

and killed between two and three hundred of them—unarmed and in the act of asking quarter. Lord Cornwallis now determined to retire from Hillsborough, partly because he could no longer subsist his troops in the neighborhood, and partly from the great discouragement given to the loyalists by the massacre of Pyle's command; it was deemed expedient to take up a position between the Haw and Deep Rivers to cover the country about Cross Creek which was said to contain a large number of reputed loyalists.

The American army having crossed the Haw near its source, took post between Troublesome Creek and Reedy Fork, both tributaries of the Haw (which is itself the chief tributary of the Cape Fear River), thus interposing between the British and the Dan and rendering a retreat by their former line of advance impossible, as well as covering their own line of communication with Virginia. Want of reliable information prevented Lord Cornwallis from compelling General Greene to fight in an unfavorable position, or by moving again on Hillsborough cut off his communications and by driving him towards the northwest compel him to disband his forces—so dangerous was his position that he changed it every night lest he should be attacked.

On the 6th of March the British army passed Allemanee Creek and marched on Reedy Fork; the Americans received early intelligence and hastily crossed the creek and endeavored to make a stand at Wetzell's Mill, but were routed with considerable slaughter; General Greene hastily retreated. No attempt was made on the part of the British to improve this advantage, a movement on High Rock Ford on the Haw would have obliged General Greene to fight without his reinforcements, or enabled the British General to cut off or disperse those in detail besides seizing the stores and ammunition on the way to the American army, but evil or designing advisers were counselling him to move to Deep River for the purpose of covering the King's friends, whereas if the pursuit of the American army had been continued for forty-eight hours all their stores could have been captured and their troops destroyed in detail. Instead of this a retrograde movement to the Deep River allowed General Greene to receive reinforcements which raised his army to 7000 men and enable him to take up a position at Reedy Fork pushing forwards his light troops to attack the British rear as it crossed a branch of Deep River. On the 12th the Royal army encamped at the Quakers Meeting House.

It now became a matter of importance to General Greene to bring the British army to action, and he therefore moved his whole force to Guildford Court House, within 12 miles of the British position—prudence and sound policy combined to urge the American commander to this course of action—he knew the weakness of the British force—that they had no chance of succor, and a defeat

would be their utter destruction, while on his part his troops were amongst friends a defeat would be no advantage to his opponents whose loss in action would materially weaken their force and seriously impede future operations if not compel them to evacuate both North and South Carolina, action was therefore advisable under every circumstance.

Lord Cornwallis finding by Gen. Greene's movements that an action was inevitable, on the evening of the 14th March sent forward his baggage to Bell's Mill on Deep River, and at dawn on the 15th put his army in motion towards Guildford Court House, about four miles from that point the advanced guards of both armies met, when a sharp skirmish ensued which ended in the retreat of the Americans; meanwhile General Greene drew up his troops in a very advantageous position in three lines. The first line were drawn up in rear of a clearing about 300 yards in length, both flanks being covered by woods, two six-pounders were stationed to the right of the centre on and commanding the main road to the Court House, a heavy rail fence ran across the clearing behind which the front line was drawn up. The second line was about 400 yards in the rear of the first, it was drawn up in the woods parallel to the latter. The road to Reedy Fork joins the high road from Salisbury to Guildford Court House, a short distance below the Court House and in advance of it and nearly parallel to the road the third line of American regular troops were drawn up behind a clearing in such a manner that the flanks were drawn back from the centre so that the two brigades of which it was composed should each have a separate front; two six-pounders were placed on a small eminence commanding the road; this line was near 600 yards in the rear of the second line. The cavalry with some light infantry and riflemen covered both flanks. As soon as the British column appeared in sight of the American first line a cannonade was begun from the two six-pounders posted on the road in their centre, and was immediately answered by the British artillery under cover of which the dispositions for attack was made—by throwing the British regiments forward with a single file supported by light infantry, and the cavalry in column being unable to deploy owing to the heavy timber in which they were drawn up—an immediate advance was ordered and the open ground in front crossed under a galling fire of artillery, while the militia reserved their fire till the Royal troops were within 150 yards, but nothing could check the advance, the Americans withdrew their artillery and the militia repeated their fire, still the *thunder* moved on; at last a volley from the whole line and a rapid bayonet charge which the Americans did not wait to receive but fell back behind their second line—this being drawn up in broken and wooded ground impeded the advance of the British, but at length their line was also broken and driven

back on the third line—during this operation the retreating militia had diverged to the right and left causing the British flanks to open from the centre, but the reserve was moved into line—by this time the British left had reached and attacked the right of the third line, but after a severe struggle being outflanked were forced back across a ravine where they were enabled to hold their ground; the centre having reached the open ground in front of the Court House attacked the left of the third line and seized the two six pounders commanding the road, but were driven back and forced over the clearing by a body of American regular troops who retook the guns, and, then, as if astounded at their own success, fell back to their original position. A portion of the British reserve coming up at this juncture, and the artillery opening on the Americans, while the cavalry began to emerge from the woods, and the left flank being turned the regular troops retreated leaving in the hands of the British four pieces of artillery (six-pounders) and 1400 stand of arms. The militia of the first and second lines continued a desultory fight with the right wing of the British troops long after the left and centre of the American army was broken and driven off the field, they were finally dispersed by a rapid charge of Tarleton's dragoons.

The British loss in this action amounted to 93 killed, 413 wounded and 26 missing. The loss of the Americans was officially stated at 80 killed, 377 wounded and 1046 missing, but no returns are given of the North Carolina brigades which formed the first line and fought in the second, and as nearly 300 dead were counted on the field of action their loss must have reached one thousand men.

The beaten army retreated to the Iron Works on Troublesome Creek some 15 miles from the field of battle. The British although conquerors were in a miserable plight, without provisions, tents, or any shelter or comfort. It is a matter of considerable astonishment to the military student to imagine what possible object the British General could have in prosecuting such a hare-brained expedition—on the day of the action his troops were marched 12 miles without anything to eat, they fought all day, and on the 16th had one quarter of a pound of flour and the same amount of lean beef per man—such soldiers could not be beaten, but it is a pity that their energies were not employed on a more effective field of action.

This victory had so completely crippled the British force that any forward movement was out of the question, and it became of the utmost importance to retreat to a position where supplies could be obtained; accordingly about 70 of the worst cases of wounded men were left under a flag of truce at the Quakers Meeting House, and on the 18th March the British troops retreated towards Cross Creek.

During the action the Americans lost a favorable opportunity for achieving a com-