

Gates, Horatio

1780 Extract of a letter from General Gates to the President of Congress, dated Hillsborough, Aug 20, 1780 cited in Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America*, 1967:145-147.

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"In the deepest distress and anxiety of mind, I am obliged to acquaint your excellency with the defeat of the troops under my command. I arrived with the Maryland line, the artillery, and the North-Carolina militia, on the 13th instant at Rugeley's, thirteen miles from Camden; and took post there, and was the next day joined by General Stevens, with seven hundred militia from Virginia.

...

Having communicated my plan to the general officers in the afternoon of the 15th, it was resolved to march at ten at night, to take post in a very advantageous situation, with a deep creek in front,

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seven miles from Camden; the heavy baggage, &c. being ordered to march immediately by the Wacsaw road. At ten the army began to march in the following order: Colonel Armand's legion in front, supported on both flanks by Colonel Porterfield's regiment, and the light infantry of the militia; the advanced guard of infantry, the Maryland line, with their artillery, in front of the brigades, the North-Carolina militia, the Virginia militia, the artillery, &c. and the rear guard. Having marched about five miles, the legion was charged by the enemy's cavalry, and well supported on the flanks, as they were ordered, by Colonel Porterfield, who beat back the enemy's horse, and was himself unfortunately wounded; but the enemy's infantry advancing with a heavy fire, the troops in front gave way to the first Maryland brigade, and a confusion ensued, which took some time to regulate. At length the army was ranged in line of battle, in the following order: General Gist's brigade upon the right, with his right close to a swamp, the North-Carolina militia in the center, and the Virginia militia, with the light infantry and Porterfield's corps, on the left; the artillery divided to the brigades; and the first Maryland brigade as a corps de reserve, and to cover the cannon in the road, at a proper distance in the rear. Colonel Armand's corps were ordered to the left, to support the left flank, and oppose the enemy's cavalry. At daylight the enemy attacked and drove in our light party in front, when I ordered the left to advance and attack the enemy; but to my astonishment, the left wing and North-Carolina militia gave way. General Caswall [sic] and myself, assisted by a number of officers, did all in our power to rally the broken troops, but to no purpose, for the enemy coming round the left flank of the Maryland division, completed the rout of the whole militia, who left the continentals to oppose the

enemy's whole force. I endeavoured, with General Caswall [sic], to rally the militia at some distance, on an advantageous

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piece of ground, but the enemy's cavalry continuing to harass their rear, they ran like a torrent, and bore all before them. Hoping yet, that a few miles in the rear they might recover from their panic, and again be brought into order, I continued my endeavour, but this likewise proved in vain.

The militia having taken the woods in all directions, I concluded, with General Caswall [sic], to retire toward Charlotte.