

Colonel Tarleton Gave No Quarter to South Carolinians



Just before sunrise, Colonel Banastre Tarleton's van came out of the woods in front of the Americans and he ordered his dragoons to attack the first line of skirmishers who opened fire. They shot fifteen dragoons while the others retreated. Tarleton quickly ordered an infantry charge before the remainder of his infantry and cavalry could make it out of the woods. He then used his main body to attack the skirmish line, but the American skirmishers kept firing as they fell back to join the second line of the Pickens Militia.

The British attacked again, this time reaching the militiamen but were surprised when two volleys were fired upon them. This tactic confused the British officers. They regrouped and continued advancing. Tarleton ordered one of his officers to charge into the "defeated" Americans. His men moved forward in regular formation and were momentarily checked by the militia

musket fire but continued to advance while Pickens militia moved around behind and prepared to fire off their second volley.

The British took the Americans withdrawal of its first two lines to mean that they were retreating and commenced advancing headlong into the third and final line of the regulars who were awaiting them on the hill. The British Highlanders were ordered to flank the American right but that flanking movement was observed by John Eager Howard who ordered his Virginia militiamen to turn and face the Scots. However, in the noise of battle the order which Howard gave was misunderstood and the militiamen began to withdraw. It was almost 7:45 a.m. when the weary British who had marched all night, became tired and disorganized.

When they saw the militia withdrawing, they assumed that the Americans were on the run. So they broke formation and charged. Morgan ordered a volley. The Howard militia stopped their running and made an about-face. The Virginians fired, causing the confused British to lurch to a dead halt. John Eager Howard shouted, "Charge bayonets!" The Continentals mounted a bayonet charge upon the weary British who surrendered and ran. Meanwhile, while the cavalry of William Washington hit the British on their right flank and rear, the Pickens militia charged out from behind the hill and encircled the British highlanders. Then Howard ordered the Virginia militia to turn about and attack the Scots from the other direction.

Nearly half of the British and Loyalist infantrymen fell to the ground whether they were wounded. Their exhaustion was complete. But Tarleton rode back to his Legion Cavalry and ordered them to charge, but they refused and ran off the field instead. The Highlanders, now surrounded by militia and Continentals, surrendered.

Desperate to save something, Tarleton found about forty cavalymen and attempted to save two cannons, but they were gone. He then rode back into the fight, but after clashing with Washington, also retreated from the field. He was stopped by Washington, who attacked him with his saber and

shouted "Where is now the boasting Tarleton?" The whole battle had only lasted one hour!