



# The London Gazette

## EXTRAORDINARY.

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*Downing-Street, September 13, 1806.*

**D**ISPATCHES, of which the following are Copies and Extracts, have this Day been received at the Office of the Right Honorable William Windham, One of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, from Major General Beresford, commanding a Detachment of His Majesty's Troops in South America.

*SIR, Fort of Buenos Ayres, July 2, 1806.*

**I**HAD the Honor to communicate to you, by my Letter dated the 30th April, the Circumstances of my Arrival at St. Helena, and the Result of the Application to the Honorable the Governor of that Place for Troops.

The Fleet sailed thence the 2d of May, and after a most unexpected long Passage made Cape St. Mary on the 8th of June: His Majesty's Ship Narcissus had been dispatched from the Fleet on the 27th of May, and Sir Home Popham thought it right to proceed in her for the Purpose of making himself acquainted with the Navigation of the River, that no Delay might occur in proceeding immediately on the Arrival of the Troops to such Place as our Information should induce us first to attack. I had sent Captain Kennet of the Royal Engineers (not liking myself to leave the Troops) in the Narcissus, to make such Reconnoitring of the Enemy's Places on the River, as Circumstances would admit; and to collect every possible Information concerning them, and the Strength of the Enemy at the several Places.

From Fogs and baffling Winds we did not meet the Narcissus until the Sixth Day after our Arrival in the River, and I had there the Satisfaction to see in Company with her the Ocean Transport, which had parted from us previous to our going to St. Helena. Sir Home Popham and myself immediately consulted whether it would be better first to attack the Town of St. Philip of Monte-Video, or Buenos Ayres, the

Capital of the Provinces; and after much reasoning, we determined to proceed against Buenos Ayres, which made it necessary to remove from the Line of Battle Ships, the Troops and Marines, and such Seamen as were incorporated with the latter, and others that had been practised to Arms during the Passage, into the Transports, and His Majesty's Ship Narcissus, which was effected on the 16th Ult. and though then only about Ninety Miles from Buenos Ayres; still, though to his Skill Sir Home Popham added the most persevering Zeal and Assiduity, yet from Fogs, the Intricacy of the Navigation, and continual opposing winds, it was not until the 24th, at Night, that we reached opposite to it. We found ourselves the next Morning, about eight Miles from the Point of Quilmes, where I proposed landing, having been informed by an Englishman, who was Pilot for the River, and who had been taken by the Narcissus out of a Portuguese Vessel, that it was an excellent Place, and an easy Access from it into the Country. As soon as the Wind would permit, on the 25th Sir Home Popham took the Shipping as near as it was possible for them to go; and at a convenient Distance for disembarking, which was effected in the course of the Afternoon and Night, and without any Opposition: the Enemy remaining at the Village of Reduction, on a Height about Two Miles from us in our Front: the whole intermediate Space, as well as to the Right and Left, being a perfect Flat; but my Guide informed me that though in Winter it was impassable, it was then very practicable, and easy for Guns to pass.

It was Eleven o'Clock in the Morning of the 26th, before I could move off my Ground, and the Enemy could, from his Position, have counted every Man I had; the Numbers as per Margin\*. He was drawn up along the Brow of a Hill, on which was

\* See the "Actual State of the Troop, &c." at the end of this Letter.

the Village of Reduction, which covered his Right Flank, and his Force consisted principally of Cavalry, (I have been since informed Two Thousand,) with Eight Field-Pieces. The Nature of the Ground was such, that I was under the Necessity of going directly to his Front; and to make my Line, as much as I could, equal to his, I formed all the Troops into one Line, except the St. Helena Infantry of One Hundred and Fifty Men, which I formed One Hundred and Twenty Yards in the Rear, with Two Field Pieces, with Orders to make face to the Right or Left, as either of our Flanks should be threatened by his Cavalry. I had Two Six-Pounders on each Flank, and Two Howitzers in the Centre of the first Line. In this Order, I advanced against the Enemy, and after we had got within range of his Guns, a Tongue of Swamp crossed our Front, and obliged me to halt whilst the Guns took a small Circuit to cross, and which was scarcely performed when the Enemy opened their Field-Pieces on us, at first well pointed, but as we advanced at a very quick Rate, in spite of the boggy Ground that very soon obliged us to leave all our Guns behind, his Fire did us but little Injury. The 71st Regiment reaching the Bottom of the Heights in a pretty good Line, seconded by the Marine Battalion, the Enemy would not wait their nearer Approach, but retired from the Brow of the Hill, which our Troops gaining, and commencing a Fire of small Arms, he fled with Precipitation, leaving to us Four Field-Pieces and One Tumbrel, and we saw nothing more of him that Day.

I halted Two Hours on the Field to rest the Troops, and to make Arrangements for taking with us the Enemy's Guns (and our own, which had now, by the Exertions of Captain Donnelly, of His Majesty's Ship Narcissus, been extricated from the Bog. He had accidentally landed, and accompanied the Troops, on seeing them advance to the Enemy, and I am much indebted to him for his voluntary Assistance.

I then marched in hopes of preventing the Destruction of the Bridge over the Rio Chuelo, a River at this Season of the Year not fordable, and which lay between us and the City; distant from it about Three Miles, and Eight from our then Situation; and though I used every Diligence, I had the Mortification to see it in Flames long before I could reach it. I halted the Troops for the Night a Mile from it, and pushed on Three Companies of the 71st, under Lieutenant Colonel Pack, with Two Howitzers, to the Bridge, to endeavour to prevent its total Destruction. I accompanied this Detachment, but on reaching the Bridge found it entirely consumed; and as the Enemy during the Night was heard bringing down Guns, I withdrew the Detachment before Light, as their Position was thought too open and exposed to the Enemy's Fire, who had at Nine o'Clock, on hearing some of our Soldiers go to the River to get Water, opened a Fire from their Guns, and a considerable Line of Infantry.

As soon as it was light I sent Captain Kennet of the Engineers to reconnoitre the Sides of the River, and found that on our Side we had little or no Cover to protect us, whilst the Enemy were drawn up behind Hedges, Houses, and in the Shipping on the opposite Bank, the river not Thirty Yards wide. As our Situation and Circumstance could not admit

of the least Delay, I determined to force the Passage, and for that Purpose ordered down the Field Pieces, which, with the Addition of those taken from the Enemy the Day before, were Eleven (one I had spiked and left, not being able to bring it off), to the Water's Edge, and ordered the Infantry to remain in the Rear, under Cover, except the Light Company and Grenadiers of the 71st. As our Guns approached, the Enemy opened a very ill directed Fire from great Guns and Musquetry; the former soon ceased after our Fire opened, the latter was kept up for more than Half an Hour, but though close to us, did us but little or no Injury, so ill was it directed. We then found Means, by Boats and Rafts, to cross a few Men over the Rio Chuelo, and on ordering all Fire to cease, the little of them that remained ceased also.

The Troops which opposed us during these Two Days appear to have been almost entirely Provincial, with a considerable Proportion of Veteran Officers. The Numbers that were assembled to dispute our Passage of the River. I have been since informed were about Two Thousand Infantry, I had no Reason from their Fire to suppose their Numbers so great, the Opposition was very feeble; the only Difficulty was the crossing the River to get at them.

I cannot omit reporting to you that I had the most just Cause to be satisfied with the Conduct of every Officer, and all the Troops under my Command: To Lieutenant-Colonel Pack of the 71st every Praise is due, as well as to that excellent Regiment. The Battalion of Marines, commanded by Captain King of the Royal Navy, not only behaved with the utmost good Conduct, but with a Discipline in the Field much beyond what could have been expected, though every Exertion to effect it had been used by Commodore Sir H. Popham, and every Officer of the Royal Navy during the Passage.

A Corps of Seamen, who had been drilled to Small Arms, were also landed; they were between Eighty and Ninety in Number, and I was under the Necessity of attaching them to draw the Guns, which they did with a Cheerfulness and Zeal that did them great Credit; and I was under great Obligation to Captain King for his Activity in preparing Rafts, Boats, &c. to pass the Rio-Chuelo.

Lieutenant-Colonel Lane, and the St. Helena Troops, also merit my Thanks for their good Conduct; as does Captain Ogilvie, commanding the Artillery, for the Manner in which the Guns were conducted and served. Captain Kennett of the Royal Engineers, was particularly serviceable by his Intelligence and Zeal; as were the Honorable Major Deane, my Brigade Major, and the Honorable Ensign Gordon of the 3d Guards, my Aide-de-Camp.

By Eleven o'Clock A. M. I had got some Guns and the greater Part of the Troops across the River, and seeing no Symptoms of further Opposition, and learning that the Troops in general had deserted the City, Motives of Humanity induced me to send, by the Honorable Ensign Gordon, a Summons to the Governor to deliver to me the City and Fortress, that the Excesses and Calamities which would most probably occur if the Troops entered in a hostile Manner might be avoided; informing him that the British Character would insure to them the exercise of their Religion, and Protection to their Persons and all Private Property. He returned to me as