At length, South Carolina being subjugated, Lord Cornwallis proposed to enter North Carolina, and as a part of his operations, on the 28th of January, 1781, Maj. James H. Craig took possession of Wilmington. His force consisted of eighteen vessels, carrying a full supply of provisions and munitions, and 400 regular troops, artillery, and dragoons. At that time Brunswick was entirely deserted, and Wilmington contained but 200 houses and only 1,000 inhabitants. The entire Cape Fear region was defenseless. The losses of the Cape Fear counties at Camden and in other battles at the South had been heavy, while many of the militia and the whole Continental Line had been surrendered by Lincoln at Charleston. Thus the Whig strength had been greatly weakened, while there were in the country but few guns and no powder and lead. On the other hand, the Loyalists had been strengthened by accessions from those who wearied of the war.

Major Craig at once dispatched detachments to scour the country, seize prominent Whigs, collect forage, and arouse the Loyalists, who in some counties largely outnumbered the Whigs. After the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis retreated to Wilmington, his army arriving there on the 7th of April. In the closing days of April, when he had repaired his damage as well as he could, he marched through the eastern counties to Virginia, leaving the subjugation of North Carolina to Major Craig.

Large bodies of Loyalists, well supplied by the British with arms and ammunition and too strong to be successfully resisted, now marched at will throughout the Upper Cape Fear, suppressing the Whigs and taking many prisoners, confining them in prison ships or in Craig's "bull-pen" on shore.

After Cornwallis had passed on to Virginia, General Lillington returned to his former position at Heron Bridge, over the Northeast; but in June he was forced to retire into Onslow County, and Craig established an outpost at Rutherford Mills, on Ashe's Creek, seven miles east of Burgaw, where he constructed a bastion fort. In the meantime Craig had been active in organizing the Loyalists, and issued a proclamation notifying the inhabitants that they were all British subjects and must enroll themselves as Loyalist Militia, and those who did not do so by the first day of August were to be harried, their property seized and sold, and themselves destroyed. On the last day of grace Craig began a march through the eastern counties, his

loyal lieutenants being very vigorous in the counties on the Northwest and the Haw and the Deep Rivers. When he reached Rock Creek, two miles east of Wallace, he found Colonel Kenan with some 500 militia ready to contest his passage, but Kenan's ammunition was soon exhausted and the British successfully crossed and dispersed the militia. For ten days Craig remained in Duplin and harried the Whigs, and then, after being joined by 300 Loyalists, he moved towards New Bern. Lillington was at Limestone Bridge, but hurried on the road to the Trent to keep in Craig's front. He had about 600 men, but only three rounds of ammunition, and had been directed not to hazard a battle. On the 17th of August General Caswell reported to the Governor: "General Lillington is between New Bern and the enemy, and I am fearful will risk an action. I have done everything I can to prevent it, and have let him have a sight of Your Excellency's letter, wherein you mention that no general action must take place." Craig entered New Bern, and then marched towards Kinston, but turned south and went to Richlands, and, after obtaining a supply of forage, returned to Wilmington. At the east, the Whigs now rallied everywhere, those in Duplin, having suffered greatly, being thoroughly exasperated. They surprised a body of Tories, "cut many of them to pieces, took several and put them to instant death." The retaliation on each side was fierce and ferocious, until at length the Tories subsided. But in Bladen and higher up the Tory detachments, each numbering several hundred, held the country and drove the Whigs out. However, on August 28, Colonel Brown, with about 150 Bladen men, won a complete victory at Elizabethtown and broke the Tory power in Bladen. But a fortnight later, Fanning, whose force numbered 1,000 men, took Hillsboro, captured the Governor, and fought the Battle of Cane Creek.

It was not until October that General Rutherford was able to collect enough men to march to the relief of Wilmington. Early in November he reached the Northeast, ten miles above the town, and established himself there, hemming Craig in. But now momentous events happening at Yorktown had their effect on the Cape Fear. On the 17th of November, Light-Horse Harry Lee (the father of Gen. Robert E. Lee) arrived at Rutherford's camp, bringing the glad news of the surrender of Cornwallis. Immediately the whole camp united in a *feu de joie,* and then Rutherford crossed the river and took post at Schaw's, four miles from the town. On the following morning, Novem-