

The London Gazette



Published by Authority.

From Saturday June 2, to Tuesday June 5, 1781.

Whitehall, June 4, 1781.

THIS Morning Captain Brodrick, Aid de Camp to Lieutenant-General Earl Cornwallis, arrived from Charles-Town, South Carolina, with Dispatches from his Lordship, and Lieutenant-Colonel Balfour, to the Right Honourable Lord George Germain, One of Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, of which the following are Copies and Extracts :

Guildford, March 17, 1781.

MY LORD,

HAVING Occasion to dispatch my Aid de Camp, Captain Brodrick, with the Particulars of the Action of the 15th, in Compliance with general Directions from Sir Henry Clinton, I shall embrace the Opportunity to give your Lordship an Account of the Operations of the Troops under my Command, previous to that Event, and of those subsequent, until the Departure of Captain Brodrick.

My Plan for the Winter's Campaign was to penetrate into North Carolina, leaving South Carolina in Security against any probable Attack in my Absence.

Lord Rawdon, with a considerable Body of Troops, had Charge of the defensive, and I proceeded about the Middle of January upon the offensive Operations. I decided to march by the Upper, in Preference to the Lower Roads, leading into North Carolina, because Fords being frequent above the Forks of the Rivers, my Passage there could not easily be obstructed; and General Greene having taken Post on the Pedee, and there being few Fords in any of the great Rivers of this Country below their Forks, especially in Winter, I apprehended being much delayed, if not entirely prevented from penetrating by the latter Route. I was the more induced to prefer this Route, as I hoped in my Way to be able to destroy or drive out of South Carolina the Corps of the Enemy commanded by General Morgan, which threatened our valuable District of Ninety-six; and I likewise hoped by rapid Marches to be between General Greene and Virginia, and by that Means force him to fight, without receiving any Reinforcement from that Province, or, failing of that, to oblige him to quit North Carolina with Precipitation, and thereby encourage our Friends to make good their Promises of a general Rising, to assist me in Re-establishing His Majesty's Government.

The unfortunate Affair of the 17th of January was a very unexpected and severe Blow; however, being thoroughly sensible that defensive Measures would be certain Ruin to the Affairs of Britain in the Southern Colonies, this Event did not deter me from prosecuting the original Plan.

That General Greene might be uncertain of my intended Route as long as possible, I had left General Leslie at Campden, until I was ready to move from Wynnesborough, and he was now within a March of me. I employed the 18th in forming a Junction with him, and in collecting the Remains of Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton's Corps; after which great Exertions were made by Part of the Army, without Baggage, to retake our Prisoners, and to intercept General Morgan's Corps, on its Retreat to the Catawba; but the Celerity of their Movements, and the Swelling of the numberless Creeks in our Way, rendered all our Efforts fruitless. I therefore assembled the Army on the

25th at Ramsoure's Mill, on the South Fork of the Catawba; and as the Loss of my Light Troops could only be remedied by the Activity of the whole Corps, I employed a Halt of Two Days in collecting some Flour, and in destroying superfluous Baggage, and all my Waggon's, except those loaded with Hospital Stores, Salt and Ammunition, and four reserved empty in Readiness for Sick or Wounded. In this Measure, though at the Expence of a great deal of Officers Baggage, and of all Prospect in Future of Rum, and even a regular Supply of Provisions to the Soldiers, I must, in Justice to this Army, say, that there was the most general and chearful Acquiescence.

In the mean Time the Rains had rendered the North Catawba impassable, and General Morgan's Corps, the Militia of the Rebellious Counties of Rowan and Mecklenburgh under General Davidson, or the Gang of Plunderers usually under the Command of General Sumpter, not then recovered from his Wounds, had occupied all the Fords in a Space of more than Forty Miles upwards from the Fork. I approached the River, during its Height, by short Marches, so as to give the Enemy equal Apprehensions for several Fords; and, after having procured the best Information in my Power, I resolved to attempt the Passage at a private Ford (then slightly guarded) near M'Cowan's Ford, on the Morning of the 1st of February.

Lieutenant-Colonel Webster was detached with Part of the Army, and all the Baggage, to Beattie's Ford, Six Miles above M'Cowan's, where General Davidson was supposed to be posted with 500 Militia, and was directed to make every possible Demonstration, by cannonading and otherwise, of an Intention to force a Passage there; and I marched at One in the Morning, with the Brigade of Guards, Regiment of Bole, 23d Regiment, Two Hundred Cavalry, and Two Three-pounders, to the Ford fixed upon for the real Attempt. The Morning being very dark and rainy, and Part of our Way through a Wood, where there was no Road, One of the Three-pounders, in Front of the 23d Regiment, and the Cavalry, overset in a Swamp, and occasioned those Corps to lose the Line of March; and some of the Artillery Men belonging to the other Gun (One of whom had the Match) having stopped to assist, were likewise left behind. The Head of the Column, in the mean while, arrived at the Bank of the River, and Day began to break. I could make no Use of the Gun that was up, and it was evident, from the Number of Fires on the other Side, that the Opposition would be greater than I had expected. However, as I knew that the Rain then falling would soon render the River again impassable, and I had received Information the Evening before, that General Greene had arrived in General Morgan's Camp, and that his Army was marching after him with the greatest Expedition, I determined not to desist from the Attempt; and therefore, full of Confidence in the Zeal and Gallantry of Brigadier General O'Hara, and of the Brigade of Guards under his Command, I ordered them to march on; but, to prevent Confusion, not to fire until they gained the opposite Bank. Their Behaviour justified my high Opinion of them; for a constant Fire from the Enemy, in a Ford upwards of 500 Yards wide, in many Places up to their Middle, with a rocky Bottom and strong Current, made no Impression on their cool and determined Valour, nor checked their Passage. The Light Infantry, landing first, immediately formed, and, in a few Minutes, killed or dispersed every Thing that appeared before them, the Rest of the Troops forming and advancing in Succession. We now learned, that we had been opposed by about