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CHAPTER XLIII.

It having become abundantly evident that the British army should seek rest and assistance as speedily as possible, Lord Cornwallis endeavored to find both by opening a communication with Wilmington, a post at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, which was taken possession of by Major Craig of the 82nd, and it was anticipated by his Lordship that a communication with Cross Creek, which is a tributary of that river about 100 miles above its mouth, could be made by water, he had therefore issued his instructions to Major Craig to form a depot of such stores as were necessary at the former place, on which he directed his troops cautiously followed by General Greene with detachments from the American army as far as Ramsay's Mill on Deep River.

On the very day that this retrograde movement was made one of those silly proclamations (for which this contest was notorious) was issued by the British General, setting forth the great victory achieved and calling on all loyal subjects to stand forth and assist in the maintenance of order and promising pardon and protection in person and property to all those desirous of returning to their allegiance if such desire was manifested by a surrender of themselves, arms and ammunition, on or before the 20th April, with permission to return to their homes on parole with the prospect of a speedy restoration to constitutional privileges; and this from a General whose troops had indeed achieved a notable victory, but whose resources did not amount to a day's provisions, or whose power was unequal to the task of protecting its own wounded, and who were then retreating before the foe whom they had driven in headlong flight from the field of battle three days before.

Upon the arrival of the British army at Cross Creek it was ascertained that the pro-

jected communication between that point and Wilmington was impossible owing to the banks being of great height, the river narrow, and the population on both sides inveterately hostile; Cross Creek however was a loyal settlement and therefore all the provisions and other supplies that could be collected within a convenient distance were freely brought into camp, but as that was at best limited, the army was compelled to march to Wilmington, where it arrived on the 7th April.

The Earl of Cornwallis sent despatches addressed to Lord Rawdon (who had been left in command in South Carolina) of the retrograde movement he was compelled to make, and of the certainty that General Greene would march directly on Camden and try to reduce all the British posts in South Carolina; but the messengers were intercepted and none of the despatches reached their destination.

Immediately on his arrival at Wilmington information reached him that left no doubt of the fact of the American army's advance on Camden, this placed the British General in an awkward dilemma, it was evident that he could not reach Lord Rawdon before the fate of South Carolina was determined; his force was reduced to 1435 effective men, and a return by sea was out of the question as it could only be done by sacrificing all the cavalry and horses of the army. A movement into South Carolina would have brought the British army on the direct line of General Greene's communications, and with such a dashing partisan as Tarleton it was quite possible to arrange a series of simultaneous operations with Lord Rawdon which would have caused the destruction or dispersion of the American army; this was strongly urged by Tarleton who offered to lead the cavalry back to Charlestown, overland if necessary. Unfortunately this judicious advice was not adopted, but a plan proposed of marching through North Carolina into Virginia in order to form a junction with an expedition which Sir Henry Clinton (with that fondness for desultory operations which characterised the school to which he belonged) had dispatched under General Philips and Brigadier General

Arnold (who had obtained the rank as the reward of his treason) in the early part of the year.

It was sagely surmised by Lord Cornwallis and his advisers that a movement in this direction would induce General Greene to hasten back to the defence of Virginia, forgetting that every march in that direction was bringing the British troops nearer the centre of the great power of Congress and within striking distance of the most numerous and best appointed troops in its service and under the operations of its most able generals; while General Greene, whose forces was steadily accumulating as he advanced, had only a small force broken up into numerous and widely separated detachments incapable of supporting each other to deal with.

The advance into North Carolina, was a blunder in its inception—it had been badly managed and the ruin of the army which attempted its conquest began at Guildford Court House was consummated by the resolutions taken at Wilmington.

Lord Rawdon appears to have had early advice of the failure in North Carolina and General Greene's advance, for which he took precautionary measures with energy and promptitude. Marion had been joined by Colonel Lee and had crossed the Pedee River separating the force under Colonel Watson from Lord Rawdon. When on the 9th April General Greene arrived before Camden, with 1500 regular soldiers of the United States army and some corps of militia, the garrison numbered 900 men including regulars and loyal militia; unable or unwilling to risk an attack on the British lines, after several changes of position the American army at length encamped on Hobkirk's Hill awaiting the junction of Marion and Lee. As a part of the American General's militia force was detached to bring up the heavy artillery, Lord Rawdon determined to attack the position, and accordingly on the 25th April he marched out his whole available force and by filing along the edge of a swamp managed to turn the left flank of the American army. This manoeuvre brought on an action in which Gen. Greene showed his capacity as a general, by such a