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WAR DEPARTMENT.

Downing-Street, June 17, 1812.

MAJOR CURRIE, Aide-de-Camp to Lieutenant-General Sir Rowland Hill, arrived this Evening at Lord Bathurst's Office with a Dispatch, of which the following is an Extract, addressed to the Earl of Liverpool by General the Earl of Wellington, dated Fuente Guinaldo, 28th May 1812.

WHEN I found that the enemy had retired from this frontier, on the 24th of April, I directed Lieutenant General Sir Rowland Hill to carry into execution the operations against the enemy's posts and establishments at the passage of the Tagus at Almaraz.

Owing to the necessary preparations for this expedition Lieutenant-General Sir Rowland Hill could not begin his march, with part of the 2d division of infantry, till the 12th instant, and he attained the objects of his expedition on the 19th, by taking by storm Forts Napoleon and Ragusa, and the tetes-du-pont and other works, by which the enemy's bridge was guarded; by destroying those forts and works, and the enemy's bridge and establishments, and by taking their magazines and two hundred and fifty-nine prisoners, and eighteen pieces of cannon.

I have the honour to enclose Lieutenant-General Sir Rowland Hill's report of this brilliant exploit; and I beg to draw your Lordship's attention to the difficulties with which he had to contend, as well from the nature of the country, as from the works which the enemy had constructed, and to the ability and the characteristic qualities displayed by Lieutenant-General Sir Rowland Hill in persevering in the line, and confuing himself to the objects chalked out by his instructions, notwithstanding the various obstacles opposed to his progress.

I have nothing to add to Lieutenant-General Sir R. Hill's report of the conduct of the officers and troops under his command, excepting to express my concurrence in all he says in their praise. Too much cannot be said of the brave officers and troops who took by storm, without the assistance of cannon, such works as the enemy's forts on both banks

of the Tagus, fully garrisoned, in good order, and defended by eighteen pieces of artillery.

Your Lordship is aware that the road of Almaraz affords the only good military communication across the Tagus, and from the Tagus to the Guadiana, below Toledo. All the permanent bridges below the bridge of Arzobispo have been destroyed during the war, by one or other of the belligerents, and the enemy have found it impossible to repair them. Their bridge which Lieutenant-General Sir Rowland Hill has destroyed, was one of boats; and I doubt their having the means of replacing it. The communications from the bridges of Arzobispo and Talavera to the Guadiana, are very difficult, and cannot be deemed military communications for a large army. The result then of Lieutenant-General Hill's expedition, has been to cut off the shortest and best communication between the armies of the South and of Portugal.

Nearly about the time that the enemy's troops, reported in my last dispatch to have moved into the Condado de Niebla, marched from Seville, it is reported that another considerable detachment under Marshal Soult went towards the blockade of Cadiz, and it was expected that another attack was to be made upon Tariffa.

It appears, however, that the enemy received early intelligence of Sir Rowland Hill's march. The troops under the command of General Drouet made a movement to their left, and arrived upon the Guadiana at Medellin on the 17th instant; and on the 18th, a detachment of the cavalry under the command of the same General drove in, as far as Ribera, the picquets of Lieutenant-General Sir William Erskine's division of cavalry, which had remained in Lower Estramadura, with a part of the 2d division of infantry, and Lieutenant-General Hamilton's division of infantry. Marshal Soult likewise moved from the blockade of Cadiz towards Cordova; and the troops which had marched from Seville into the Condado de Niebla, returned to Seville nearly about the same time; but Lieutenant-General Sir Rowland Hill had attained his object on the 19th, and had returned to Truxillo, and



was beyond all risk of being attacked by a superior force on the 21st. The enemy's troops have retired into Cordova.

Since the accounts have been received of Lieutenant-General Sir Rowland Hill's expedition, the enemy's troops have likewise been put in motion in Old and New Castile; the 1st division, under General Foy, and a division of the Army of the Centre under General D'Armagnac, crossed the Tagus by the bridge of Arzobispo on the 21st, and have moved by the road of Deleytosa, to relieve or withdraw the post which still remained in the tower of Mirabete.

The whole of the army of Portugal have likewise made a movement to their left; the 2d division being on the Tagus, and Marshal Marmont's head-quarters have been removed from Salamanca to Fontieros.

By a letter from Sir Howard Douglas, of the 24th instant, I learn that the troops under General Bonnet, after having made two plundering excursions towards the frontiers of Galicia, had again entered the Asturias, and was on the 17th in possession of Oviedo, Gijon, and Grado.

In the meantime the troops under General Mendizabel are in possession of the town of Burgos, the enemy still keeping the castle; and in all parts of the country the boldness and activity of the chiefs of Guerillas are increasing; and their operations against the enemy are becoming daily more important.

I forward this dispatch by Major Currie, Aide-de-Camp to Lieutenant-General Sir Rowland Hill, whom I beg leave to recommend to your Lordship's notice and protection.

My Lord, *Truxillo, May 21, 1812.*

I HAVE the satisfaction to acquaint your Lordship, that your instructions relative to the capture and destruction of the enemy's works at Almaraz have been most fully carried into effect by a detachment of troops under my orders, which marched from Almendralejo on the 12th instant.

The bridge was, as your Lordship knows, protected by strong works thrown up by the French on both sides of the river; and further covered on the southern side by the castle and redoubts of Mirabete about a league off, commanding the pass of that name, through which runs the road to Madrid, being the only one passable for carriages of any description by which the bridge can be approached.

The works on the left bank of the river were a tête-du-pont, built of masonry, and strongly entrenched, and on the high ground above it, a large and well-constructed fort, called Napoleon, with an interior intrenchment, and loop-holed tower in its centre. This fort contained nine pieces of cannon, with a garrison of between four and five hundred men. There being also on the opposite side of the river, on a height immediately above the bridge, a very complete fort recently constructed, which flanked and added much to its defence.

On the morning of the 16th, the troops reached Jaraicejo, and the same evening marched in three columns; the left column, commanded by Lieutenant-General Chowne (28th and 34th regiments,

under Colonel Wilson, and the 6th Portuguese Cadagores), towards the castle of Mirabete; the right column, under Major-General Howard (50th, 71st, and 92d regiments), which I accompanied myself, to a pass in the mountains; through which a most difficult and circuitous foot-path leads by the village of Romangordo to the bridge; the centre column, under Major-General Long (6th and 18th Portuguese infantry, under Colonel Ashworth, and 13th light dragoons; with the artillery), advanced upon the high road to the pass of Mirabete.

The two flank columns were provided with ladders, and it was intended that either of them should proceed to escalate the forts against which they were directed, had circumstances proved favourable; the difficulties, however, which each had to encounter on its march were such, that it was impossible for them to reach their respective points before daybreak; I judged it best therefore, as there was no longer a possibility of surprize, to defer the attack, until we should be better acquainted with the nature and position of the works, and the troops bivouacked on the Leina.

I determined on endeavouring to penetrate to the bridge by the mountain path leading through the village of Roman gordo, although, by that means, I should be deprived of the use of my artillery.

On the evening of the 18th I moved with Major-General Howard's brigade, and the 6th Portuguese regiment for the operation, provided with scaling ladders, &c. Although the distance marched did not exceed five or six miles, the difficulties of the road were such, that with the united exertions of officers and men, the column could not be formed for the attack before daylight. Confiding, however, in the valour of the troops, I ordered the immediate assault of Fort Napoleon. My confidence was fully justified by the event.

The 1st battalion of the 50th, and one wing of the 71st regiment, regardless of the enemy's artillery and musquetry, escalated the work in three places, nearly at the same time. The enemy seemed at first determined, and his fire was destructive, but the ardour of our troops was irresistible, and the garrison was driven at the point of the bayonet, through the several intrenchments of the fort and Tete du Pont, across the bridge, which having been cut by those on the opposite side of the river, many leaped into the river and thus perished.

The impression made upon the enemy's troops was such, that panic soon communicated itself to those on the right bank of the river, and Fort Ragusa was instantly abandoned, the garrison flying in the greatest confusion towards Naval Moral.

I cannot sufficiently praise the conduct of the 50th and 71st regiments, to whom the assault fell. The cool and steady manner in which they formed and advanced, and the intrepidity with which they mounted the ladders, and carried the place, was worthy of those distinguished corps, and the officers who led them.

Could the attack have been made before day, the 92d regiment, under Lieutenant-Colonel Cameron, and the remainder of the 71st regiment, under the Honourable Lieutenant-Colonel Cadogan, were to have escalated the tête-du-pont, and effected the destruction of the bridge, at the same time that the attack was made on Fort Napoleon. The impossi-

bility of advancing deprived them of this opportunity of distinguishing themselves, but the share which they had in the operation and the zeal which they displayed, entitles them to my warmest commendation, and I cannot avoid to mention the steadiness and good discipline of the 6th Portuguese infantry, and two companies of the 60th regiment, under Colonel Ashworth, which formed the reserve to this attack.

Our operations in this quarter were much favoured by a diversion made by Lieutenant-General Chowne, with the troops under his orders, against the castle of Mirabete, which succeeded in inducing the enemy to believe that we should not attack the forts near the bridge, until we had formed the pass, and thus have made way for our artillery. The Lieutenant-General conducted this operation, as well as his former advance, entirely to my satisfaction. I regret much that the peculiar situation of Mirabete should have prevented my allowing the gallant corps under his orders to follow up an operation which they had commenced with much spirit, and were so anxious to compleat.

I cannot too strongly express how much I am satisfied with the conduct of Major-General Howard through the whole of this operation, the most arduous part of which has fallen to his share; and particularly of the manner in which he led his brigade to the assault. He was ably assisted by his Staff, Brigade-Major Wemyss, of the 50th, and Lieutenant Battersby, of the 23d Light Dragoons.

To Major-General Long I am also indebted for his assistance, although his column was not immediately engaged.

Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart and Major Harrison, of the 50th, and Major Cotter, of the 71st, commanded the three attacks, and led them in a most gallant and spirited manner.

I have received the greatest assistance from Lieutenant-Colonel Dickson, of the Royal Artillery, whom, with a brigade of twenty-four-pounders, a company of British and one of Portuguese artillery, your Lordship was pleased to put under my orders; circumstances did not permit his guns being brought into play; but his exertions, and those of his officers and men during the attack and destruction of the place, were unwearied. In the latter service Lieutenant Thiele, of the Royal German artillery, was blown up; and we have to regret in him a most gallant officer; he had particularly distinguished himself in the assault. Lieutenant Wright, of the Royal Engineers, has also rendered me very essential service; he is a most intelligent, gallant, and meritorious officer; and I must not omit also to mention Lieutenant Hillier, of the 29th regiment, whose knowledge of this part of the country proved of great assistance.

Your Lordship will observe, from the return of ordnance and stores which I have the honour to enclose, that Almaraz has been considered by the enemy in the light of a most important station; and I am happy to state that its destruction has been most complete. The towers of masonry which were in Forts Napoleon and Ragusa have been entirely levelled; the ramparts of both in great measure destroyed; and the whole apparatus of the bridge, together with the work-shops, magazines, and every piece of timber which could be found, entirely destroyed.

A colour, belonging to the fourth battalion of the Corps Étranger, was taken by the 71st regiment, and I shall have the honour of forwarding it to your Lordship.

Our loss has not been severe, considering the circumstances under which the attack was made. I enclose a list of the killed and wounded. Captain Candler, of the 50th regiment, (the only officer killed in the assault) has, I am sorry to say, left a large family to deplore his loss. He was one of the first to mount the ladder, and fell upon the parapet, after giving a distinguished example to his men.

I have had frequent occasions to mention to your Lordship in terms of the highest praise the conduct of Lieutenant-Colonel Rooke, Assistant Adjutant-General. During the whole period I have had a separate command in this country, that officer has been with me, and rendered most essential service to my corps; and the present expedition he has eminently distinguished himself, and I beg leave particularly to notice his conduct. Your Lordship is also aware of the merits of Lieutenant-Colonel Offaney, my Assistant Quarter-Master-General, of whose valuable aid I have been deprived during the latter part of this expedition. Though labouring under severe illness, he accompanied me, to the serious detriment of his health, and until it was totally impracticable for him to proceed. Captain Thorn, Deputy-Assistant Quarter-Master-General, succeeded to his duties; and I am indebted to him for his assistance, and also to Major Hill and my personal staff.

The Marquis de Almeida, Member of the Junta of Estremadura, has done me the honour to accompany me, since I have been in the province: I have received from him, as well as from the people, the most ready and effectual assistance which it was in their power to bestow.

Major Currie, my Aid-de-Camp, will deliver to your Lordship this dispatch, and the colour taken from the enemy, and will be able to give you any further particulars. I beg to recommend him to your Lordship.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) R. HILL, Lieut. Gen.

I enclose a return of prisoners, in number two hundred and fifty-nine, including the Governor, one Lieutenant-Colonel, and fifteen officers. I also transmit a return of provisions in the forts near the bridge, taken from one signed by the chief of the French Commissariat on the 18th of May.

Return of Killed and Wounded of the Army under the Command of His Excellency General the Earl of Wellington, K. B. under the immediate Orders of Lieutenant-General Sir Rowland Hill, K. B. at the Storm and Capture of Fort Napoleon, and the Enemy's other Works, in the Neighbourhood of Almaraz, on the Morning of the 19th of May, 1812.

Royal Artillery—3 rank and file wounded.

Royal Engineers—1 lieutenant wounded.

King's German Artillery—1 lieutenant killed.

1st Batt. 28th Reg.—2 rank and file wounded.

1st Batt. 50th Reg.—1 captain, 27 rank and file killed; 1 captain, 3 lieutenants, 3 ensigns, 6 sergeants, 87 rank and file, wounded.

1st Batt. 71st Reg.—1 serjeant, 3 rank and file, killed; 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 1 ensign, 4 serjeants, 1 drummer, 23 rank and file, wounded.

1st Batt. 92d Reg.—2 rank and file, wounded.

Total British loss—1 captain, 1 lieutenant, 1 serjeant, 30 rank and file, killed; 2 captains, 6 lieutenants, 4 ensigns, 10 serjeants, 1 drummer, 117 rank and file, wounded.

Portuguese Artillery—2 rank and file wounded.

6th Cacadores—1 ensign, 1 rank and file, wounded.

Total Portuguese loss—1 ensign, 3 rank and file, wounded.

General Total—1 captain, 1 lieutenant, 1 serjeant, 30 rank and file, killed; 2 captains, 6 lieutenants, 5 ensigns, 10 serjeants, 1 drummer, 120 rank and file, wounded.

Names of Officers killed and wounded.

Killed.

King's German Artillery—Lieutenant Thiele, blown up.

50th Reg.—Captain Candler.

Wounded.

Royal Engineers—Lieutenant Wright, slightly.

50th Foot—Captain Sandys, severely; Lieutenant Hemsworth, severely; Lieutenant Patterson, slightly; Lieutenant Richardson, severely; Ensign Goddard, severely; Ensigns Crofton and Godfrey, slightly.

71st Foot—Captain Grant, dangerously (since dead); Lieutenant Lockwood, severely; Lieutenant Ross and Ensign M'Kenzie, slightly.

6th Cacadores—Ensign Botinho, severely.

Return of Ordnance and Stores captured at the Bridge of Almaraz, on the Morning of the 19th of May 1812, by the Troops under the Command of Lieutenant-General Sir Rowland Hill, G. B.

Fort Napoleon.

Brass Ordnance mounted—4 twelve-pounders, 1 six-pounder, 1 four-pounder, 3 six-inch howitzers.

Pête du Pont.

Brass Ordnance mounted—2 six-pounders, 1 ten-inch howitzer.

Fort Ragusa.

Brass Ordnance mounted—3 twelve-pounders, 2 six-pounders, 1 six-inch howitzer.

Total—7 twelve-pounders, 5 six-pounders, 1 four-pounder, 1 ten-inch howitzer, 4 six-inch howitzers.—19.

A considerable proportion of powder in barrels and cartridges fixed to shot; but as the magazines were blown up immediately after the capture by order of Lieutenant-General Sir R. Hill, and

every thing destroyed, the exact quantity was not ascertained.

120,000 Musket-ball cartridges.

300 Six-inch shells.

380 Rounds of case-shot of various calibre.

413 Muskets with bayonets.

20 large pontoon boats, composing the bridge, with timber, complete.

60 Carriages for removing the same, and also for the conveyance of heavy timber.

A large proportion of rope of various dimensions; also anchors, timber, tools, and every thing complete on a large establishment, for keeping the bridge and carriages in a state of repair.

(Signed) A. DICKSON, Lieut. Col.
Commissary Reserve Artillery.

Return of Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Soldiers, Prisoners of War, taken at the storming of the Enemy's Works at the Bridge of Almaraz, on the Morning of the 19th May 1812.

Governor and Staff—1 major, 1 captain, 1 staff, 4 non-commissioned officers and privates.

3d Regiment of Artillery—4 non-commissioned officers and privates.

Engineers—1 captain, 1 private.

Pontoneers—6 non-commissioned officers and privates.

Sappers—8 ditto.

6th Regiment French Infantry (Light)—1 captain, 1 staff, 48 non-commissioned officers and privates.

39th Regiment (of the Line)—1 lieutenant-colonel, 1 lieutenant, 1 staff, 64 non-commissioned officers and privates.

7th Regiment Foreigners—2 captains, 2 lieutenants, 102 non-commissioned officers and privates.

Commissariat—4 staff; 5 non-commissioned officers and privates.

Total—1 lieutenant-colonel, 1 major, 5 captains, 3 lieutenants, 7 staff, 242 non-commissioned officers and privates.

(Signed) J. C. ROOKE,
Lieut. Col. and A. A. G.

State of Provisions in the Forts at the Bridge of Almaraz, on the Morning of the 19th of May 1812, taken from a Return signed by the French Commissary, dated the 18th of May 1812.

Rations—bread 33, biscuit 29,961, rice 65,961, vegetables 2554, salt 23,926, oil 4428, wine 1718, brandy 27,814, live cattle 16,848, salt meat 18,086.

(Signed) F. PORCHET,
A true extract,
(Signed) J. C. ROOKE,
Lieut. Col. and A. A. G.