France in 1746] ended an adventure which in the times of knight-errantry might have proved fortunate, but could not be expected to succeed in an age when military discipline, artillery, and, above all, money, in the end determine everything."