

The royalists were when embodied to march down the northern branch of the Cape Fear River to Wilmington and there form a junction with the King's troops and fleet; the occupation of this town would have in a great measure placed all the resources of the Province in their hands and completely overawed their opponents. Owing to the unskillful manipulation of this affair and the energetic action of the usurping executive it was found necessary to precipitate the organization which was to take place at the town of Cross Creek. With the usual blundering of the royalist leaders the whole of this affair was conducted with so little precaution that every movement became known to the usurping executive, and the troops raised at Wilmington, amounting to 800 men, were ordered to intercept their progress. In order to effect this object they marched up the Northwest branch of the Cape Fear River to Rock Fish Creek, which was crossed by a bridge near its junction, about six miles from Cross Creek, and encamped with the Northwest branch of Cape Fear River on their right, an impassable swamp on their left, and Rock Fish Creek with its impassable stream and steep banks in their rear.

In this disadvantageous position they remained for three days, during which time flags of truce were continually passing between them and the royalists at Cross Creek on the most trivial occasions, and it shows not only the total want of military skill but the thorough ignorance of the first principles of the art of war on the part of Brigadier-General Macdonald and Colonel McLeod that they were not cut to pieces the moment they arrived at this ground. But those officers seem to have thought that their whole duty was to get to Wilmington regardless of any force in their rear, provided there was none in front to oppose their progress, and with this view after wasting time in fruitless intercourse with their opponents they crossed to the left bank of the Northwest branch of the Cape Fear River at Cambleton and Gibson's ferries, leaving Colonel Moore's troops in their position on the right bank, thus placing the river between them.

Their intention was to proceed to Wilmington by what was then known as the Black River Road, through a peninsula formed by the river of that name, and the Northwest branch, at that period thinly inhabited, and which ended at the junction of the Northeast and Northwest branches of Cape Fear River, at a place called Negro-head point, within half a mile of Wilmington.

Instead of being a question to be decided by arms it became one of speed, and if another element had not been added it is possible that Brigadier General Macdonald's troops would have outrun Colonel Moore's.

A Colonel Caswell had collected about 500 men at Newburn, and with one 2-pounder gun and two swivels marched to reinforce Colonel Moore. Having a trifle more brains

than either of the other commanders he at once decided that if the Royalists had not been defeated they would march by the Black River Road. He therefore crossed the Northeast branch and marched up the Black River road to a point where a bridge crossed a creek falling into the Northwest branch known as Moore's Creek. Having crossed this stream he effected a junction with Colonel Moore, who had marched back the road by which he had advanced and crossed the Northwest branch at the lower ferries. The position chosen was just as bad as that Colonel Moore occupied at Rock Fish, and as the Royalists advanced to within half a mile of the encampment before they halted and then sent forward a flag of truce to ascertain what the position really was. Colonel Caswell at once divined their object and took measures to render an attack futile. As soon as night came on he lighted up all his fires, withdrew his men over the creek, took the planks off the bridge and greased the sleepers, placing his men about fifty yards from the bank, covering the front of the position with intrenchments. The Royalists marched to attack the position before day, and finding the fires burning concluded their opponents had retreated through fear. Colonel MacLeod, who led the advance, crossed the bridge with some twenty of his Highlanders but was shot down with the whole of his party, eight being killed outright and the remainder wounded. The Royalists on the other side of the creek poured in an irregular fire and immediately dispersed. The "Regulators," being good woodsmen got clear off, but the Highlanders and their General were taken prisoners.

On the 12th February, 1776, an expedition under the command of Lord Cornwallis, consisting of the 15th, 28th, 33rd, 37th, 54th and 57th regiments and seven companies of the 46th regiment sailed from Cork under the convoy of Commodore Sir Peter Parker, and arrived at Cape Fear River on the 3rd of May. At this place they were joined by General Clinton who at once took command of the land forces, and finding he had arrived too late to aid the Royalist organization issued a proclamation inviting the people to return to their allegiance, but the effect is described as being "trifling," which might be applied to the whole expedition and its object, which was to try whether any of the inhabitants would join the British cause, in which case a body of troops was to be left to assist them and the remainder carried to New York to join General Howe in his invasion of the United States—thus illustrating the peculiar strategy employed by the British War Department in the Conquest of the revolted Colonies.

In order to enforce the system of protection afforded to the loyalists General Clinton organised an expedition against Brunswick, a town to the northwest of Cape Fear, where a few soldiers were captured and a large

quantity of provisions carried off, the people of the town having abandoned it at the approach of the troops. As much time had already been wasted in those raids, and as it became necessary to fulfil the Commander in Chief's wishes by repairing to New York, General Clinton wishing to have something more than stolen cattle to show as the fruits of his expedition, determined to occupy Charles town, the trade of which had supplied the opponents of British rule with the funds necessary for warlike purposes.

This town, since so famous in the annals of warfare for its memorable siege and as the chief port of the Southern Confederacy was at that time protected by a fort on Sullivan's Island, and by an army, or the excuse for one, under the United States General Lee.

The fort was built of palmetto logs and mounted 26 guns, (18 and 24 pounders) it was garrisoned by 400 men under Col. Moultrie whose name it afterwards bore.

The squadron anchored off Charleston on the 4th June, and as the larger vessels had to be lightened before crossing the bar, considerable delay ensued. On the 9th General Clinton landed on Long Island and by the 15th all the troops were disembarked. This Island is separated from Sullivan's Island by a narrow channel said to be fordable at low water, and the intention was to have attacked the fort in front with the squadron while the troops assailed it in the rear, on which there was no protection whatever.

The squadron was composed of the Bristol and Experiment, 50 gun ships. Active, Solebay, Syron, and Actaeon, 28 gun ships. Sphinx 20 Guns, Friendship 22 guns. Ranger 8 guns, Thunder (bomb) 8 guns and St. Lawrence, schooner, 6 guns.

On the 28th June the wind being favorable Sir Peter Parker announced his readiness to commence the attack, and at 10h. 45m a. m. the Bristol, Experiment, Actaeon and Solebay anchored in their stations. Owing to want of skill on the part of the pilots the Sphinx, Actaeon and Syron got foul of each other and drove on shore on the middle ground; the Sphinx and Syron got off with the flood but the Actaeon remained fast ashore. The Thunder commenced throwing shells but they fell short and Colonel James of the Artillery endeavoured to remedy the miscalculation of distance by increasing the charge. A few shells fell in the fort in a swamp producing no effect, while the increased recoil broke the mortar beds and the vessel was useless. The ships led by the Active took up their position in seven fathoms of water without molestation. She anchored off the east bastion, the Experiment off the West bastion and curtain, the Solebay off the West bastion and the Bristol off the curtain. A tremendous fire was opened on the ships which they returned without making any visible impression on the works while the vessels were fearfully cut up. At noon the commodore looked for the co-operation of the troops but Gen-