

COL. WILLIAM HILL'S MEMOIRS
OF
THE REVOLUTION

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these things happened we received information that there was a tory colonel by the name of Floyd in the western part of the District who much distressed the Inhabitants and was collecting men to go to the British post at Rocky Mount, upon this Col. Neel with all the men but about 12 or 13- that was left to keep the camp went in pursuit of that party of Tories but unfortunately before he got to their settlement they had marched to Rocky Mount.— And from there a certain captain Hook with a company of Horse and about 500 Tories came to the Iron works, destroyed all the property they could not carry away. Burned the forge furnace, grist and saw mills together with all other buildings even to the negro huts, & bore away about 90 negroes all which was done before Col. Niel returned with the army to camp— About this time I was informed that Col. Sumter was then in Salisbury with a few men waiting for a reinforcement— I then wrote to him, informing him of our situation & that there was a probability of our making a handsome stand—and that we were about to form a junction with Genl. Rutherford, in N. Car., that we were going to attack a large body of Tories that had collected at a place called Ramsour's Mill— But so it was that a detached party of about, 300 horse from Genl. Ruthd. attacked the Tory camp said to be upwards of a 1000 men, killed & dispersed, the whole—and then it was that Col. Sumter met with us from So. Ca. He then got authority from the civil & military authority of that State to impress or take waggons horses, provisions of all kinds, from the enemy that was in that action— & to give a receipt to that state for the same— This being done we returned to So. Ca. & formed a camp on the East side of Catawba River at the place called Clems branch—from this out all our proceedings of importance was done by a convention of the whole—a commission of captains appointed to take notice of all the property taken either from the enemy or friends, & a commissioner to supply us with provisions &c.—

After we had been some time at this camp as before mentioned. in order to prepare for actual service a number of men together

¹Christian Huck, formerly a lawyer of Philadelphia. As a regular captain he ranked a militia field officer.
²Hill's Iron Works, the property of Col. William Hill (author of these Memoirs) and Isaac Hayne.
³Interlined above is: likely
⁴Interlined above is: the

with yr. author. being desirous to go into their own settlements on the west side of the River, in order to get a reinforce as well as other necessaries to enable us to keep the field—shortly after we crossed the River we were informed by our friends, that Capt. Hook the same that had a few weeks before destroyed the Iron works had sent to most of the houses in the settlement to notify the aged men, the young being in Camp, to meet him at a certain place, that he desired to make terms with them. & that he would put them in the King's peace accordingly they met him, he undertook to harrangue them, on the certainty of his majesty's, reducing all the Colonies, to obedience, and he far exceeded the Assyrian Genl's who we read of in ancient writ in blasphemy by saying that God almighty had become a Rebel, but if there were 30 Gods on that side, they would all be conquered, was his expression— Whilst he was employed in this impious blasphemy he had his officers & men taking all the horses fit for his purpose, so that many of the aged men had to walk many miles home afoot— This ill behaviour of the enemy made an impression on the minds of the most serious men in this little band and raised their courage under the belief that they would be made instruments in the hand of Heaven to punish this enemy for his wickedness and blasphemy—and no doubt the recent injuries that many of their families received from the said Hook and his party had, an effect to stimulate this little band to a proper courage— The number of the Americans was 133, and many of them without arms Capr. Hook had about 100 horse & Col. Ferguson, at this time commander of the Tory Militia, had about 300 men: they were encamp'd, in a Lane—a strong fence on each side—the Horse picketed in the inside of a field next to the lane, with their furniture on the officers in a mansion house in the field, in which was a number of women, which the said Hook had brought there, and at the moment the action commenced, he was then flourishing his sword over the head of these unfortunate women, & threatening them with death if they would not get their husbands & sons to come in—and

¹The words in order stricken out here.

²The word who stricken out and that interlined above.

³The word blasphemy changed to blasphemous and harrangue interlined above.

⁴Interlined above is: of the

⁵The word instruments changed to instrumental

⁶Interlined above is: likewise

marching all night. we made the attack about the break of day— The plan was to attack both ends of the Lane at the same time, but unfortunately the party sent to make the attack on the east end of the lane met with some embarrassments, by fences, brush, briars &c. that they could not get to the end of the lane until the firing commenced at the west end—The probability is that if that party had made good their march in time very few of them wd. have escaped— However Cap. Hook was killed, and also Col. Forguson of the Tory Militia— Hook's Luit^t. was wounded & died afterwards; considerable number of privates the number not known, as there were many of their carcasses found in the woods some days after— This happened about the 10th. of July 1780 at Williamsons Plantation in Y^k. D^s., and it was the first check the enemy had received after the fall of Charleston; and was of greater consequence to the American cause than can be well supposed from an affair of small a magnitude—as it had the tendency to inspire the Americans with courage & fortitude & to teach them that the enemy was not invincible—¹And here in order to shew the present generation, what a set of unprinced officers, with a few exceptions, their fathers had to deal with— Two very valuable young negroes, belonging to yr. author were taken by the wounded Lieu^t. already mentioned, and were kept to wait upon him. He requested of me to grant him a guard & a waggon to take him to the post at Rocky Mount— Which request was granted to him. & while I was making arrangements to send the guard the two negroes disappear^d. I then told the Lieu^t. that I knew that they were gone to Rocky Mount. & that I s^d. should expect him to send them back with the guard, he appeared to be very warm that I should have any doubt of his doing so, and said, that he would be a D—n scoundrel to keep my property, after receiving such human treatment from me— But so it was, it turned out that he shewed himself to be the person he mentioned: for the Cap^t. of the guard, knew the negroes, & found that he the said Lieu^t had them again in his service, and when he was ready to leave the place applied to him for the negroes; but he threatened him and the rest of

¹Interlined above is: after

²The word could stricken out and did written above

³Interlined above is: at the East end

the guard with confinement, if he would say any thing about them, & it was with a great difficulty he obtained a pass to return back to me— These two negroes have never been recovered by me¹ by any other for me

Shortly after this, being the 13th. July 1780. Gen^l. Sumter made an unsuccessful attempt to reduce the British post at Rocky M^t. This was made under the impression that the Enemy was in a large framed house: the walls of which were only thin clap boards, and we supposed that our balls wd. have the desired effect by shooting through the wall, but so it was, that from the time we rec^d. this information until the time the attack was made the Enemy had wrought day & night and had placed small logs about a foot from the inside of the wall and rammed the cavity with clay, and under this delusion we made the attack—; but soon found that we c^d. injure them noway, but by shooting in their port-holes And here the brave Col. Neil was killed & 7 privates: upon this we were forced to retreat behind a ledge of Rocks about a hundred y^ds. from the house— Here the officers held a council & it was discovered that there was a large rock, and between this rock and the fort, stood a small house which might be fired by throwing fire brands over the rock, & that this house wd. communicate the fire to the house the Enemy was in and as we had the command of the water they could not possibly extinguish the flames— From this ledge of Rocks where the army lay, to the rock near the house was about 100 y^ds. free of any obstructions: & it is well known that when any object is going from or coming to a marksman, the marksman had near as good a chance as if the object was stationary it was then proposed by the Gen^l. & other officers for 2 men to endeavor to fire that small house, but the undertaking appeared so hazardous, that no two men of the army could be found to undertake it— After some considerable time was spent, yr. author proposed that if any other man w^d. go with him he w^d. make the attempt: at length a young man, brother to the Johnsons now living in Fairfield D^s. propos^d to undertake with me—and we had every assistance that c^d. be obtained— Rich lightwood split & bound with cords to cover the most vital parts of our bodies, as well as a large bundle of the same wood to carry in our arms, being thus equip^d

¹Interlined after me is: nor