

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

F R I D A Y, D E C E M B E R 29, 1780.

from the LONDON GAZETTE extraordinary. WHITEHALL, Oct. 9, 1780.

HIS majesty's captain Ross, aid de camp to lieutenant-general Earl Cornwallis, arrived in town from South-Carolina, with a letter from his lordship to lord George Germain, one of his majesty's principal secretaries of state, of the following is a copy: Camden, Aug. 21, 1780.

MY LORD, IT is with great pleasure that I communicate to your lordship an account of a complete victory obtained on the 16th instant, by his majesty's troops under my command, over the rebel fourth army commanded by general Gates.

In my dispatch No. 1, I had the honour to inform your lordship, that while at Charles-town, I was regularly acquainted by lord Rawdon with every material incident or movement made by the enemy, or by the troops under his lordship's command. On the 9th instant two expresses arrived, with an account that general Gates was marching towards Lynch's creek with his whole army, supposed to amount to 6000 men, exclusive of a detachment of 1000 men under general Sumpter, who after having in vain attempted to reach the posts at Rocky-mount and Hanging-rock, was believed to be at that time trying to get round the left of our position, to cut off our communication with the Congarees and Charles-river; that the disaffected country between Peter and Black river had actually revolted; and that lord Rawdon was contracting his posts, and preparing to assemble his force at Camden.

In consequence of this information, after finishing some important points of business at Charles-town, I set out on the 10th, and arrived at Camden on the night between the 13th and 14th, and there found lord Rawdon with our whole force, except lieutenant-colonel Turnbull's detachment, which fell back from Rocky-mount to major Ferguson's posts of the militia of Six on Little river.

I had now my option to make, either to retire and attempt the enemy; for the position at Camden was a bad one to be attacked in, and by general Sumpter's advancing down the Wateree my supplies must have failed me in a few days.

I saw no difficulty in making good my retreat to Charles-town with the troops that were able to march; but, in taking that resolution, I must have not only left near 300 sick and a great quantity of stores at this place, but I clearly saw the loss of the whole province, except Charles-town, and of all Georgia, except Savannah, as immediate consequences, besides forfeiting all pretensions to future confidence from our friends in that part of America.

On the other hand, there was no doubt of the army being well appointed, and of its number being upwards of 5000 men, exclusive of general Sumpter's detachment, and of a corps of Virginia militia of 12 or 1500 men, either actually joined or expected to join the main body every hour; and my own corps, which never was numerous, was now reduced, by sickness and the casualties, to about 1400 fighting men of regulars and provincials, with 4 or 500 militia and North-Carolina refugees.

However, the greatest part of the troops that had been perfectly good, and having left Charles-town sufficiently garrisoned and provided for a siege, and seeing little to lose by a defeat, and much to gain by a victory, I resolved to take the first good opportunity to attack the rebel army.

Accordingly, I took great pains to procure good information of their movements and positions; and I learned that they had encamped, marching from Hanging Rock, at colonel Rugeley's, about 12 miles from hence, on the morning of the 14th.

After consulting some intelligent people, well acquainted with the ground, I determined to march at ten o'clock in the night of the 15th, to attack at day-break, pointing my principal force against their continentals, who from intelligence I knew to be badly posted close to colonel Rugeley's house. Late in the evening I received information that the Virginians joined that day: however, that having been

expected, I did not alter my plan, but marched at the hour appointed, leaving the defence of Camden to some provincials, militia, and convalescents, and a detachment of the 63d regiment, which, by being mounted on horses which they had pressed on the road, it was hoped would arrive in the course of the night.

I had proceeded nine miles, when about half an hour after two in the morning, my advanced guard fell in with the enemy. By the weight of the fire I was convinced they were in considerable force, and was soon assured by some deserters and prisoners, that it was the whole rebel army on its march to attack us at Camden. I immediately halted and formed, and the enemy doing the same, the firing soon ceased. Confiding in the disciplined courage of his majesty's troops, and well apprized by several intelligent inhabitants, that the ground on which both armies stood, being narrowed by swamps on the right and left, was extremely favourable for my numbers, I did not chuse to hazard the great stake for which I was going to fight, to the uncertainty and confusion to which an action in the dark is so particularly liable. But having taken measures that the enemy should not have it in their power to avoid an engagement on that ground, I resolved to defer the attack till day. At the dawn I made my last disposition, and formed the troops in the following order: The division of the right consisting of a small corps of light infantry, the 23d and 33d regiments, under the command of lieutenant-colonel Webster; the division on the left, consisting of the volunteers of Ireland, infantry of the legion, and part of lieutenant-colonel Hamilton's North-Carolina regiment, under the command of lord Rawdon, with two 6 and 3 pounders, which were commanded by lieutenant McCleod. The 71st regiment, with two 6 pounders, was formed as a reserve, one battalion in the rear of the division of the right, the other of that of the left, and the cavalry of the legion in the rear, and the country being woody, close to the 71st regiment, with orders to seize any opportunity that might offer to break the enemy's line, and to be ready to protect our own, in case any corps should meet with a check.

The disposition was just made when I perceived that the enemy, having likewise persisted in their resolution to fight, were formed in two lines opposite and near to us; and observing a movement on their left, which I supposed to be with an intention to make some alteration in their order, I directed lieutenant-colonel Webster to begin the attack, which was done with great vigour, and in a few minutes the action was general along the whole front. It was at this time a dead calm, with a little haziness in the air, which, preventing the smoke from rising, occasioned so thick a darkness, that it was difficult to see the effect of a very heavy and well supported fire on both sides. Our line continued to advance in good order, and with the cool intrepidity of experienced British soldiers, keeping up a constant fire, or making use of bayonets, as opportunities offered; and, after an obstinate resistance during three quarters of an hour, threw the enemy into total confusion, and forced them to give way in all quarters. At this instant I ordered the cavalry to compleat the route, which was performed with their usual promptitude and gallantry: and after doing great execution on the field of battle, they continued the pursuit to Hanging Rock, 22 miles from the place where the action happened, during which many of the enemy were slain, a number of prisoners, near 150 waggons, (in one of which was a brass cannon, the carriage of which had been damaged in the skirmish of the night) a considerable quantity of military stores, and all the baggage and camp equipage of the rebel army fell into our hands.

The loss of the enemy was very considerable; a number of colours, and seven pieces of brass cannon, (being all their artillery that were in the action) with all their ammunition waggons, were taken; between eight and nine hundred were killed; among that number brigadier-general Gregory, and about one thousand prisoners, many of whom wounded; of which number were major-general baron de Kalb, since dead, and brigadier-general Rutherford.

I have the honour to inclose a return of killed and wounded on our side. The loss of so many brave men is much to be lamented; but the number is moderate in proportion to so great an advantage.

The behaviour of his majesty's troops in general was beyond all praise; it did honour to themselves and their country. I was particularly indebted to colonel lord Rawdon and lieutenant-colonel Webster, for the distinguished courage and abilities with which they conducted their respective divisions and the capacity and vigour of lieutenant-colonel Tarleton at the head of the cavalry, deserve my highest commendation; lieutenant McCleod exerted himself greatly in the conduct of our artillery. My aid de camp, captain Ross, and lieutenant Haldane of the engineers, who acted in that capacity, rendered me most essential service; and the public officers major of brigade England, who acted as adjutant-general, and the majors of brigade Manly and Doyle shewed the most active and zealous attention to their duty; governor Martin became again a military man, and behaved with the spirit of a young volunteer.

The fatigue of the troops rendered them incapable of further exertion on the day of the action; but as I saw the importance of destroying or dispersing, if possible, the corps under general Sumpter, as it might prove a foundation for assembling the routed army, on the morning of the 17th I detached lieutenant-colonel Tarleton, with the legion cavalry and infantry, and the corps of light infantry, making in all about 350 men, with orders to attack him wherever he could find him; and I sent orders to lieutenant-colonel Turnbull and major Ferguson, at that time on Little river, to put their corps in motion immediately, and on their side to pursue and endeavour to attack general Sumpter, lieutenant-colonel Tarleton executed this service with his usual activity and military address. He procured good information of Sumpter's movements, and, by forced and concealed marches, came up with and surprised him in the middle of the day on the 18th, near the Cataho fords: he totally destroyed or dispersed his detachment, consisting then of 700 men, killing 150 on the spot, and taking two pieces of brass cannon and 300 prisoners, and 44 waggons. He likewise retook 100 of our men, who had fallen into their hands partly at the action at Hanging-rock, and partly in scattering some waggons from Congarees to Camden; and he released 150 of our militiamen, or friendly country people, who had been seized by the rebels. Captain Campbell, who commanded the light infantry, a very promising officer, was unfortunately killed in this affair. Our loss otherwise was trifling. This action was too brilliant to need any comment of mine, and will, I have no doubts, highly recommend lieutenant-colonel Tarleton to his majesty's favour. The rebel forces being at present dispersed, the internal commotions and insurrections in the province will now subside. But I shall give direction to inflict exemplary punishment on some of the most guilty, in hopes to deter others, in future, from sporting with allegiance and oaths, and with the lenity and generosity of the British government.

On the morning of the 17th I dispatched proper people to North-Carolina, with directions to our friends there to take arms and assemble immediately, and to seize the most violent people, and all military stores and magazines belonging to the rebels, and to intercept all stragglers from the routed army; and I have promised to march without loss of time to their support: some necessary supplies for the army are now on their way from Charles-town, and I hope that their arrival will enable me to march in a few days.

My aid de camp, captain Ross, will have the honour of delivering this dispatch to your lordship, and will be able to give you the fullest account of the state of the army and country. He is a very deserving officer, and I take the liberty of recommending him to your lordship's favour and patronage.

I have the honour to be, &c.

CORNWALLIS.

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