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VICTORY IN THE SOUTH: AN APPRAISAL OF GENERAL GREENE'S STRATEGY IN THE CAROLINAS

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The War for American Independence was a long and hazardous struggle. American victories were few in the years from the surrender of General John Burgoyne at Saratoga to that of Charles, Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown. British victories, on the other hand, posed a serious threat to the security of Georgia and the Carolinas. The British commenced to turn their attention to the South in 1778, and their offensive opened successfully with the capture of Savannah. A combined Franco-American force then attempted to recapture Savannah in the following year, but the garrison repelled the attackers with heavy loss to the latter. The tide of victory continued to run in favor of British arms in 1780 when General Sir Henry Clinton, closely supported by the Royal Navy, besieged and captured Charleston. Flying columns of dragoons and light infantry then overran the interior of South Carolina and approached the borders of North Carolina. It seemed, by the summer of 1780, that everything south of Virginia would soon be conquered by the victorious redcoats. The British advance was checked momentarily by the summer sickly season, however, and the North Carolina militia began to turn out in considerable numbers to defend their State from invasion.

General George Washington, alarmed by the British victories, decided to send a detachment of Continental troops

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from his army in New Jersey to reinforce the defenders of the Carolinas. General Johann Kalb (the self-styled Baron de Kalb), who commanded the detachment, led his troops to North Carolina and halted there when he learned that Charleston had fallen. The command of America's Southern Department devolved upon him when General Benjamin Lincoln became a prisoner of war at the surrender of Charleston. Kalb was a foreigner with no influential friends in Philadelphia, however, and Congress decided to appoint a general to supersede him. Washington's choice for the command was General Nathanael Greene, but Congress passed over Greene in favor of General Horatio Gates, the victor of Saratoga.

Gates accepted the command of the Southern Department and hurried from his plantation in Virginia to put himself at the head of his army. He took charge of his troops in July, 1780, and lost no time in leading them toward Camden, South Carolina, where a British army was encamped. Unfortunately, he led his men through a thinly-inhabited and infertile part of the Carolinas during the heat and humidity of July and August. Many of his soldiers became sick, and the army was in a sorry state by the time it had reached its objective. Nevertheless, Gates led it into action, and the laurels which he had won at Saratoga were soon tarnished by a crushing defeat at Camden.

The American army was made up partly of regulars and partly of Virginia and North Carolina militia. Many of the militia were ill-trained and poorly armed and equipped, and it was risky to send them into battle against British regulars. Gates accepted the risk, however, and sent Continentals and militia alike into action against the British on August 16, 1780.¹ The results of Gates' tactics were catastrophic. Most of his militia broke and fled when a line of redcoats advanced upon them with fixed bayonets. Gates was swept from the field by the rush of fugitives, and Kalb and his Continentals were left alone to fight against Cornwallis' entire army. Kalb

¹John R. Alden (ed.), *The War of the Revolution*. By Christopher Ward (New York: The Macmillan Company, 2 volumes, 1952), II, 724-732, hereinafter cited as Alden, *War of the Revolution*.

and his men fought bravely, but they were finally overpowered. Some of the Continentals escaped, but many were captured and many others, including General Kalb, were killed. All told, the American army lost about 1,000 regulars and militia killed, wounded, or captured. The victorious British lost but 324 officers and men.

Camden brought an end to Gates' hope of driving the British from the interior of South Carolina. The survivors from his beaten army fled to Hillsboro, leaving South Carolina at the mercy of the British. Fortunately for Gates and his soldiers, the British army remained at Camden for several weeks instead of commencing an immediate invasion of North Carolina. The British marched northward in September, however, while Gates' army was still too shattered to offer any effective resistance. Some North Carolina militia took the field against the advancing redcoats, but it seemed unlikely that they could turn back the veterans who had captured Charleston and triumphed at Camden.

The North Carolina militia proved themselves to be made of tough fiber. They delayed the advance of the main British army by a determined stand at Charlotte, and they wiped out a column of Tories led by Major Patrick Ferguson of the British army. A combination of frontiersmen from western Virginia and North Carolina, together with the "over-mountain men" from settlements in what is now Tennessee, trapped and defeated Ferguson's men on the crest of Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780.² Ferguson himself was killed and his followers were killed or captured in the action.

The victors of Kings Mountain returned to their homes after the battle. However, their victory had important results. It discouraged the Tories and deprived them of the services of a large number of fighting men. It encouraged the Whigs, and, most important of all, it induced Cornwallis to retreat from North Carolina, thereby giving Gates' army a respite in which to regroup.

Meanwhile, Congress took steps to replace Gates. General Washington was empowered to choose a new commanding

² Alden, *War of the Revolution*, 741-745; J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton (ed.), "King's Mountain: Letters of Colonel Isaac Shelby," *Journal of Southern History*, IV (August, 1938), 367-377.

general for the Southern Department and he lost no time in selecting General Greene. The selection proved to be a fortunate one; Greene distinguished himself as an able leader and a brilliant strategist in his campaigns in the South.³

Greene accepted his new command with some misgivings. The army which he was to lead had been terribly shattered at Camden. Moreover, the South had been a graveyard for the reputations of Greene's predecessors. General Robert Howe had been defeated at Savannah. General Lincoln had had to surrender at Charleston. Gates had suffered defeat at Camden, and Kalb had been killed in action. In the circumstances, it is understandable that Greene entered upon his new duties with some reluctance.

Nathanael Greene was thirty-eight years of age at the time of his appointment to the Southern Department. He was blond, blue-eyed, stocky, and broad-shouldered. He had a stiff knee and walked with a limp, but he was in good health in all other respects. He had been born and brought up in Rhode Island, and had been a member of the Society of Friends there. He had served in the Rhode Island militia before becoming an officer in the Continental army, and he had been expelled from his Quaker Meeting because of his willingness to bear arms. He had served as a brigadier general during the siege of Boston and had then been promoted to major general in August, 1776. He had gained the friendship and respect of General Washington and had been entrusted with important commands in the battles of Trenton, Brandywine, and Germantown. Later he was quartermaster general of the army from March, 1778, until August, 1780. He was appointed commandant of West Point shortly after the defection of Benedict Arnold. He was busily engaged in

³ Alden, *War of the Revolution*, II, 842-844; John R. Alden, *The South in the Revolution, 1763-1789* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, Volume III of *A History of the South*, edited by Wendell H. Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, 1957), 267; John W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (London: The Macmillan Company, 13 volumes in 14 books, 1899-1930), III, 404, hereinafter cited as Fortescue, *History of British Army*; Francis V. Greene, *General Greene* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1893), 317-320; Theodore Thayer, *Nathanael Greene: Strategist of the American Revolution* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960), 330-331, 334-337, 365.

strengthening the defenses of West Point when he received Washington's request to take command of the army in the Carolinas.

Greene knew from reports from the Carolinas that his army lacked adequate supplies of arms, clothing, tents, blankets, and camp equipage. Therefore, he entered upon his new duties by journeying to Philadelphia to request aid from Congress in forwarding supplies to his troops. He visited, also, the capitals of Maryland and Virginia to request supplies and reinforcements for his army. He received promises of help, but the poverty of Congress and the southern States made it impossible for them to forward as many men and as much equipment as he had requested.

Gates relinquished command of the army to Greene when the latter reached camp at Charlotte on December 2, 1780. Greene then reviewed the army and found that it consisted of but 2,036 officers and men fit for duty.⁴ Only about 800 of the troops were Continentals; the remainder were Virginia and North Carolina militia. They were so poorly clothed and equipped that Greene exclaimed in a letter to Congress, "The regular force that is here is so naked and destitute of every thing that but little more than half of them are fit for any kind of duty. . . ." ⁵ He added that, "The troops from Virginia may literally be said to be naked." The troops were not quite naked, but they were in rags and tatters. Some of the soldiers were so poorly clothed that Greene was obliged, as he informed Governor Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, "to send a considerable number of them away into some secure place and warm quarters, until they can be furnished with clothing." ⁶

Greene worked tirelessly throughout December to restore order and discipline in his army. He bombarded Governor

⁴ "Return of the Southern Army of the United States . . .," December 8, 1780, U. S. Continental Army, Adjutant General's Returns, manuscript, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

⁵ Greene to President of Congress (Samuel Huntington), December 7, 1780, Letters of General Greene, I, 471-479, Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 155 (Washington, D. C.: National Archives), hereinafter cited as Letters of General Greene.

⁶ Green to Jefferson, December 6, 1780, Julian Boyd (ed.), *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 15 volumes [to date], 1950 —), IV, 183, hereinafter cited as Boyd, *Jefferson Papers*.

Jefferson with requests for recruits, arms, clothing, tents, and blankets. While waiting for supplies and reinforcements, he decided to move his army from Charlotte, where the countryside had been exhausted by foraging, to the Cheraw district of South Carolina in the valley of the Pee Dee River. There was reason to believe that the army would be better fed at Cheraw than at Charlotte because the Pee Dee Valley was fertile and had not been picked clean by foraging parties.

The move from Charlotte to Cheraw smacked of a retreat. It left the western districts of the Carolinas at the mercy of British and Tory forces operating from Cornwallis' camp at Winnsboro and the fort at Ninety-Six. Greene was determined, however, to give some protection to the Whigs in the western districts. He hit upon a daring plan to meet the situation. Disregarding the classic rules of warfare, he divided his army into two parts. The main army encamped at Cheraw, while a detachment of some 600 officers and men, commanded by Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, marched westward across the Catawba River into the district bounded by the Broad and Pacolet rivers.⁷

Greene's strategy seemed to be a desperate gamble. It exposed the army and Morgan's detachment to the possibility of being beaten in detail. However, there was method to Greene's madness. His army was so lightly-equipped that it was very much like a flying column of light infantry and dragoons. Moreover, the detachment which Greene sent westward was commanded by an able soldier and experienced frontiersman who was well-qualified to lead troops through the mountainous and heavily-forested terrain of the western Carolinas. Morgan was hardly the man to be taken by surprise by the British, and both Morgan and Greene hoped to be able to make a very rapid retreat if they were pursued by Cornwallis.

Moreover, Greene, who was a careful, cautious man, had

⁷ Alden, *War of the Revolution*, II, 750-752; Greene to Morgan, December 16, 1780, William Johnson, *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene* (Charleston, S. C.: A. E. Miller [for author], 2 volumes, 1822), I, 346-347, hereinafter cited as Johnson, *Sketches of Nathanael Greene*; Greene to President of Congress, December 28, 1780, *Letters of General Greene*, I, 497-504.

made preparations for a rapid retreat if it became necessary. He knew that the principal rivers of North Carolina — the Catawba, Yadkin, and Dan — could be fatal obstacles to a retreating army. He knew, also, that the rivers, when swollen by recent rains, could be major obstacles to the advance of the British army. In the light of his knowledge of the rivers, he sent officers to examine the fords and to collect boats, barges, and ferries.⁸ Thus, if it became necessary to retreat, the American forces would have the means to cross the rivers quickly and would then be in position to force the British to march upstream to the nearest ford before continuing their advance.

Morgan's detachment crossed the Catawba in mid-December and marched to the banks of the Pacolet River. Lieutenant Colonel William Washington's dragoons were sent beyond the Pacolet to protect the people of western South Carolina from a band of Tories who were ravaging the frontier districts. Washington's troops defeated the Tories, inflicting heavy losses upon them, and drove the survivors back toward Ninety-Six. Thus Morgan's operations got off to a good start, but their success quickly called Cornwallis' attention to the presence of an American detachment on his left, or western, flank.

Cornwallis saw what he thought was a golden opportunity when he realized that Morgan's men were separated by 140 miles of rural roads — mere tracks and ruts through the wilderness — from Greene's camp at Cheraw.⁹ The British army could cut Morgan off from any possibility of support from Greene by marching up the west bank of the Wateree and Catawba rivers. At the same time, a flying column of dragoons and light infantry could be sent to attack Morgan's camp on the Pacolet. If all went well, one-third of Greene's army could be destroyed at one stroke! Such a victory would be fitting revenge for King's Mountain. It was a glittering opportunity, and Cornwallis grasped for it eagerly.

⁸ Alden, *War of the Revolution*, II, 751-752.

⁹ For a description of the "roads" of North Carolina, see Charles Christopher Crittenden, "Overland Travel and Transportation in North Carolina, 1763-1789," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, VIII (July, 1931), 239-257.

Cornwallis ordered his swashbuckling, brutal young cavalry commander, Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, to lead a flying column to attack Morgan's detachment. Tarleton advanced rapidly, and Morgan began to retreat before him. He had retreated only a short distance before deciding to stand and fight. He had about 1,000 officers and men, only about one-third of whom were regulars, as opposed to about 1,100 regulars under Tarleton's command. He posted his men on a thinly-wooded hill at Cowpens and waited for Tarleton's arrival.

Tarleton was young and impetuous.¹⁰ He had been rendered overconfident after winning a series of one-sided victories. In the circumstances, Morgan had every reason to expect him to make a head-on attack upon the American camp. Morgan made an ingenious disposition of his troops to meet the expected attack. He placed a thin line of riflemen behind trees and stumps to pick off as many British officers and sergeants as they could. The riflemen were to fall back upon a line of North and South Carolina militia when they were hard-pressed. The militia were then to fire two rounds apiece at close range at the oncoming British. The militia, in their turn, were to fall back behind the strongest part of Morgan's detachment, the Maryland and Delaware Continentals commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Eager Howard. Colonel Washington's cavalry was stationed in reserve behind Howard's line, ready to dash forward to protect the retreating militia or the flanks of the main American battle line when their help was needed.

The story of the Battle of Cowpens has been told before.¹¹ It should suffice to say here that Tarleton proved to be as impetuous as usual when he reached Cowpens on the morn-

¹⁰ For an account of Tarleton's military career, read Robert D. Bass, *The Green Dragoon: The Lives of Banastre Tarleton and Mary Robinson* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1957), hereinafter cited as Bass, *The Green Dragoon*.

¹¹ Bass, *The Green Dragoon*, 153-159; Alden, *War of the Revolution*, II, 755-762; Lynn Montross, "America's Most Imitated Battle," *American Heritage*, VII (April, 1956), 35-37, 100-101; Hugh F. Rankin, "Cowpens: Prelude to Yorktown," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, XXXI (July, 1954), 336-369. Tarleton's account of the battle is to be found in his *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London: T. Cadell, 1787), 215-218, hereinafter cited as Tarleton, *History of Campaigns*.

ing of January 17, 1781. He was so eager to attack Morgan's little army that he allowed his men no breakfast, deployed them at once, and rushed forward to overwhelm the riflemen and militia in his front. The riflemen exacted a heavy toll of casualties before falling back on the militia. The militia fired their two shots per man at close range and then retreated quickly. Colonel Howard's Continentals then made a magnificent stand. Washington's cavalry, and the militia who had fallen back after meeting the initial charge of Tarleton's men, came to their aid, and Tarleton's infantry were thrown into complete disorder and, finally, were routed by a bayonet attack. Tarleton and some of his dragoons made their escape, but the infantry were surrounded and shot down or forced to surrender. All told, about 900 of Tarleton's command were killed, wounded, or captured. Two field-pieces, two flags, 800 muskets, and large quantities of ammunition and equipment were taken by the victorious Americans.

The victory at Cowpens helped to turn the tide of war in the South. It deprived Cornwallis of most of his light infantry and weakened his army quite seriously.¹² It encouraged the Whigs of the Carolinas and further discouraged the Tories (some of whom were just beginning to regain their courage after Kings Mountain). Morgan was unable, however, to remain upon the scene of his victory. He was obliged to abandon his captured fieldpieces and to retreat rapidly to avoid being cut off by the main British army. He retreated across the Broad and Catawba rivers, marching northeast toward an eventual junction with the American army. Cornwallis fell behind by a march or two and failed to intercept Morgan before he could cross the Catawba. However, his lordship was determined to press on, and, to facilitate a rapid advance, he turned his entire army into a flying column by burning all excess baggage and knocking in the casks which contained the rum supply for his troops.¹³

Cornwallis' army made a mad dash through the interior of

¹² Fortescue, *History of British Army*, III, 364-365; Alden, *War of the Revolution*, II, 762, 765.

¹³ Charles Stedman, *The History of the Origin, Progress, and Termination of the American War* (London: J. Murray [for author], 2 volumes, 1794), II, 326, hereinafter cited as Stedman, *History of American War*.

North Carolina in the cold and rainy weather of January and February, 1781, in order to avenge the disaster at Cowpens. The redcoats forced their way across the Catawba in the face of spirited resistance by North Carolina militia commanded by General William Lee Davidson.¹⁴ The militia were dispersed, Davidson was killed in action, and the redcoats plunged on along muddy forest trails in pursuit of the retreating Americans. The British sometimes advanced thirty miles a day, despite the hardships of their march, but they failed to overtake the lightly-equipped and fast-moving Americans. Morgan's column and Greene's army succeeded in making a junction near Guilford Court House. Morgan's column had been hard-pressed during its retreat, but it had crossed the formidable barrier of the Yadkin River safely, partly because of Davidson's stand at the Catawba, and partly because of Greene's foresight in rounding up the boats and barges on the several rivers before retreat had become necessary.

Greene hoped to make a stand somewhere in North Carolina, but only a few militia had joined his army during its rapid retreat and he decided that it would be foolhardy to fight anywhere south of the Dan. Consequently, he and his weary soldiers resumed their retreat and came to a halt only after putting the Dan between themselves and the enemy. Once again, Greene's foresight facilitated the escape of the retreating army. Boats and barges had been collected to ferry the army across the Dan, and the troops and their baggage succeeded in crossing before Cornwallis could overtake them.¹⁵

The forced marches which had taken Greene's and Cornwallis' armies to the Dan had been agonizing experiences for Americans and British alike. Both armies had lost many officers and men from sickness brought on by exposure to winter weather. Both armies had shed a number of deserters

¹⁴ Chalmers G. Davidson, *Piedmont Partisan, The Life and Times of Brigadier-General William Lee Davidson* (Davidson: Davidson College, 1951), 114-119.

¹⁵ Greene to Jefferson, February 15, 1781, Boyd, *Jefferson Papers*, IV, 615-616; Greene to Baron von Steuben, February 15, 1781, Steuben Papers (New York: New-York Historical Society), hereinafter cited as Steuben Papers; Stedman, *History of American War*, II, 332.

and stragglers. But Greene had reaped important advantages by his retreat. He had reached the borders of Virginia, a populous and friendly State in which reinforcements of militia and Continental recruits were being raised in his behalf. Cornwallis, on the other hand, had marched far from his bases in South Carolina. No reinforcements were available to him in North Carolina, and a hostile countryside lay ahead of him north of the Dan. His redcoats were exhausted from their breakneck advance, and he dared not lead them across the river. However, he could not remain for long in a position far from his bases in face of an American army which would be reinforced heavily from Virginia. In the circumstances, he had to turn back from the Dan, and he did so on February 19, leading his men back to Hillsboro by easy marches.¹⁶

Greene lost no time in recrossing the Dan when he learned of Cornwallis' retreat. He sent Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lee's Legion and a body of riflemen south of the Dan as early as February 19 to harass Cornwallis' foraging parties.¹⁷ Shortly thereafter, Greene himself crossed the river and commenced a cautious advance into North Carolina. His army was still numerically weak, and he was careful to avoid battle with the British. However, he sent his light infantry and Lee's Legion to observe and harass the enemy, and some hard fighting resulted from collisions of the American light troops with British and Tory detachments. Cornwallis remained, meanwhile, in the vicinity of Hillsboro, reluctant to continue his retreat and eager to fight a battle if Greene would but give him an opportunity to do so.

Cornwallis had to wait until mid-March before fighting his battle. Greene continued to avoid battle until then in order to give time for reinforcements from Virginia and North Carolina to reach his army. The army had doubled in strength, reaching a total of about 4,900 officers and men by March 13, and, on that day, Greene advanced to occupy a

¹⁶ Tarleton, *History of Campaigns*, 229; Stedman, *History of American War*, II, 332.

¹⁷ Henry Lee to Greene, February 20, 1781, Greene Papers, William L. Clements Library; Greene to President of Congress, February 28, 1781, Letters of General Greene, I, 585-591.

strong position at Guilford Court House.¹⁸ His troops encamped on a thickly-wooded slope, and he deployed them in a manner similar to that which Daniel Morgan had used at Cowpens. The first of three defensive lines was composed of North Carolina militia with some Continentals on their flanks. A line of Virginia militia was posted about three hundred yards farther uphill in a densely-wooded area. The third line, several hundred yards farther back, was made up of Continental infantry and was Greene's principal battle line. Greene hoped that the militia would take a heavy toll of the British regulars before they could reach his Continentals. Then, if all went well, the Continentals would rout the British in something like the manner in which they had been routed at Cowpens.

It was foolhardy of Lord Cornwallis to attack Greene's carefully chosen defensive position at Guilford. Cornwallis had only slightly more than two thousand officers and men available for an attack upon the army which outnumbered his own by two-to-one. After detaching a force to guard his baggage, he was able to lead slightly more than 1,900 officers and men to the attack.¹⁹ There was a possibility that his army would be shattered in its charge uphill against the multiple lines of American militia and regulars, and, if that had happened, the army could hardly have escaped from the interior of North Carolina to its base at Camden, 180 miles away, or to the British-held seaport of Wilmington, at the mouth of Cape Fear River, 190 miles away. Nevertheless, Cornwallis advanced toward Guilford and made a head-on attack upon the American army on March 15, 1781.²⁰

¹⁸ Only about 4,500 of Greene's troops saw action at Guilford; the remainder were detached to guard the army's baggage. See Otho Holland Williams, "Field Return of the Southern Army . . . 13th March, 1781," *Papers of George Washington*, 168, Library of Congress, hereinafter cited as *Papers of George Washington*.

¹⁹ *Field Return of the Troops Under the Command of Lieutenant-General Earl Cornwallis in the Action at Guilford, 15th March, 1781*, Sir Henry Clinton Papers, William L. Clements Library.

²⁰ Alden, *War of the Revolution*, II, 784-794. Contemporary accounts include Tarleton, *History of Campaigns*, 270-279; Henry Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States* (Philadelphia, Penna.: Bradford and Inskeep, 2 volumes, 1812), I, 339-358, hereinafter cited as Lee, *Memoirs of the War*; Cornwallis to Lord Germain, March 17, 1781, Benjamin Franklin Stevens (ed.), *The Campaign in Virginia, 1781* (London, 1888), I, 354-362, hereinafter cited as Stevens, *Campaign in Virginia*; Greene to President of Congress, March 16, 1781, contemporary copy in *Papers of George Washington*, 168.

Cornwallis attack might have been repelled if all three of Greene's lines had fought as hard as Morgan's men had done at Cowpens. However, most of the North Carolina militia in the first line broke and melted away into the woods after making only a token resistance. Thus, the British suffered only a few casualties in their assault on Greene's first line of defense. The Virginia militia, unlike the North Carolinians, resisted furiously. Cornwallis' soldiers found themselves involved in a prolonged and confused fight in the woods before they were able to drive the Virginians before them. The redcoats then attacked Greene's line of Continentals and found themselves engaged in a desperate battle which ended only after Greene decided to withdraw after his line had fallen into some confusion. Greene had some reserves available and could have played one last card by throwing them into action. He was reluctant, however, to risk total defeat in a gamble for total victory.²¹ Consequently, he ordered a retreat, and Cornwallis' weary soldiers found themselves in possession of the field after having lost 532 officers and men killed and wounded. Greene's losses in killed and wounded were only about half those suffered by the British, but a large number of the militia were "missing"—they had simply gone off to their homes after deciding that war was too dangerous a game for them!

The British victory at Guilford Court House was a Pyrrhic one. It completed the ruining of Cornwallis' army. The cumulative losses of Cowpens, the winter campaign in North Carolina, and the battle of Guilford left Cornwallis with only half as many men as he had had in his field army at the beginning of January, 1781.²² Many of the men who remained alive in the British army were sick or wounded, and a considerable number of these unfortunates died shortly after Guilford. In such distressing circumstances, Cornwallis could not long remain in the interior of North Carolina. His army was nearly

²¹ Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, I, 350-352.

²² "State of the Troops that Marched with the Army under the Command of Lieutenant-General Earl Cornwallis" [April 1, 1781], Stevens, *Campaign in Virginia*, I, 376, gives the strength of Cornwallis' army for January 15, February 1, March 1, and April 1, 1781. See also, Sir Henry Clinton to Cornwallis, April 30, 1781, Stevens, *Campaign in Virginia*, I, 441-445.

destitute of provisions, and his foraging parties could not venture from his camp without danger of being cut off and destroyed by Greene's light troops or parties of North Carolina militia.²³ Therefore, Cornwallis stayed at Guilford for but two days and then commenced a long, painful retreat toward Wilmington. He had won a battle, but lost the campaign and had abandoned North Carolina.

Cornwallis' retreat from the banks of the Dan River and his further retreat from Guilford Court House were turning points in the campaign. They represented defeat for the British and victory for the Americans. The American army had been defeated upon the battlefield, but Greene's strategy of drawing his enemies far from their bases had resulted in greatly weakening the British army and had left it isolated in the midst of a hostile countryside. Then, as the redcoats retreated down the long road to Wilmington, Greene's columns became the pursuers. The British army began to disintegrate a bit, as stragglers and numbers of seriously wounded men were left behind to be taken by the advancing Americans. A shortage of provisions and the fact that the time of many of the American militia had expired during the campaign forced Greene to call a halt to his pursuit of Cornwallis.²⁴ The survivors of Cornwallis' shattered army then made their way down the valley of the Cape Fear River to safety at the British-held post at Wilmington.

The retreat to Wilmington was part of a complete reversal of the role of the British army in the Carolinas. The British had taken the offensive and had driven Morgan and Greene all the way from the Pacolet and Pee Dee to the banks of the Dan. The invaders had threatened to overrun North Carolina and to complete, thereby, the subjugation of all the States south of Virginia. However, the offensive had collapsed, and the British had had to evacuate the State which they had tried to conquer. Greene had succeeded in gaining the initia-

²³ Stedman, *History of American War*, II, 347-348; Tarleton, *History of Campaigns*, 278-280.

²⁴ Greene to Jefferson, March 27, 1781, Boyd, *Jefferson Papers*, V, 258-259; Greene to the Marquis de Lafayette, March 29, 1781, Greene Papers, Clements Library; Greene to President of Congress, March 30, 1781, Letters of General Greene, II, 17-21.

tive, and bands of militia had come to his aid in both of the Carolinas. Cornwallis' army, which reached Wilmington early in April, was temporarily impotent, and most of North Carolina was under the control either of Greene's army or of bodies of militia which co-operated with it. Meanwhile, partisan bands were active in attacking the British in South Carolina. Lord Cornwallis had not only come a-cropper, but his retreat had encouraged the Whigs everywhere and had discouraged the Tories to the point where they were more inclined to go into hiding than come to the aid of the British army.²⁵

Cornwallis' retreat was a great triumph for General Greene's strategy and perseverance, but it presented him with some difficult problems. He could not hope to attack the British post at Wilmington without the support of a French fleet — and no fleet was available to come to his aid in the spring of 1781. What, then, should he do? Should he wait until Cornwallis departed by land or sea for South Carolina, or, possibly, for the Chesapeake? Should he advance into South Carolina to strike at British outposts there before Cornwallis could come to their rescue? He pondered these questions, and his answer was bold, imaginative, and may well be considered to have been one of the most brilliant strategical moves of the entire war.

Greene decided not to dance to Cornwallis' tune. He knew that the British army had been seriously weakened by the hardships and losses of the Cowpens and Guilford campaigns, and he decided to strike into South Carolina while Cornwallis' redcoats were still resting at Wilmington. A more cautious and less imaginative general than Greene would have waited until Cornwallis had finally made his move from Wilmington. The cautious, conservative general would then have marched after Cornwallis in order to confront him in South Carolina, Virginia, or wherever his lordship chose to go. However, Greene declined to wait passively for Cornwallis to begin a new offensive somewhere. Greene began his own offensive, and, in doing so, he succeeded in overrunning most of the

²⁵ Cornwallis to Clinton, April 10, 1781, Stevens, *Campaign in Virginia*, I, 395-399.

interior of Georgia and South Carolina. Cornwallis, on the other hand, decided to march toward the Chesapeake to join, and take command of, a British detachment which was based at Portsmouth. Unknowingly, Cornwallis was marching toward utter disaster. Greene, meanwhile, was about to win a whole series of victories in which more than twelve hundred British and Tory prisoners were to fall into his hands.

The American army, which had numbered about 4,500 officers and men at Guilford Court House, dwindled to about 2,400 fighting men by the end of March, 1781.²⁶ The Virginia militia, who had fought so well at Guilford, marched away en masse, leaving Greene to lament that, "The greatest advantages are often lost by the troops disbanding at the critical moment."²⁷ However, Greene wasted no time in wringing his hands at the loss of so many of his troops. Instead, he halted for a time to give his troops an opportunity to rest from the hardships of the Guilford campaign and the pursuit of Cornwallis' army toward Cross Creek (now Fayetteville). He made no effort to march on toward Cross Creek and Wilmington. Instead, he made his decision to invade South Carolina. He informed the Marquis de Lafayette, then commanding the American detachment in Virginia, of his decision when he wrote to the latter on April 3 that he was determined, "to carry the war into South Carolina. . . ." ²⁸ The invasion of South Carolina would, he thought, prevent Lord Cornwallis from marching into Virginia to make a junction with the British detachment operating there. It would serve to draw the British from their post in Virginia, and Greene hoped that Lafayette would then be able to march southward to join the American army in the Carolinas. Eventually, if all went well, the combined forces of Greene and Lafayette, possibly reinforced by General Anthony Wayne's Pennsylvania Continentals, would be able to give Cornwallis a

²⁶ Otho Holland Williams, "Return of Infantry Serving in the Southern Army of the United States . . .," March 31, 1781, Papers of George Washington, 169. Williams gives exact figures for Continentals but makes only an estimate of militia.

²⁷ Greene to President of Congress, March 30, 1781, Letters of General Greene, II, 17-21.

²⁸ Photostat of Greene to Lafayette, April 3, 1781, Greene Papers, Clements Library.

"drubbing" which would force him to abandon the interior of the Carolinas in order to defend Charleston.

Greene's hopes of receiving aid from the Marquis de Lafayette were soon dashed. The British detachment in Virginia was heavily reinforced by the arrival from New York of a strong force commanded by Major General William Phillips. Lafayette was unable to drive Phillips' force out of Virginia, and Phillips pressed Lafayette's troops so hard that none of them could be spared to reinforce Greene. Meanwhile, Wayne's Continentals, who were stationed at York, Pennsylvania, were not yet clothed, equipped, and ready to march to Lafayette's assistance. Thus Greene was unable to receive the reinforcements which he had hoped would be available to him from Virginia. His chances of "drubbing" Cornwallis or Francis, Lord Rawdon, Cornwallis' lieutenant in South Carolina, decreased accordingly. Nevertheless, he persevered in his determination to invade South Carolina while Lafayette remained in Virginia to defend that State against its invaders.

British, Hessian, and Loyalist forces in South Carolina outnumbered Greene's army by three or four-to-one when the American army advanced to attack them. However, the British forces were widely scattered, and many of them were stationed at isolated forts which guarded towns, river crossings, and concentrations of military supplies. These forts were threatened by bands of raiders who struck from time to time from their hideaways in the swamps and pine forests. Therefore a large part of the British army in South Carolina and Georgia was occupied in garrison duty and in patrolling the roads. The main force of about 1,000 officers and men was stationed at Camden, near the scene of Cornwallis' victory over Gates, to protect the interior of South Carolina against an invasion or large-scale raid by Greene's troops.

The destruction of the British corps at Camden was Greene's first objective. He hoped to fall upon the British before they could send for and receive any reinforcements. If all went well, he hoped to surprise and smash the garrison of Camden — the best fighting force available to the British in South Carolina — and then push on quickly to co-operate with

General Francis Marion and other partisan leaders in capturing the several British outposts in the interior of the two southernmost States.

Greene's army began its march upon Camden on April 7.²⁹ It had to march more than 150 miles from Ramsey's Mill, in the interior of North Carolina, before reaching its objective. The war-weary troops were ragged and poorly equipped, and they were unable to make a lightning advance across the many rivers, streams, and swamps in the countryside through which they had to march. Consequently they covered only about twelve miles a day, and the British received warning of their approach long before they had reached the immediate vicinity of Camden. Lord Rawdon's soldiers then proceeded to strengthen their redoubts and to prepare for a determined defense of the military stores and provisions which were housed at Camden.

The American army reached the vicinity of Camden on April 19.³⁰ They had made a tremendous comeback since they had retreated across the Dan River two months before. They were 250 miles south of the Dan when they reached the neighborhood of Camden, and they were engaged in offensive operations against an enemy who had lost the initiative in the South. The enemy, who had but recently been on the offensive, was reduced to standing upon the defensive behind earthworks.

Greene reconnoitered Camden and found its redoubts and earthworks too strong to be taken by assault. He had no siege guns, and his field guns were too few and too small to batter down the enemy's defenses. In the circumstances, he was forced to take a strong position near Camden upon a wooded elevation known as Hobkirk's Hill. While he waited for South Carolina militia to come to his assistance, the garrison of Camden remained behind their earthworks and a temporary stalemate developed. Greene's army was too weak to storm Camden, and Rawdon's army was too weak to storm Hobkirk's Hill.

²⁹ Greene to President of Congress, April 22, 1781, Johnson, *Sketches of Nathanael Greene*, II, 91-93.

³⁰ Greene to President of Congress, April 22, 1781, Johnson, *Sketches of Nathanael Greene*, II, 91-30.

Military stalemates sometimes last a long time, but the one at Camden was very short-lived. Lord Rawdon received news from a deserter that Greene's army was weak and ill-equipped and that it was deployed along a fairly wide front. Rawdon had fewer than 1,000 men available for combat, but he decided to advance against Greene's army (which numbered about 1,500 officers and men, including Continentals and militia alike). The British — almost all of whom were Loyalists in regular units assigned to the British army — advanced towards Hobkirk's Hill by a circuitous route which led them through underbrush and clumps of trees toward Greene's left flank where the ascent was relatively easy. The redcoats were able to advance almost to the bottom of the slope before they were discovered by American pickets who had been unable to see them as they marched through the broken and wooded countryside. The pickets put up a stout resistance, however, and Greene's Continentals were able to form in line of battle on their wooded hilltop before the British could fall upon them.

The battle of Hobkirk's Hill, fought on April 25, 1781, resulted in another one of General Greene's defeats.³¹ Greene was an able strategist, but his battlefield tactics were conspicuously less successful than his strategy. Greene's Continentals advanced downhill to meet the British after the American field-pieces had unleashed a sudden blaze of grape-shot. The British faltered momentarily, then rallied and held their ground. There was a hot fire-fight at close range for a moment, and both sides suffered heavy casualties. Then a company of Maryland Continentals fell into disorder when one of their officers was shot down. The confusion among the Marylanders increased until Lieutenant Colonel John Gunby felt obliged to order an entire battalion to retreat to a new position and re-form. The retreat of Gunby's battalion threw the rest of the line into disorder and brought about a general retreat.³² Greene succeeded in rallying some Virginia

³¹ Alden, *War of the Revolution*, II, 802-808; Greene to Baron von Steuben, April 27, 1781, Steuben Papers, VII.

³² Greene to Joseph Reed, May 4, 1781, William B. Reed, *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed* (Philadelphia, Penna.: Lindsay and Blakiston, 2 volumes, 1847), II, 352-353, hereinafter cited as Reed, *Life of Joseph Reed*.

and Delaware Continentals who covered the retreat and saved his fieldpieces from capture. The American army was driven from the field, however, and Greene was forced to add Hobkirk's Hill to his list of battlefield misfortunes. He had already been beaten at Guilford Court House, and he had shared in Washington's defeats at Brandywine and Germantown.

Colonel William Washington's dragoons had been sent to attack the rear of the enemy's line while the infantry fire-fight was in progress. His troopers made too long a circuit around Rawdon's army and finally fell upon the noncombattants — surgeons and commissaries — who were stationed behind the line of battle. Washington took a considerable number of prisoners, and then reached the field of battle in time to play a part in the rear guard action which covered the American retreat. Washington's exploits helped to salvage some glory for the beaten army, but Washington and his dragoons might possibly have turned the tide of battle had they spent less time taking prisoners among rear-area soldiers.

The losses on both sides in the brief but hard-fought battle were very heavy. Greene lost some 270 officers and men who were killed, wounded, or captured. Rawdon lost 258 officers and men, or about one-fourth of his entire force. Both sides were badly hurt by their losses, but the British had the satisfaction of claiming a victory.

Greene was very depressed by his defeat at Hobkirk's Hill. He had hoped to win a victory over Rawdon if the latter chose to risk a battle. However, Gunby's blunder (Greene considered it a blunder) in ordering his men to retreat instead of rallying them on the spot, had broken the American line and had led to defeat.³³ Greene's hope of winning a series of victories as a result of his offensive began to fade momentarily, but they revived in short order. Hobkirk's Hill was not, as it turned out, fatal to Greene's plans. The American army was forced to retreat only a short distance, and it was soon able to advance again while the British evacuated not only Camden but a large part of Georgia and South Carolina.

³³ Reed, *Life of Joseph Reed*, II, 352.

The chain of British posts which connected Camden with Charleston was already under attack before Hobkirk's Hill. Greene had sent Colonel Lee's Legion of dragoons and mounted infantry to march to South Carolina in advance of the main American army. Lee was under orders to find and make a junction with the South Carolinians commanded by General Francis Marion. Lee and Marion were then to bend every effort to capture the forts which the British had erected to guard river crossings and road junctions along their lines of communication.

Lee's column joined Marion's partisans on April 14 somewhere in the swamps of the Black River in the Williamsburg district of South Carolina. The British posts on the Santee and Wateree rivers, between Camden and Charleston, were their objectives and they lost no time in attacking one of them. They commenced to besiege a stockaded post, called Fort Watson, on April 15.³⁴ Fort Watson was an important link in the chain of British posts between Camden and Charleston. It guarded the north-south line of communications along the Wateree River. It was garrisoned by about 120 British regulars and Tories and was protected by a stockade and a triple ring of felled trees with their branches interlocking in an eighteenth-century equivalent of a barbed-wire entanglement. There was no artillery in the fort, but Lee and Marion possessed no artillery either.

The besiegers made but little headway against Fort Watson for a time. They needed artillery to batter down the defenses, but without artillery they were unable to take the fort until Major Hezekiah Maham, a South Carolinian, hit upon an ingenious scheme to overwhelm the garrison. Maham suggested that a tower of crossed timbers should be erected to a height which would enable marksmen stationed on a firing platform on the top of it to shoot downward into the fort. A "Maham Tower," as it came to be called, was quickly erected, and the fire of the sharpshooters on top of it soon brought about the capture of the fort.³⁵ Thus the line of communica-

³⁴ (Francis) Marion to Greene, April 23, 1781, Greene Papers, Clements Library; Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, II, 50-52.

³⁵ Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, II, 51-52.

tions between Camden and Charleston was broken, and a major contribution was made toward the liberation of the back country of South Carolina from British occupation.

There is no need to go into the details of the sieges which followed the fall of Fort Watson. The presence of Greene's army in South Carolina was enough to pin down Lord Rawdon so that he was unable to march to the assistance of the forts which Lee and Marion captured, one by one, with the help of Maham Towers and a single fieldpiece which Greene sent to them. Fort Motte, located on the south bank of the Congaree River, was the next post after Fort Watson to be attacked by Lee and Marion. It was an important supply base on the route from Charleston to Camden and Ninety-Six. The fort, which was located on a high and commanding hill, was invested on May 8. The garrison made a vigorous defense, but the fort was taken after a siege which lasted only a few days.³⁶ All told, 184 prisoners were taken at Fort Motte; the loss of Forts Watson and Motte cost the British more than 300 officers and men who were killed or captured.

The loss of Forts Watson and Motte seriously endangered Lord Rawdon's position at Camden. Rawdon announced to his officers on May 9 that Camden was to be evacuated on the next day. Preparations were made to destroy such stores as could not be loaded in the baggage wagons, and it was decided to leave the men who had been seriously wounded at Hobkirk's Hill behind under the care of surgeons until the arrival of Greene's army at Camden. The British army then marched southward from Camden on May 10, leaving their excess baggage and stores, the town jail, and some flour mills in flames.³⁷ It was a bitter moment for the victors of Hobkirk's Hill; they had lost more than 200 men killed and wounded in battle, but their sacrifices had failed to save Camden. The most mortifying sight of all to the retreating soldiers as they marched from their burning base was the hospital in which

³⁶ Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, II, 73-79.

³⁷ Greene to Washington, May 14, 1781, Papers of George Washington, 174, published with minor discrepancies, Jared Sparks (ed.), *Correspondence of the American Revolution* (Boston; Mass.: Little, Brown and Company, 4 volumes, 1853), III, 310-312, hereinafter cited as Sparks, *Correspondence of the Revolution*.

fifty-three of their own wounded and thirty-four captured Continentals were left behind. Hobkirk's Hill, like Guilford Court House, had been an empty victory for the British and had been followed by the retreat of the victors and the advance of the vanquished!

Lord Rawdon's column retreated sixty miles to Nelson's Ferry on the banks of the Santee without being harried or pursued by Greene's little army. However, Greene's army marched down the west bank of the Wateree to McCord's Ferry on the Congaree to support the besiegers of Fort Motte. Upon arriving in the vicinity of the fort, the Americans learned that it had already fallen. Tidings of still another victory came within a few days after the fall of Fort Motte. Patriots of the Edisto River Valley had taken advantage of Rawdon's preoccupation with Greene to attack the British post at Orangeburg. The Edisto Valley men joined General Thomas Sumter's partisans in considerable numbers, and Sumter and his followers succeeded in capturing Orangeburg on May 14.³⁸ Nearly 100 prisoners, and considerable quantities of provisions, arms, and ammunition were taken at Orangeburg. The cumulative losses suffered by the British in the evacuation of Camden and the loss of Forts Watson, Motte, and Orangeburg were quite heavy. All told, some 450 British, Hessian, and Tory fighting men were captured, and the remaining British forts in the interior of South Carolina were isolated and seriously endangered.

Disaster continued to spread throughout South Carolina despite Rawdon's efforts to prevent it. He sent orders to Forts Granby and Ninety-Six to order the evacuation of those places, but his couriers were captured by American scouting parties.³⁹ Consequently, the garrisons of the two forts remained where they were until they, too, were besieged. Rawdon retired toward Monck's Corner, only a little more than thirty miles from Charleston, while awaiting the arrival of garrisons from the two forts. Meanwhile, Greene occupied a position at Fort Motte, squarely across the route which Raw-

³⁸ Sparks, *Correspondence of the Revolution*, III, 310-312.

³⁹ Alden, *War of the Revolution*, II, 810-811; there is a contemporary account in Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, II, 72-73.

don would have had to travel to relieve Fort Granby. Greene then sent General Marion's South Carolinians toward Georgetown, on the seacoast, while Lee's Legion and some Continental infantry were detached to besiege Fort Granby.

Fort Granby was located at Friday's Ferry, near the present site of Columbia, South Carolina, about thirty miles up the Congaree from Fort Motte. It was garrisoned by more than 360 officers and men, and, according to Colonel Lee, the fort was so strong that, had it been stoutly defended, "it could not have been carried without considerable loss, except by regular approaches; and in this way would have employed the whole force of Greene for a week at least, in which period Lord Rawdon's interposition was practicable."⁴⁰ Fortunately for Lee, however, Fort Granby surrendered on the morning of May 15 after the garrison had made only a token resistance. The garrison was allowed to march to Charleston as prisoners of war under parole not to fight again until formally exchanged. Thus the bag of prisoners taken at the several British posts in South Carolina swelled to more than 800, and the captors of Fort Granby found themselves in possession of valuable quantities of ammunition, salt, liquor, and other useful articles.⁴¹

The fall of several forts and the loss of more than 800 men spelled ruin for the British and Tories in the interior of Georgia and South Carolina. Hundreds of fugitives, with their Negro slaves, fled from the back country to Rawdon's camp at Monck's Corner. Other hundreds of refugees poured into Charleston, and panic and despair swept through the minds and hearts of Tories throughout the area in which the presence of Greene's army had made it possible for such partisan leaders as Francis Marion, Andrew Pickens, and Thomas Sumter to take the offensive. The victory gained by Rawdon's brave soldiers at Hobkirk's Hill was obviously fruitless. Greene's strategic planning had resulted in overwhelming success despite the momentary check suffered upon the battlefield!

⁴⁰ Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, II, 81-82.

⁴¹ Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, II, 85. See also, Edward Hyrne, "Return of Prisoners Taken at Fort Granby, 15th May, 1781," *Papers of George Washington*, 174.

Lee's capture of Fort Granby was followed by an even more impressive victory at Augusta. Lee began his march toward Augusta almost immediately after the fall of Fort Granby. His scouts reached the vicinity of Augusta on May 20 and soon learned that the annual present of small arms, ammunition, liquor, salt, and blankets for the Indian tribes had been stored nearby at a small stockaded post known as Fort Galphin (also Fort Dreadnought). Lee then led his men on a forced march in weather which he described as "sultry beyond measure" to try to surprise the garrison at the fort.⁴² He succeeded in taking the fort and its garrison quickly and easily through use of a stratagem. The victory cost Lee but one man who died of heat exhaustion and several men wounded. The fall of the fort cost the British several men killed, 112 captured, and the loss of a considerable quantity of stores which were then put to use by the Americans in the siege of Augusta.⁴³ The cumulative loss suffered by the British reached a total of more than 900 officers and men killed and captured after the fall of Fort Galphin.

Lee turned his attention to the siege of Augusta immediately after taking Fort Galphin. The place was strongly fortified and had a garrison of more than 300 officers and men, but Lee was strongly reinforced by Georgia militia commanded by Colonel Elijah Clarke and South Carolinians commanded by General Pickens. The attackers outnumbered the defenders by more than two-to-one, but they encountered determined resistance and had to fight hard to capture Augusta. Plunging fire of a six-pounder mounted on a Maham Tower finally rendered the principal fort at Augusta untenable, and the garrison surrendered on June 4.⁴⁴

The surrender of Augusta brought British losses in South Carolina and Georgia to more than 1,200 officers and men killed or captured at the taking of the forts which had fallen to Lee, Marion, Sumter, and Pickens. Greene's invasion of the Deep South had led to a whole series of victories which had resulted in the liberation of a vast part of the two south-

⁴² Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, II, 89.

⁴³ Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, II, 90-91.

⁴⁴ Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, II, 102-117; joint letter of Lee and General Andrew Pickens, June 5, 1781, contemporary copy in *Letters of General Greene*, II, 135-136.

ernmost States and had virtually reduced the British to the defense of Charleston and the lowlands within thirty or forty miles thereof.

While Lee and Pickens were engaged in taking Augusta, Greene led his army westward from Fort Granby to besiege the fort at Ninety-Six. The taking of Ninety-Six, which had a garrison of more than 500 Tory regulars and militia, would have been the crowning victory of Greene's campaign in South Carolina. However, Greene's luck ran out at Ninety-Six. The garrison, commanded by a New York Tory, Lieutenant-Colonel John Harris Cruger, resisted stoutly, and neither artillery fire nor the use of a Maham Tower enabled Greene to overcome the defenders. Lord Rawdon, meanwhile, after enduring agonies of retreat and misfortune, was reinforced by several battalions of crack troops who had been sent to Charleston from the British Isles. Rawdon added the flank companies — the light infantry and grenadiers — of the new arrivals to his army at Monck's Corner and then set out on a series of forced marches toward Ninety-Six.⁴⁵ Greene learned of the approach of Rawdon's relief column and ordered storming parties to attack the fort. The attack took place on June 18 and the attackers were driven back with heavy loss after some desperate hand-to-hand fighting.⁴⁶ Greene's army then retreated within a day or two, and Rawdon's relief column, terribly fatigued from forced marches in the heat and humidity of summer, marched into Ninety-Six on June 21 with the cheers of the heroic garrison ringing in their ears.

Ninety-Six was Greene's third defeat in the Carolinas. He had already been defeated at Guilford Court House and Hobkirk's Hill, but he had been able to take the offensive after each of his setbacks. He succeeded in regaining the initiative once again after his defeat at Ninety-Six. Lord Rawdon could not remain for long in the Ninety-Six district with a hostile countryside between him and his principal base at Charleston, nearly 180 miles away. Consequently he was forced to order the evacuation of Ninety-Six shortly after

⁴⁵ Alden, *War of the Revolution*, II, 820-821.

⁴⁶ Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, II, 126-129; Greene to the President of Congress, June 20, 1781, contemporary copy in Papers of George Washington, 177.

his arrival at that place.⁴⁷ Once again, as at Hobkirk's Hill, Rawdon had gained a victory only to be forced to retreat because Greene's offensive strategy had resulted in the capture of key forts along his lines of communication.

Greene's spring offensive in the Deep South ended with the siege of Ninety-Six. The deadly summer "sickly season" made it impossible to carry on military operations in July and August. Moreover, Greene's army was weary from its exertions and weakened by the losses which it had suffered at Hobkirk's Hill and Ninety-Six. Accordingly Greene marched to the High Hills of Santee and encamped his men on high ground where they could escape the ravages of malaria and dysentery.⁴⁸ The British, meanwhile, abandoned the interior of South Carolina and Georgia and fell back to Orangeburg, which they occupied for a time, and then to a camp at Eutaw Springs on the Santee River, about 55 miles from Charleston.

No effort will be made here to describe the campaign which led to the battle of Eutaw Springs on September 8, 1781. The outcome of the battle, in which Greene suffered another of his defeats, is well-known. Greene's army remained intact after Eutaw Springs, however, and defeat was no more fatal to his plans than his previous battlefield defeats had been. He remained in effective control of the interior of the Deep South throughout the remainder of 1781 and 1782 until the British finally decided to evacuate Charleston and Savannah. He was denied the satisfaction of winning a battle at any time during his campaigns in the Carolinas, but he had succeeded in driving Lord Cornwallis from North Carolina and Lord Rawdon from the back country of Georgia and South Carolina in the space of less than four months from the time his troops recrossed the Dan River to begin their long march southward. During those four months, Greene had done nothing less than beat two British armies (without winning a battle) and had proved himself to be one of the finest strategists developed by either side during the course of the war.

⁴⁷ Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, II, 133-134; Greene to President of Congress, July 17, 1781, contemporary copy in Papers of George Washington, 180.

⁴⁸ Alden, *War of the Revolution*, II, 825; Greene to President of Congress, July 26, 1781, Letters of General Greene, II, 223-229.