



Back-Country Victory

Charles Cornwallis, given command in the South, acted immediately to establish a chain of posts in South Carolina in the spring of 1780. Then, on August 16, he tightened his grip on the state at Camden by routing Horatio Gates and a makeshift army of Rebel militia, who "ran like a Torrent and bore all before them." Alexander Hamilton commented acidly that Gates' precipitous flight did "admirable credit to the activity of a man at his time of life."

Planning to expand his operations northward, Cornwallis sent his left wing, a Tory force under Patrick Ferguson, to sweep the interior of the Carolinas. On October 7 it was attacked at King's Mountain by what Ferguson called "back water men . . . a set of mongrels" under Isaac Shelby and John Sevier. The rugged pioneers killed Ferguson and knocked out eighty per cent of his command, a crushing defeat which disabused Cornwallis of any ideas of taking North Carolina in 1780.

The "over-mountain men" from the Watauga settlements rendezvoused at Sycamore Flats (above) before marching on the Tory force at King's Mountain. The Tories fired too high at the attackers charging up the hillside (below) and were overwhelmed.

