



Miniature believed to be of "The Green Dragoon"—courtesy of banastretarleton.org

CONTEMPORARY REVIEWS OF TARLETON'S *CAMPAIGNS*

Despite his being traditionally vilified as a notorious and ruthless cavalry leader, Banastre Tarleton has in recent decades come to receive more impartial appraisal and, for that matter, greater sympathy. Indeed, in retrospect and on the whole, it does seem that Tarleton, rather than the cold hearted monster he has been depicted as being, was rather and simply a young, ambitious, and energetic officer attempting merely to do what he saw as his assigned task and duty. That things at times, such as at the battle of Waxhaws, got out of hand was more so the result of unruly men under his command getting carried away than any inherent devilry or sinister design on his part. And if Sherman's maxim that "war is cruelty, and you cannot refine it" has any truth to it, Tarleton's lapses, such as in his rampant burning of homes and executing civilians, if not excusable, were at least within the purview of his orders; nor were such practices unique to him. He was after all simply obeying and following directives, and if any blame is to be leveled, the *more* proper object should have been his superiors. In retrospect his unusually bad reputation seems to have been the result of Americans propaganda seeking to demonize the British war effort by way of using a colorful figure for that purpose, and later some British apologists who resented his post war candor. It is also interesting to note in his favor that when at the time of the French Revolution Lafayette was imprisoned at Olmutz by Francis II of Austria, Tarleton, as a member of Parliament, seconded a motion (March 17, 1794) to have the British government seek the Marquis' release; but which was foolishly voted down by opposition led by, on that occasion, the short-sighted Edmund Burke.

What follows below are two contemporary assessments of Tarleton's *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America* (1787). It should in fairness be noted that much of the negativity and derision directed at him, as evinced by these reviewers, stemmed in no little part from Tarleton's repeated, and not without justice, criticisms of Cornwallis' handling of the southern campaign, and, in turn, his alleged ingratitude of the latter's fatherly patronage. Per chance as well, personal jealousy may have been a further inducement of animosity. Included here in addition is a separate review of Roderick Mackenzie's no less acerbic *Strictures on Tarleton's History* (1787).

From *The Critical Review, or the Annals of Literature*, for Jan. 1787 volume 63, pp. 346-352.

A History of the Campaigns of 1780 end 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America.
By Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton. 4to. 1L. 6s. Cadell.

THIS History is, in general, a compilation of the official letters of the British officers, both in the sea and land service; of the American and French commanders, which have appeared in the news-papers, with lord Rawdon's much admired campaign, from the *Remembrancer* and *Annual Register*. The military transactions are collected into a regular order: the author, lieutenant-colonel Tarleton, enters into a very minute detail of his own services, and makes a very free comment on those of others, and in particular of lord Cornwallis. His conclusions are not, however, always logically deduced, nor, as we conceive,

warranted by military science. We must examine colonel Tarleton's opinions in general, and his criticisms on others, particularly on lord Rawdon and lord Cornwallis; for we do not find any information very interesting or uncommon in the transactions themselves. The plans are useful and correctly executed.

The detail of military actions is seldom of importance to any but those of the profession, and they necessarily make the greatest part of a publication of this nature. As an history, it ought to be authenticated by public papers, but, as a work of general information, it is not pleasing to hear the most trifling circumstances digested by a minute historian, and to read them again in the official letters of the commanders. As a specimen of our author's manner, and his reasoning, we shall select the passage commenting on the action of the Cowpens. Colonel Tarleton relates the history of the action, nearly as it is described in the marquis de Chastellux's *Travels*: if there had been an essential difference we should have pointed it out, according to our promise.

“On the 14th earl Cornwallis informed Tarleton that Leslie had surmounted his difficulties, and that he imagined the enemy would not pass the Broad-river, though it had fallen very much. Tarleton then answered, that he would try to cross the Pacolet, to force them, and desired earl Cornwallis to acquire as high a station as possible, in order to stop their retreat. No letter, order, or intelligence, from head-quarters reached Tarleton after this reply, previous to the defeat on the 17th, and after that event he found earl Cornwallis on Turkey-creek, near twenty-five miles below the place where the action had happened. The distance between Wynnesborough and King's-mountain, or Wynnesborough and Little Broad-river, which would have answered the same purpose, does not exceed sixty-five miles: earl Cornwallis commenced his march on the 7th or 8th of January. It would be mortifying to describe the advantages that might have resulted from his lordship's arrival at the concerted point, or to expatiate upon the calamities which were produced by this event.’

In this passage, we think we perceive a manifest contradiction. If no letter or order reached colonel Tarleton from lord Cornwallis, in answer to his proposal, there could be no point concerted for his lordship to arrive at and the reflections do not seem to accord, in the opinion of the best judges, with military propriety, as it is apparent, that he either should not have been detached from the main army, or, when detached, that he should have relied on the troops under his command for success.

Of the action, he says,

The disposition was planned with coolness, and executed without embarrassment. The defeat of the British must be ascribed either to the bravery or good conduct of the Americans; to the loose manner of forming which had always been practised by the king's troops in America; or to some unforeseen event, which may throw terror into the most disciplined soldiers, or counteract the best concerted designs. The extreme extension of the files always exposed the British regiments and corps, and would, before this unfortunate affair, have been attended with detrimental effect, had not the multiplicity of lines with which they generally fought rescued them from such imminent danger. If infantry who are formed very open, and only two deep, meet with opposition, they can have no liability: But when they experience an unexpected shock, confusion will ensue, and flight, without immediate support, must be the inevitable consequence.”

These are principles on which common sense, the foundation; of all science, may, we think, decide. Military men may probably be induced to wish that they had been promulgated before the action of the Cowpens; and they will condemn the colonel for want of tactical knowledge, that might have led him to alter any interior arrangement which he thought erroneous, or for not suiting the general disposition of the troops to his own numbers.

Lord Cornwallis's support of lieutenant-colonel Tarleton, who, in consequence of his defeat, required his lordship's approbation of his proceedings, or his leave to retire, till enquiry could be instituted to investigate the merits of his conduct (p. 222), is fully expressed in a letter, which we transcribe with pleasure, as success is too often supposed to be an infallible criterion of desert.

“You have forfeited no part of my esteem as an officer by the unfortunate event of the action of the 17th: the means you used to bring the enemy to action were able and masterly, and must ever do you

honour. Your disposition was unexceptionable; the total misbehaviour of the troops could alone have deprived you of the glory which was so justly your due.”

We cannot agree in some of the political proposals of our author, particularly where, on the desertion of the militia, he thinks it would have been adviseable to incorporate them with the regular troops. Surely those who were remiss or treacherous in the lesser duties of the militia, could not have been brought to undergo the hardships, which this volume tells us were the lot of the king’s troops.

Colonel Tarleton’s remarks on lord Rawdon’s conduct are, we think, also exceptionable. Previous to the battle of Camden, it appears that this nobleman, when general Gates advanced into South Carolina, took post at Lynche’s Creek, 14 miles from Camden, and in Gates’s road to that place.

“General Gates (says our author) advanced to the creek opposite to the British camp, and skirmishes ensued between the advanced parties of the two armies. The American commander discovered that Lord Rawdon’s position was strong, and he declined an attack; but he had not sufficient penetration to conceive, that by a forced march up the creek, he could have passed Lord Rawdon’s flank, and reached Camden; which would have been an easy conquest, and a fatal blow to the British.”

This reflection must suppose a supineness in lord Rawdon, by no means consistent with his abilities and military talents, nor to the decision which this very movement illustrated. It seems to have been a part of that system, which, on Gates’ moving in the line described by our historian, brought on the action and the victory. We need only transcribe colonel Tarleton’s own reflections on the misconduct of Gates, for an illustration of this conjecture.

“On reviewing the striking circumstances preceding and during the battle, the conduct of earl Cornwallis cannot be placed in a clearer light than by contrasting it with that of his opponent. The faults committed by the American commander, during his short campaign at the head of the southern army, were neither unimportant in themselves, nor inconsiderable in number. The first misconception imputed to general Gates, was the not breaking in upon the British communications as soon as he arrived near Lynche’s creek. The move up the creek, and from thence to Camden, was practicable and easy before the king’s troops were concentrated at that place; or he might, without the smallest difficulty, have occupied a strong position on Saunders’ Creek, five miles from Camden, before earl Cornwallis joined the royal forces. His second error was moving an army, consisting of young corps and undisciplined militia, in the night: A manœuvre always to be avoided with troops of that description, in the neighbourhood of an enterprising enemy; and only to be hazarded when regiments are perfectly officered, and well trained. His third mistake was in the disposition of his army before the action: if the militia had been formed into one line, in front of the continentals, they would have galled the British in the wood, when approaching to attack the main body: or, if the militia had been kept totally separate from the continentals, and too much confidence had not been placed in them, perhaps that confusion in part of the Maryland line, owing to the early flight of Caswell’s brigade, had never happened. His last and greatest fault, was attempting to make an alteration in the disposition the instant the two armies were going to engage; which circumstance could not escape the notice of a vigilant enemy, who by a skilful and sudden attack threw the American left wing into a state of confusion, from which it never recovered. The favourable opportunities which presented themselves to earl Cornwallis during the march and the action, were seized with judgment, and prosecuted with vigour; a glorious victory crowned the designs of the general, and the exertions of the troops.”

Our military historian is decidedly of opinion, that lord Cornwallis ought to have moved from Cross Creek to Camden, without going into Virginia. Speaking of the advantage gained by earl Cornwallis over the marquis de la Fayette, at the passage of James River, colonel Tarleton observes,

“The events of this day were particularly important, and claimed more attention than they obtained. The marquis de la Fayette had made a long march, in very sultry weather, with, about fifteen hundred continentals and one thousand militia, to strike at the rear of the British before they passed to James island: too great ardour, or false intelligence, which is most probable, for it is the only instance of this officer committing himself during a very difficult campaign, prompted him to cross a morass to attack earl Cornwallis, who routed him, took his cannon, and must inevitably have destroyed his army, if night

had not intervened. His lordship might certainly have derived more advantage from this victory. If the two battalions of light infantry, the guards, and colonel Yorke's brigade, who had all been slightly engaged, or any other corps, and the cavalry, had been detached, without knapsacks, before dawn of day, to pursue the Americans, and push them to the utmost, the army of the marquis de la Fayette must have been annihilated. Such an exploit would have been easy, fortunate, and glorious, and would have prevented the combination which produced the fall of York Town, and Gloucester. It was suggested to earl Cornwallis, in opposition to the plan of pursuing the victory, that sir Henry Clinton's requisition for troops was a circumstance (hence of greater consequence, and more worthy of attention. This was allowed to be a strong and forcible reason; but at that same time it was represented, that the exertion of half, or two thirds of the British army, in pursuit of the Americans, would not occasion delay, or in the least derange the original design of proceeding to Portsmouth. Experience fully evinced and justified the propriety of this opinion.

“Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton, with two hundred dragoons, and eighty mounted infantry, was ordered to proceed after daybreak across the swamp, in pursuit of the enemy; and three Companies of light infantry were directed to take post beyond it, until he returned. Some wounded men, and deserters joined the British before they reached the Green Springs, where the marquis de la Fayette had rallied his troops after the action. The dragoons then struck into the road by which, about two hours before, the Americans had retreated, and they had not advanced four miles when they met a patrol of mounted riflemen. The captain who commanded it, and several of his men were killed or taken: The remainder were pursued into the marquis de la Fayette's army, who had been forced by extreme fatigue to repose themselves no more than six miles from the field of battle. In this situation they would have been an easy prey to a powerful detachment of the British, who could have marched into their rear by several roads, whilst the light troops amused them in front; or the infantry might have followed the route of the continentals in case they retreated, and the English dragoons and mounted infantry could have passed through the woods into their front, or on their flank, and have impeded and harassed them till the foot could force them to action. Either of these plans must have succeeded against a corps that was destitute of cavalry; that had made a forced march in very hot weather during the preceding day; that had been routed, and had retreated without refreshment or provisions. When the late defeat, the diminished force, and the bodily fatigue of the Americans are contrasted with the recent success, the superior numbers, and the active vigour of the British, it may fairly be presumed, that less time than twelve hours would have given, without the smallest hazard, a decisive advantage to the king's troops.”

Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton also accuses his general of neglect, in not attacking la Fayette before the junction of the French at Williamsburgh (p. 369). If we admit the propriety of this attempt, can we suppose it easy to surprise a distant enemy, whose obvious aim it was to avoid any contest, while he waited for the junction of other armies to strike a very important stroke. Our author also decidedly supports the construction which sir Henry Clinton placed on his own official letters; a construction which we find in lord Cornwallis's account of the correspondence, he did not admit; and, in a summary of the campaigns of 1780, and 1781, at the end of the volume, he says,

“A retrospective view of British operations plainly discovers that the march from Wilmington to Petersburg was formed and executed by earl Cornwallis without the knowledge or consent of sir Henry Clinton: That York Town and Gloucester were voluntarily occupied by his lordship, in preference to Old Point comfort, when a post for the protection of the navy was required: That as soon as sir Henry Clinton was apprized of the minister's wish to make a serious attempt upon Virginia, he committed as large a corps to earl Cornwallis in that province as was compatible with the safety of New York and its dependencies, during the vicinity of the French and American army: That every intelligence which could be obtained of the enemy's movements was transmitted by the commander in chief, who made all the efforts in his power to assist and relieve his lordship from the period that the French fleet entered the Chesapeake to the hour of the capitulation at York Town: And that earl Cornwallis may be said to incur the imputation of misconceiving his own danger, in not destroying la Fayette's detachment after the affair near James island; in not striking at the corps at Williamsburgh previous to the junction of Washington and Rochambeau; in quitting so early the outward for the inner position, where he was obliged to make proposals to surrender eight days after the enemy opened their batteries; and in not adopting sooner and more decidedly the measure of passing through the country. Some instances of oversight may, therefore, be attributed to his lordship, which precipitated, perhaps, the fate of his own army; but the genuine cause of the great national

calamity, which put a period to the continental war, must by all ranks and descriptions of men be principally ascribed to the minister in England, or the admiral in the West Indies. The arrival of De Grasse in the Chesapeake equally animated the confidence of the allies, and destroyed all the British, hopes of conquest or of reconciliation in that quarter. The safety of earl Cornwallis's army, in all human probability, would only have procrastinated the evil day; for the past success of the campaign, and the future prospect of the king's troops, were counteracted by the formidable appearance of the French fleet. The superiority at sea proved the strength of the armies of Great Britain, deranged the plans of her generals, disheartened the courage of her friends, and finally confirmed the independency of America."

As there was little novelty in the facts, or the arrangement of this History, our quotations and remarks have been necessarily confined to the observations and reflections more peculiarly the author's own. It is unfortunate that we can so seldom agree with him, except in identical propositions, which, it was useless to select. It will be obvious, that colonel Tarleton it unfortunate in the period of his publication. The observations, whether just or unjust, are such as must have occurred to him on the spot, and previous to the conclusion of the war. If they were ever to have been made public, they mould have been so while earl Cornwallis was in England. Admitting that the accusations which a lieutenant-colonel brings against his general be true, the reader will reflect that the same want of discernment and ability will weaken the commander's uniform testimony to the merits of colonel Tarleton, and will greatly invalidate the force of that unqualified decision, which lord Cornwallis made in his favour, against the troops under his command, at the unfortunate action of the Cowpens. This was a decision which the noble earl made without any opportunity of personal observation, or exercising that deliberation which preceded all those measures, the propriety of which our historian has attacked.

On the whole, we cannot praise this *History*: it is diffuse, laboured, and tedious. The author appears every where, forward, on the canvas; and, when his importance is estimated by the weight of his own remarks, we are tempted frequently to remove him to the back-ground.

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From *The English Review, or, An abstract of English and foreign literature*, vol. X, for December 1787, pp. 403-418.

Art. I. *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North-America*. By Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton, Commandant of the late British Legion. 4to. 11. 6s. Cadell.

IT is an opinion that has been carefully propagated of late years, especially by authors who were interested in its success, that little credit is to be given to historians who were contemporary with the agents and actions which they describe; that the truth of an historical narrative requires transactions to be reviewed in a remote light; and that the springs of human action, the policy of princes, and the secrets of cabinets, can only be developed by the research and discernment of succeeding centuries. In some cases this is true. When a civil war has shaken a state, or a revolution taken place in a kingdom, personal animosity and party resentment must be obliterated from the minds of men, and a nation recover from the shock of internal commotion, before many events can be traced to their just causes, or the characters of the principal agents be delineated in their true colours. There may, however, be enlightened individuals, who, when the fervid bustle of transactions is over in which they were engaged, may be extremely well qualified, if they possess a philosophical temper, to write the history of their own times. Cardinal de Retz, who happily saw his errors and survived his prejudices, delineates the troubles of the League with an impartial pen; and the philosopher faithfully exposes the errors of the politician. Clarendon and Burnet, though sometimes partial in their representation of characters, give a lively, and, in general, a just picture of cotemporary events; and we make no doubt but that Lord North, from his undoubted ability, his intimate acquaintance with the springs of action, and his calm and serene temper, could write a most incomparable history of the late American war.

But whatever objections may be made to a general history of one's own times, describing characters as well as events, and including the motives of actions as well as their consequences, no reasonable doubt can be entertained but that an intelligent officer, free from partiality and prejudice, is well

qualified to write a narrative of the campaigns in which he served, and of the battles which he fought. With this view Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton, well known in the martial, now enters the literary, world; wishes to associate the honours of Minerva with those of Mars; and to blend the laurels of eloquence with those of valour. Xenophon and Caesar, not to mention General Burgoyne, courted both Minervas successfully, and excelled equally in wielding the pen and the sword. Fired with enthusiastic admiration of these celebrated heroes and historians, why may not the commandant of the thundering legion cry out, like the Italian artist, "I too am a painter?"

*Tentanda est via qua me quoque possim  
Tollere humo, victorque virum volitare per ora.*<sup>1</sup>

The history before us is confined to the campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the southern provinces of North-America; and our author gives an additional interest to his narrative by recording in prose to the public what Aeneas recited in verse to Dido, events and transactions quorum pan magna suit. The exordium of our historian, like the march of a warrior, is brisk and spirited.

"This short history commences at a time when the whole aspect of the American war experienced a change the most critical and interesting; when prospects, big with the utmost importance, sprung up in a variety of shapes, and gave birth to those decisive events which so speedily followed. While several European powers privately assisted the colonies, in opposition to the mother country, they undoubtedly injured the interests of Great-Britain, without allowing her the advantage of reprisal; but when France and Spain threw off the mask, -- and openly embraced the cause of American independence, the nature of the war underwent a manifest alteration. From that epoch, different political, as well as naval and military measures, might have been adopted. The magnitude of the confederacy was evident and fortunate would it have been for England had she attacked the vulnerable situation of her avowed enemies at that momentous and critical period. An immediate attention to the West-Indies, and an early evacuation of New-York, might have produced such important consequences as would, in all human probability, have given a different termination to the war: her blood and treasures might then have been saved; her natural enemies might then have been humbled; and America would have resorted again to the protection of her parent state, after Great-Britain had vindicated her own dignity, and established that preeminence, which she had acquired in her late contest with the house of Bourbon. But as it is intended only to enter into a detail of occurrences which took place in the southern provinces, during the campaigns of 1780 and 1781, and not to deviate into political disquisitions, it will be sufficient to point out the primary cause upon which the principal events were hinged, and then proceed to the narrative of military operations."

These observations are just and manly; they indicate a vigour of intellect, and an acquaintance with political affairs. There were two periods in the late unfortunate struggle with America, in which a line of conduct, different from that which was pursued, might have terminated favourably for this country. Before the European powers took a part in the quarrel, and when we had only to struggle with America, the object of British policy, if at that time there had been any policy in Britain, was to bring the contest to a sudden decision, and to break Washington's army in one great battle. Delays were fatal to us, but favourable to America. On various occasions this could have been easily effected. At one period there were nearly eighty thousand British and German troops in America a force which the colonies were not in a condition to resist. Washington's army, if once broken and dispersed, could never have recovered. America would have been struck with a panic, and returned to its allegiance. Instead of this we weakened our forces by spreading them over an immense surface; endeavoured to garrison towns and defend forts; and made war not on the Americans, but on America.

When France and Spain threw off the mask, and openly supported the cause of American rebellion, as our author justly observes, different political and military measures ought to have been adopted. To have withdrawn our troops from America, and bent our whole force to attack the vulnerable situation of our enemies, particularly in the West-Indies, might have humbled the pride of France, and perhaps reduced our colonies to subjection to the mother-country.

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<sup>1</sup> [Editor] This quote from Virgil's *Georgics*, as translated by author William Sotheby (1757-1833), reads "I, too, will strive o'er earth my flight to raise, And wing'd by victory, catch the gale of praise."

Colonel Tarleton next proceeds to relate the effect of D'Estaing's attack upon Savannah, which he reckons the primary cause on which the principal events were hinged that took place during the campaigns of 1780 and 1781:

"In the autumn of the year 1779 congress was considerably advanced in credit and power by the military combination in Georgia. The appearance of the French, although the attack upon Savannah was not crowned with success, reanimated the expiring vigour of the desponding Americans, and confirmed the attachment of the unsteady. The loss of the naval superiority presented an unexpected scene to the British commander in chief, counteracted the promise of the minister, and equally deranged the intentions of both. After that event, administration could never hope for a fortunate period to the American, war, except in full confidence that the fleets of England could prevent the ships of France from giving interruption to the military operations in that quarter of the globe: and undoubtedly the success of the commander in chief on the western continent, and the future expectations of the loyalists, could only be sounded on the permanent superiority of the British navy."

These are very strange and unaccountable assertions, especially in the beginning of a work. The combination to which our author alludes was that of the French army under the Count d'Estaing with the Americans commanded by General Lincoln in September 1779. The army of the count, which amounted to five thousand regular troops, was joined by an equal number of Americans. This united force was repulsed, and totally routed by less than three thousand soldiers and seamen before the unfinished works of Savannah. It argues therefore a strange perversion of reason to infer that the cause of America could have derived support from such disaster and disgrace. Dr. [David] Ramsay, a member of the American congress, has lately published "A History of the Revolution of South-Carolina," in which he gives the following account of the engagement at Savannah, and its consequences: "The siege being raised, the continental troops retreated over the river Savannah. A depression of spirits succeeded, much increased by the preceding elevation. The Georgian exiles, who had arrived from all quarters to repossess themselves of their estates, were a second time obliged to abandon their country, and seek refuge among strangers. The currency depreciated much faster than ever, and the most gloomy apprehensions respecting the southern states generally took possession of the minds of the people. The repulse at Savannah impressed the people with high ideas of the power of Britain."\*<sup>2</sup>

So different are the accounts of the American and the Englishman! There are some very extraordinary incidents in the American war, but nothing so unaccountable as Colonel Tarleton's supposition that the power and credit of congress could strengthen, and the expiring vigour of the Americans revive, by the overthrow of their friends and allies.

The action at the Cowpens, conducted by Colonel Tarleton, which terminated unfavourably for the commander, and which gave a decided turn to the American cause, both in North and South-Carolina, occupies an important part in these annals. As this is composed with great care, and written with spirit and elegance, we shall extract it as the most favourable specimen we have hitherto met with of Colonel Tarleton's literary abilities:

"Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton having attained a position, which he certainly might deem advantageous on account of the vulnerable situation of the enemy, and the supposed vicinity of the two British corps on the east and west of Broad River, did not hesitate to undertake those measures which the instructions of his commanding officer imposed, and his own judgment, under the present appearances, equally recommended. He ordered the legion dragoons to drive in the militia parties who covered the front, that General Morgan's disposition might be conveniently and distinctly inspected. He discovered that the American commander had formed a front line of about one thousand militia, and had composed his second line and reserve of five hundred continental light infantry, one hundred and twenty of Washington's cavalry, and three hundred back woodsmen. This accurate knowledge being obtained, Tarleton desired the British infantry to disencumber themselves of every thing, except their arms and ammunition: the light infantry were then ordered to file to the right till they became equal to the flank of the American front line:

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<sup>2</sup> [Footnote in the original] \* Ramsay's Hist. Carolin, p. 41, 46.

the legion infantry were added to their left and, under the fire of 2 three-pounders, this part of the British troops was instructed to advance within three hundred yards of the enemy. This situation being acquired, the seventh regiment was commanded to form upon the left of the legion infantry, and the other three-pounder was given to the right division of the seventh; a captain, with fifty dragoons, was placed on each flank of the corps, who formed the British front line, to protect their own, and threaten the flanks of the enemy; the first battalion of the seventy-first was desired to extend a little to the left of the seventh regiment, and to remain one hundred and fifty yards in the rear. This body of infantry, and near two hundred cavalry, composed the reserve. During the execution of these arrangements, the animation of the officers, and the alacrity of the soldiers, afforded the most promising assurances of success. The disposition being completed, the front line received orders to advance; a fire from some of the recruits of the seventh regiment was suppressed, and the troops moved on in as good a line as troops could move at open files; the militia, after a short contest, were dislodged, and the British approached the continentals. The fire on both sides was well supported, and produced much slaughter; the cavalry on the right were directed to charge the enemy's left; they executed the order with great gallantry, but were drove back by the fire of the reserve, and by a charge of Colonel Washington's cavalry.

“As the contest between the British infantry in the front line and the continentals seemed equally balanced, neither retreating, Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton thought the advance of the seventy-first into line, and a movement of the cavalry in reserve to threaten the enemy's right flank, would put a victorious period to the action. No time was lost in performing this manoeuvre. The seventy-first were desired to pass the seventh before they gave their fire, and were directed not to entangle their right flank with the left of the other battalion. The cavalry were ordered to incline to the left, and to form a line, which would embrace the whole of the enemy's right flank. Upon the advance of the seventy-first all the infantry again moved on; the continentals and back-woodsmen gave ground; the British rushed forwards; an order was dispatched to the cavalry to charge; an unexpected fire at this instant from the Americans, who came about as they were retreating, stopped the British, and threw them into confusion. Exertions to make them advance were useless. The part of the cavalry which had not been engaged fell likewise into disorder, and an unaccountable panic extended itself along the whole; line. The Americans, who before thought they had lost the action, taking advantage of the present situation, advanced upon the British troops, and augmented their astonishment. A general flight ensued. Tarleton sent directions to his cavalry to form about four hundred yards to the right of the enemy, in order to check them, whilst he endeavoured to rally the infantry to protect the guns. The cavalry did not comply with the order, and the effort to collect the infantry was ineffectual; neither promises nor threats could gain their attention; they surrendered or dispersed, and abandoned the guns to the artillery-men, who defended them for some time with exemplary resolution. In this last stage of defeat Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton made another struggle to bring his cavalry to the charge. The weight of such an attack might yet retrieve the day, the enemy being much broken by their late rapid advance; but all attempts to restore order, Collection, or courage, proved fruitless. Above two hundred dragoons forsook their leader, and left the field of battle. Fourteen officers and forty horsemen were, however, not unmindful of their own reputation, or the situation of their Commanding officer. Colonel Washington's cavalry were charged, and driven back into the continental infantry by this handful of brave men. Another party of the Americans, who had seized upon the baggage of the British troops on the road from the late encampment, were dispersed, and this detachment retired towards Broad River unmolested. On the route Tarleton heard, with infinite grief and astonishment, that the main army had not advanced beyond Turkey Creek; he therefore directed his course to the south-east, in order to reach Hamilton's Ford, near the mouth of Bullock's Creek, whence he might communicate with Earl Cornwallis.

“The number of the killed and wounded, in the action at the Cowpens, amounted to near three hundred on both sides, officers and men inclusive: this loss was almost equally shared; but the Americans took two pieces of cannon, the colours of the seventh regiment, and near four hundred prisoners.”

To this narrative, which is not deficient in artifice, but author adds two observations, in which he endeavours to vindicate his own conduct with regard to the unhappy issue of this engagement, and imputes the blame of the overthrow at Cowpens to the total misbehaviour of the troops, and to the failure of Lord Cornwallis in arriving at a concerted point, and weakening the force of the enemy by co-operative movements. But an author, who served in the campaigns 1780 and 1781, and who has written “*Strictures on Colonel Tarleton's History*,” has exposed the futility of his vindication. The opinion of Dr. Ramsay on



the event of this engagement is worthy of attention: "Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton had hitherto acquired distinguished reputation; but he was greatly indebted for his military fame to good fortune and accident. In all his previous engagements he either had the advantage of surprising an incautious enemy; of attacking them when panic-struck after recent defeats; or of being opposed to undisciplined militia. He had gathered no laurels by hard fighting against an equal force; his repulse on this occasion (Cowpens) did more essential injury to the British interest than was compensated by all his victories. Tarleton's defeat was the first link, in a grand chain of causes, which finally drew down ruin, both in North and South-Carolina, on the royal interests."\*<sup>3</sup>

Upon the whole, "The History of the Campaigns in America of 1780 and 1781" is written with uncommon spirit and elegance for a temporary production, such as this undoubtedly will prove. But the author is too much the hero of his own tale, and brings his own figure too often into the foreground of the picture. In the history of events so recent and so important, Colonel Tarleton might have reflected that there were many military critics to dispute his pretended merits, and controvert his supposed facts. Both worlds indeed have given their evidence against him; the historians of America, as well as of Britain, contradict his rash narrative, and his unblushing assertions. His attacks on Lord Cornwallis, malignant, though concealed, will fall to the ground. That general was not without defects; but one of the chief of these was his partiality for Colonel Tarleton; a partiality which was, equally offensive to the English and to the loyal Americans.

As the compiler of a quarto volume, our author possesses no small share of discernment. He has republished in his appendix three letters from Lord Rawdon, three letters from General Green, one from Colonel Stuart, one from Colonel Balfour, and another from General Marion, which are well known in this country. The extracts from the *Remembrancer* and the *Annual Register* form also a copious part of this collection; as if the composer had supposed that a great volume necessarily indicates a great author. The style and manner of Julius Cesar in his Commentaries, which is imitated in this production, is amusing at first, but afterwards becomes offensive and disgusting. There is a remarkable difference between a hero and a mere adventurer; and Alexander the Great ought never to be confounded with Alexander, the Coppersmith.

Art. II. *Strictures on Lieutenant-Colonel, Tarleton's "History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North-America." Wherein military Characters and Corps are vindicated from injurious Aspersions, and several important Transactions placed in their proper Point of View, in a Series of Letters to a Friend. By Roderick Mackenzie, late Lieutenant in the Seventy-first Regiment. To which is added, a Detail of the Siege of Ninety Six, and the Recapture of the Island of New-Providence.* 8vo. As. boards. Faulder, London, 1787.

FRANCISCO Lopez de Gomara, the domestic chaplain of Cortez, published in 1554 a Chronicle of New Spain, the chief object of which was to celebrate the exploits, and magnify the merits, of his patron. When Bernal Diaz del Castillo found, on the perusal of the work, that neither he himself nor many of his fellow-soldiers were once mentioned, by Gomara, but that the fame of all their exploits was ascribed to Cortez, the gallant veteran laid hold of his pen with indignation, and, composed his true history of the conquest of New Spain, in which he does justice to himself and his brave associates. Although he possesses no remarkable skill in composition, and writes more like a soldier than a scholar, yet, as he relates transactions of which he was a witness, and in which he performed a considerable part, his accounts bear all the mark of authenticity, and are accompanied with such a pleasant: *naivete*, and such interesting details, as render his book one of the most singular and curious that is to be found in any language. In like manner Mr. Mackenzie, (the author of the work before us) who served in Lord Cornwallis's army, and was wounded at the battle of Cowpens, struck with the many errors and misrepresentations contained in Tarleton's history, has seized the pen of retribution, and, with a manly spirit of truth, has detected the fallacy of the vain-glorious journalist, vindicated the injured honour of his countrymen, and rendered justice to some of the first characters in the British army. Colonel Tarleton's memoirs have been read with an avidity proportionate to the ideas once formed of his military talents; and, as the public has been deceived by consummate artifice, it became necessary to detect the sophistry which produced the deception. After having exposed Colonel Tarleton's erroneous statement of the consequences which

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<sup>3</sup> [Footnote in the original] \* Ramsay's Hist. Carolin, Vol. II, p. 200.

resulted from the successful defence of Savannah, Mr. Mackenzie attacks him in one of the leading principles of his book:

“It is generally admitted, that the love of fame is, or ought to be, the ruling passion of every soldier; and perhaps it has, in a greater or less degree, had a manifest influence in impelling this order of men to glorious actions, from a Leonidas at Thermopylæ to our immortal Wolfe at the Heights of Abraham. Of this the Corsican chief Paoli, when defending his native island from the attacks of a mercenary republic, appeared truly sensible: ‘He devised an excellent method of promoting bravery among his countrymen. He wrote a circular letter to the priests of every parish in the island, desiring a list to be made out of all those who had fallen in battle. No institution was better contrived; it might be adopted by every nation, as it would give double courage to soldiers, who would have their fame preserved, and at the same time leave to their relatives the valuable legacy of a claim to the kindness of the state.’ In addition to this first principle, it certainly affords a melancholy satisfaction to find in the page of history that justice is done to the memory of the dead; it mingles sympathy with the tears of the widow and orphan; it may encourage future soldiers to emulate the actions of their predecessors, whose lives may have been sacrificed in the service of their country it also gives to the relations of these brave men that claim to the kindness of the state which the Corsican historian, has described. Liberal minds only are influenced by these exalted maxims. But let us consider the light in which they have been viewed by the journalist of the Southern American campaigns.”

These observations do equal honour to the understanding and the heart of our author. But what has been the conduct: of Colonel Tarleton as a historian? Dazzled with his own merit, and having his attention entirely absorbed with his own exploits, he endeavours to cast a shade over those of others. He has passed over in silence some of the most distinguished examples of bravery in the campaigns which he records, and has not even mentioned the glorious death of many gallant officers who fell in the cause of their country. He has been equally indifferent to the fate of many American loyalists; men of incorruptible integrity and undaunted valour, who sacrificed their private interest to public good; and who, though they knew that the peace of their families was destroyed by the ravages of war, fought and bled with manly spirit, and maintained their allegiance to their latest moments.

No charge of omission, however, can be brought against him in relating his own achievements, and the adventures of his corps. Every horse that sickened or died makes a figure in his journal. In p. 17 we find “five *horses* killed and wounded.” Page 20, “the British dragoons lost two men and four *horses*; and the same evening twenty horses expired with fatigue.” Page 30, “thirty-one *horses* killed and wounded.” Page 115, “twenty *horses* were killed and wounded.” Page 180, “with thirty *horses* killed and three men wounded, and a few horses.’

An author bestowing a superior attention to the wounds and death of horses belonging to his own corps to the fall of OFFICERS of equal or superior merit to himself, presents us with the idea of a Yahoo writing the history of the Houyhnhnms.

The errors which Colonel Tarleton committed at the unfortunate engagement at Cowpens, and which seem to decide his *military* character, are judiciously pointed out by Mr. Mackenzie:

“The first error in judgment to be imputed to Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton, on the morning of the 17th of January 1781, is, the not halting his troops before he engaged the enemy. Had he done so, it was evident that the following advantages would have been the result of his conduit: General Morgan’s force and situation might have been distinctly viewed under cover of a very superior cavalry; the British infantry, fatigued with rapid marches, day and night, for some time past, as has been already observed, might have had rest and refreshment; a detachment from the several corps left with the baggage, together with battmen and officers servants, would have had time to come up and join in the action. The artillery all this time might have been playing upon the enemy’s front, or either flank, without risk or insult; the commandants of regiments, Majors M’Arthur and Newmarsh, officers who held commissions long before our author was born, and who had reputations to this day unimpeached, might have been consulted; and, not to dwell on the enumeration of all the advantages which would have accrued from so judicious a delay, time would have been given for the approach of Earl Cornwallis to the preconcerted point, for the attainment of which he has been so much and so unjustly censured.

“The second error was, the unofficer-like impetuosity of directing the line to advance before it was properly formed, and before the reserve had taken its ground; in consequence of which, as might have been expected, the attack was premature, confused, and irregular.

“The third error in this ruinous business was, the omission of giving discretionary powers to that judicious veteran M’Arthur to advance with the reserve at the time that the front line was in pursuit of the militia, by which means the connection, so necessary to troops engaged in the field, was not preserved.

“His fourth error was, ordering Captain Ogilvie, with a troop consisting of no more than forty men, to charge before any impression was made on the continentals, and before Washington’s cavalry had been engaged.

“The next, and the most destructive, for I will not pretend to follow him through all his errors, was in not bringing up a column of cavalry, and completing the route, which, by his own acknowledgement, had commenced through the whole American infantry.”

Upon the whole, these “Strictures” are in the true spirit of military criticism. Mr. Mackenzie has drawn his pen, as he did his sword, for the honour of his country, and has vindicated eminent names that had been injured by misrepresentation. To render justice to great characters that have suffered from obloquy or detraction, is to partake of their glory; to rescue honourable achievements from oblivion, and place them in the fairest light, is next to the praise of performing them.

Our author modestly apologizes for his style, and inform the reader that he is not to expect elegant or polished diction. Plain observations, deduced from such stubborn facts as impress the mind with conviction, stand in need of no rhetorical ornaments. But in truth his composition requires no apology; and, notwithstanding some incorrect expressions, is manly, nervous, and animated. It possesses beauties which rhetoric cannot confer, the noble plainness of amiable sincerity,-and the honest warmth of undissembled probity.

To these Strictures are subjoined “A Detail of the Siege of Ninety-Six, and an Account of the Recapture of New Providence;” in which there is much curious and important information.

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William Thomas Sherman  
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