

*Downing-Street, September 2, 1809.*

A DISPATCH, of which the following is a Copy, was Yesterday Morning received at the Office of Lord Viscount Castlereagh, one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, from Lieutenant-General the Earl of Chatham, dated Headquarters, Batz, August 29, 1809.

MY LORD,

MAJOR Bradford delivered to me your Lordship's Dispatch of the 21st Instant, signifying to me His Majesty's Commands that I should convey to Lieutenant-General Sir Eyre Coote, the General and other Officers and Troops employed before Flushing, and particularly to those of the Artillery and Engineer Departments, His Majesty's most gracious Approbation of their Conduct; and which I have obeyed with the most entire Satisfaction.

I had the Honour in my last Dispatch of acquainting your Lordship with my Intention of proceeding to this Place, and I should have been most happy to have been enabled to have announced to your Lordship the further Progress of this Army. Unfortunately however, it becomes my Duty to state to your Lordship that, from the concurrent Testimony from so many Quarters, as to leave no Doubt of the Truth of the Information, the Enemy appears to have collected so formidable a Force, as to convince me that the Period was arrived, at which my Instructions would have directed me to withdraw the Army under my Command, even if engaged in actual Operation.

I had certainly early understood on my Arrival at Walcheren, that the Enemy were assembling in considerable Force on all Points; but I was unwilling to give too much Credit to these Reports, and I was determined to persevere until I was satisfied, upon the fullest Information, that all further Attempts would be unavailing.

From all our Intelligence it appears that the Force of the Enemy in this Quarter, distributed between the Environs of Bergen-op-Zoom, Breda, Lillo, and Antwerp, and cantoned on the opposite Coast, is not less than Thirty-five Thousand Men, and by some Statements is estimated higher. Though a Landing on the Continent might, I have no Doubt, have been forced, yet, as the Siege of Antwerp, the Possession of which could alone have secured to us any of the ulterior Objects of the Expedition, was by this State of Things rendered utterly impracticable, such a Measure, if successful, could have led to no solid Advantage; and the Retreat of the Army, which must at an early Period have been inevitable, would have been exposed to much Hazard.

The utmost Force (and that daily decreasing) that I could have brought into the Field, after providing for the Occupation of Walcheren and South Beveland, would have amounted to about Twenty-three Thousand Infantry and Two Thousand Cavalry. Your Lordship must at once see, even if the Enemy's Force had been less numerous than represented, after the necessary Detachments to observe the Garrisons of Bergen-op-Zoom and Breda, and securing our Communications, how very inadequate a Force must have remained for Operations against Lillo and Lietkenshoek, and ultimately against Antwerp; which Town, so far from being in the State which had been reported, is, from very correct Accounts, represented to be in a complete State of Defence;

and the Enemy's Ships had been brought up and placed in Security, under the Guns of the Citadel.

Under these Circumstances, however mortifying to me to see the Progress arrested of an Army, from whose good Conduct and Valour I had every thing to hope, I feel that my Duty left me no other Course than to close my Operations here; and it will always be a Satisfaction to me to think, that I have not been induced lightly to commit the Safety of the Army confided to me, or the Reputation of His Majesty's Arms. It was an additional Satisfaction to me to find that the unanimous Opinion of the Lieutenant-Generals of this Army, whom I thought it right to consult, more out of respect to them, than that I thought a Doubt could be entertained on the Subject, concurred entirely in the Sentiments I have submitted to your Lordship.

I am concerned to say, that the Effect of the Climate at this unhealthy Period of the Year, is felt most seriously, and that the Numbers of Sick already is little short of Three Thousand Men.

It is my Intention to withdraw gradually from the advanced Position in this Island, and sending into Walcheren such an additional Force as may be necessary to secure that important Possession, to embark the Remainder of the Troops, and to hold them in Readiness to avail His Majesty's further Commands, which I shall most anxiously expect.

I have the Honour to be, &c.

(Signed) CHATHAM.

Admiralty-Office, September 2, 1809.

*Extract of a Letter from Rear-Admiral Sir Rich. John Strachan; Bart. K. B. to the Honourable William Wellesley Pole, dated on board His Majesty's Ship the St. Domingo, off Batz; the 27th August 1809.*

I HAVE now to acquaint you, for their Lordships' Information, that the Flat Boats of every Description of Vessels being assembled, and every necessary Arrangement made on the Part of the Navy, for Landing the Army near Santflee, on the Beach which had been previously reconnoitred, and not hearing from the Earl of Chatham respecting his Intentions, I communicated with his Lordship on the 24th Instant, and on the following Day I found his Lordship had not come to a Determination, on account of the increased Force of the Enemy, and the Army getting sickly, and that he had sent for the Generals to consult, I therefore, on the Morning of the 26th, wrote to his Lordship, and I soon after went on Shore to the Meeting of the Lieutenant-Generals of the Army, taking with me Rear Admiral Sir Richard Keates; I found them decidedly of Opinion that no Operation could be undertaken against Antwerp, with any Prospect of Success, at this advanced Season of the Year, and the Enemy increasing in Strength, and our own Forces diminished by Sickness: and that as the taking of Lillo and Lietkenshoek would not ensure our obtaining the ultimate Object of the Expedition, without Antwerp being reduced, and the Country near these Fortresses being inundated; it was also their decided Opinion, that the Army ought not to make any Attempt on them. I had already, in the most unqualified Manner, offered every Naval Assistance to reduce these Fortresses, and also in Aid of every other Operation of the Army. Conceiving the Sub-