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| <p>In February 1778, in the midst of the frozen winter at Valley Forge, American troops began an amazing transformation. Friedrich von Steuben, a Prussian captain and talented drillmaster, volunteered his services to General Washington and went to work “to make regular soldiers out of country bumpkins.” Von Steuben taught the colonial soldiers to stand at attention, execute field maneuvers, fire and reload quickly, and wield bayonets. With the help of such European military</p> | <p>leaders, the raw Continental Army was becoming an effective fighting force.</p> <p>Around the same time, another military leader, the Marquis de Lafayette, a brave idealistic twenty-year-old French aristocrat, offered his assistance. The young Lafayette joined Washington’s staff and bore the misery of Valley Forge, lobbied for French reinforcements in France in 1779, and led a command in Virginia in the last years of the war.</p> |
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| <p>After their devastating defeat at Saratoga, the British changed their military strategy; in the summer of 1778 they began to shift their operations to the South. There, the British hoped to rally Loyalist support, reclaim their former colonies in the region, and then slowly fight their way back north.</p> <p>At the end of 1778, a British expedition easily took Savannah, Georgia, and by the spring of 1779, a royal governor once again commanded Georgia. In 1780, General Henry Clinton, who had replaced Howe in New York, along with the ambitious general Charles Cornwallis sailed south with 8,500 men. In their greatest victory of the war, the British captured Charles Town, South Carolina, in May 1780 and marched 5,500 American</p> | <p>soldiers off as prisoners of war. Clinton then left for New York, leaving Cornwallis to command the British forces in the South and to conquer South and North Carolina. For most of 1780, Cornwallis succeeded. As the redcoats advanced, they were joined by thousands of African Americans who had escaped from Patriot slave owners to join the British and win their freedom. In August, Cornwallis’s army smashed American forces at Camden, South Carolina, and within three months the British had established forts across the state. However, when Cornwallis and his forces advanced into North Carolina, Patriot bands attacked them and cut British communication lines. The continuous harassment forced the redcoats to retreat to South Carolina.</p> |
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| <p>Washington ordered Nathanael Greene, his ablest general, to march south and harass Cornwallis as he retreated. Greene divided his force into two groups, sending 600 soldiers under the command of General</p> | <p>Daniel Morgan to South Carolina. Cornwallis in turn sent Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton and his troops to pursue Morgan’s soldiers.</p> <p>Morgan and his men led the British on a grueling</p> |
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