

Ld. Moore to Col. McKeehan.

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Warrington, Jan^y 14, 1801-

My Dear General

Your wish for a detail of the circumstances which preceded the defeat of Gates at Camden shall be gratified as far as my recollection will serve. You tell me that it is not by yourself the information is sought. I must, therefore, express my hope that there is no intention of impeaching the just credit which has always been given to Lord Cornwallis for that battle; altho' I am not to disguise that, when

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I saw his Public Letter, I did not think myself equi-
 -tally treated in his recital of the event. I was
 simply clasped with Colonel Webster as having done
 my duty in the action with proper exertion at
 the head of the Bay which I commanded. Thereas little
 I think it will appear to you that I stood upon
 very different ground, both as to particulars of our
 -ber date which led to that battle & as to species of
 services in the very decision. I have not Steedman's
 History; but I take it for granted his dates must
 be correct. Parleton's narration is here. He has
 so strangely disjointed facts which bore important
 relation to each other, & has so singularly miscompre-
 -hended

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equi-headed points with which he ought naturally to
have been acquainted, that his exposition of the
chain of events is as incorrect as his specific
accounts of many of the battles. I send, therefore,
little aid by way of remuneration to that book.
Having been left in the command of the Back
Country when Lord Cornwallis went to Charleston,
I had by my ties kept a vigilant eye over
the force which was collecting in both Carolinas
for the invasion of our newly acquired territory.
Tho' Lord Cornwallis had not thought it probable that
the attack would be made upon South Carolina
till the violent heat of the summer should be

passed, I had suspected that Gates might calculate
on our inability to stand the Climate especially as it
was known that we were very sickly & might there
make a speedier effort. I had on that account
immediately examined the Country & found my own
plans. Camden had from the first day appeared to
be an objectionable station for the Army. It was
a false Position relative to the Country, & in itself
indefensible beyond any ground that I ever saw. On
learning that a body of the Army's Militia had ad-
vanced to the River, I considered it a sure indica-
-tion that Gates would move immediately. I therefore
detached Webster, a good & gallant Officer, to the East branch

of Lynches Creek, & I reinforced a Post which
I had at Hanging Rock. ~~Yesterday being~~
~~is~~ as soon as I had made the necessary arrange-
-ments at Camden, I followed Webster. of distances,
I must speak loosely. I suppose the point, where the
Road crosses the East branch of Lynches Creek,
to be thirty miles from Camden, the Post at Hanging
Rock, thirty-five. There was a ready communication
between the two, by a road of about twelve miles.
My object in taking this forward position was to
retard the progress of Gates till Cornwallis should
collect force from other parts of the Province, or
to reduce the Enemy to hazard an action where by

peculiar advantages of situation would compensate the
 for any disparity in numbers. I had 1100 men with me,
 all regulars or Provincials. The Detachment at Wang-
 -ing Rock consisted of 400 Provincials & 700 Militia.
 The latter was a requisite Post, because that Supter all
 menaced that Road to Candem with a Corps of
 Militia. Gates came opposite to me. Aware of the
 danger of attempting to force the Pass & of the dif-
 -ficulties that would be entailed by seeking another
 route, he apparently waited the issue of an enterprise
 that was meditated against Wanging Rock. One
 evening, news was brought to me that Supter had
 surprised & carried that Post, & the account of

ate the defeat of that Detachment was soon confirmed
by a number of fugitives from every Corps composing
it, except from the Legion Infanterie. It appeared a
clear consequence that Sumpter, whose men were
all mounted, would lose no time in pushing for
Camden; by which, in addition to the loss of our Ma-
-gazines, I should have had him on my rear while
Gates pressed by front. I addressed the Officers around
me, who seemed struck with the obvious magnitude
of the evil. I told them, in the hearing of the Soldiers,
that we were in a scrape, from which nothing but Courage
could extricate us, & that we must march instantly to

could Supter before he could further cooperate with
Gates. We marched in less than half an hour, and en-
-tered the best branch of Lynch's Creek, directing our
course to Grant's Quarters. In the morning, I received
the information that the fate of the day had been most
unexpectedly turned at Hanging Rock. Supter, after
beating every thing else out of the field, had assaulted
the Legion Infantry in a peculiarly steep part of that
strong position. And his militia had not only been
repulsed, but were so broken & disorganized by a vigorous
charge with the bayonet that they had abandoned the
whole ridge. That position was, therefore, still ours. I
immediately hastened to occupy the bridge and the

Western branch of Lynch's Creek. Having sent my Cavalry
across it, they speedily saw the Enemy's Regiments of which
I found that Gates had followed me. In the afternoon
I learned that he was encamped on the other side of
the Creek. The communication from my new position to
Hanging Rock was much longer than it had been
from my former one; & the Detachment, weakened &
except the Legion Infantry, dispersed, was a doubtful
-view against the future attempts of Sumpter. I therefore
advised those Regts to fall back & take post behind
Granny's Quarter Creek; because, altho' there was no strength
of ground there as there was at Hanging Rock, I could
in that situation give them ready support. You will see
in this the same principle of protecting the advance of.

gates until our Cavalry from Charleston & our Light Infantry from
 from ninety-six should arrive. Had I reported the western branch
 of Lynch's Creek to encounter Gates, I must have met him
 in a Pine-Barren even more advantageous for his superior
 -ty of numbers than a plain could have been. He had nearly thirty
 four times as many men as I had with me. Had I encountered
 my force at Camden, I must have stood in better before
 the arrival of the reinforcements, in a position that
 would give every imaginable advantage to the assailant, with
 the certainty that the mischief of a check was inevitable
 as there would be no space for rallying & the first sweep
 of the enemy put them in possession of our Stores. Tarleton, a
 with a British pretension to Generalship, accuses me for
 not having them collected by Troops at Camden, & accuses Gates as

for incapacity in not comprehending that the getting
road near & destroying of magazines must be fatal.
his Parleton, considering for so long a period an only Corps of
Light troops in that Country, ought to have known that,
which it is evident by his procedure Gates did know,
namely, that there was no turning by right flank with
out going fifty miles down Lynches Creek, there was no
turning by Left by a shorter process than heading
into the Creek & getting into the other Road above Hanging
Rock. Lynches Creek was thro' Swamps of perhaps a
mile in breadth on each side; impenetrable, except where
a Crossover has been made at the passing-places on
the great road. The thick woods of those Swamps prevented
Gates from seeing each other's encampments across the Creek.

In my usual position, Gates had a Post at the outlet of the
 Casnewy on his side: but he appeared soon to have discovered
 a Pass which came out about two miles from his Camp, com-
 -municating with a Road on the Creek, from which there was
 a path into the Casnewy in my front. By this track I could
 be sent out & receive my Troops. The circumstance afforded
 a great temptation for an attempt to surprise the Enemy's
 Camp: but when you recollect that I was then young,
 not backward in enterprise, & confident in my Troops,
 you may be of opinion there was some honesty in the
 forbearance. I could have offered reasons such as every
 one must have been oblig'd to take upon trust from me
 to prove the expediency of the hazard; but it would, in
 truth, have been an unjust stake of the public interest.
 I might have been discovered so as that Gates might

I had time to form his army, & in that case I should
have to fight under equal disadvantage. On the other
hand, I was well apprized that Gates' army was suffer-
-ing more distress from being detained in that Desert.
But there was one consideration which would alone have been
decisive with me: I mean that Cornwallis was then on
his way to join us, and had I achieved a Victory it must
have been terminated by the consciousness that I had arriv-
-ed myself of my temporary command to watch a Rebel
which ought to have been reserved for my General. To induce
Gates, however, into minor war was best. I retired a
mile from the outlet of my Caseway in order to tempt
him to pass the Creek; when I might have attacked him
where branches of the Swamp would have hindered him from

Judging of his numbers: but he was too wise to make the
 attempt. At length, he could no longer delay a decision.
 If by a march of fifty miles he could reach Lynch's Creek below me,
 he would still have to make his way towards Camden thro'
 a succession of defiles in the Swamps where the Black River
 has its source, with almost a certainty that I should meet
 him there. He, therefore, determined to march to Hanging
 Rock, at which point he would be thirty-four miles from
 Camden, whereas in his present position he was but fifteen.
 My view of gaining time, of course, had succeeded. As soon as
 I had spread myself that this was not a feint, I broke up the
 bridge & Carriways: but I retired to Camden, whither I marched
 the troops from Green's Linnets Creek. The motive for this was a
 conviction that rather not now be decided between that Creek

at Camden. The banks of the Creek were not defensible, and the
Pike between it & Hanging Rock was the sort of extensive
waste which we were always to shun. Cornwallis arrived, as
did also the reinforcements. Having informed himself from me
of the preceding movements, he asked me what had been
my further purpose. I told him that, as nothing appeared
to me so ineligible as receiving the Enemy at Camden, I had
intended to wait till my Spies should apprise me of Gates'
being approached within an easy march, when I meant
to move forward & attack him. Cornwallis entered
at once into the reasoning, adopted my plan, & reported
himself for its prosecution on the measures I had taken
to secure information. In the mean time, he made all the
arrangements which he judged expedient. It was I who brought

to him the intelligence that Gates had arrived at Kingsley's
Plantation. With a Pencil I sketched for him the ground, with
which I was well acquainted, indicating the position of the
Enemy, as I understood it, by the relation of the Spies, &
pointing out a path from the main road by which we might
possibly get undiscovered on the Enemy's flank. On these terms
the attempt against the Enemy was determined. We marched
at night. At day in the morning the leading Battalion, in
view of which I was, was charged by Cavalry. Their pieces
being loaded, our Infantry shrank to the right & left into
the bushes, thrusting at the Cavalry with their bayonets. The Ca-
valry retreated precipitately & we thought it had been [?] a
strong party. When the confusion was over we resumed our
march: But we were led a heavy fire poured upon us, appa-

- went from two Battalions. A brigade of ours immediately
formed, advanced in line, & soon exchanged fire with the Enemy.
The latter were broken & fell back. When we came to show
them dead lay, I got off my horse to feel by the hands
if they were the Continental Paper they which I suspected
them to be by the nature of their fire. I was immediately
satisfied in the point. I told Cornwallis of it, saying
that it certainly was the Enemy's lay which we had met.
And I then told his Lordship that he could not have
better ground to fight upon, as it was a sort of neck
between two Swamps which would prevent the Enemy
from getting round his flanks. On this appearance, it
being quite dark, he determined to rest till morning
& then to attack the Enemy. In the battle which ensued,
I behaved neither better or worse than my neighbors. Therefore

Lord Cornwallis's mention of me in his connection with Webster was
 the fair compliment paid as a matter of course to Officers of my
 rank after a successful action, and, as far as referred to the
 line of battle alone, was all that any justice could require
 towards me. But the preliminary events had not been main-
 -tained: had the arrangement been such, I own true
 to affair, as had no claim upon Lord Cornwallis's special
 acknowledgment either as an Officer or as a man. Lord
 Cornwallis had the real merit of cool decision, judicious
 management, & steady firmness in the conduct of the battle.
 Tho' the thickness of the fog in the morning left him to ex-
 rely as much upon his representation of the nature of the
 ground as he had been obliged to do during the night, his
 claim to all the credit of the Victory cannot thence be
 weakened: for it is a part of the skill of the General to

avail himself of the rights that he may gather from
of any inferior officer, & the latter cannot have a pretension
to be to share in the same for having merely possessed an accident
piece of knowledge which might have remained unprop-
-able but for the judgment of the Court. This is clear
-ly the principle on which such a case should be determi-
-ed by others. With regard to the impression left upon my
mind by that chain of events, I should be disingenuous did
I not avow that the final result furnished as much of
that confidence which one draws from one's own successful
to experience as if the conclusion had been wholly mine. The plea
of the person without wavering, tho' with infinite anxiety, for so many
days, had completely answered the end proposed & had brought
the matter to an issue on more favorable terms than my hopes

degree of perseverance could have fashioned; on you which, as it had been the distinct object of my preceding movements & was prosecuted exactly according to the line which I had laid down, I have ventured to believe would not have had any different termination had the function of ordering the attack fallen to my share.

Now, My Dear General, in return for having given me the labor of travelling over an obsolete tale which can hardly be interesting to any one upon ordinary grounds, let me claim from you that you shall not suffer a copy to be taken of the account. Remember that I have had the satisfaction of seeing one letter in print which had been intended only for a sort of confidential communication. I have entered into this detail to satisfy your request: Take care that I be not subjected to the disgrace of seeming to call attention to business or long gone by & which the great scale of action in later years would appear of miserable insignificance.

Jan 19 1801
Lord Moira

Colonel McMahon

Faithfully [? yours] Moira