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DOWNING STREET, *January 27. 1807.*

Copy of a Dispatch from Lieutenant-Colonel Backhouse, to the Right Honourable William Windham, dated Maldonado, on the River de la Plata, 31st October 1806.

SIR—In my letter of the 13th inst. I had the honour to transmit a copy of my letter, of the same date, to His Excellency Lieutenant-General Sir David Baird, apprising him of my arrival in the river Plata, and of my intention to occupy a position on shore, to await his further orders.

I, in consequence, immediately reconnoitred, from one of the frigates, which carried me sufficiently close in shore for the purpose, the works of the place, and the positions and defences in the vicinity of Monte Video, from which I formed, as the most eligible mode of attack, the idea of being able to carry the town and citadel by assault, on the south face edging on the water, in co-operation with the ships of the squadron under Commodore Sir Home Popham, which were to silence the batteries on that face, so as to enable the troops to land and enter. The attempt was accordingly commenced, on the 28th, by the navy; but the water proving too shallow to admit of the ships coming sufficiently near to cannonade it with effect, a further effort was necessarily given up.

Upon this I deemed it advisable, with the co-operative concurrence of Sir Home Popham, to take possession of the town of Maldonado, as a favourable position for the purpose of refreshing the troops, mounting my cavalry, and carrying on such other arrangements as might thereafter appear most necessary.

Not a moment was lost; and accordingly on the evening of the 29th, I landed with about four hundred men, composed principally of a part of the 38th regiment, under Colonel Vassal,

Price Sixpence.

and advanced against the town, which seemed to be occupied by about 600 regulars and militia, mostly mounted, with one howitzer, and one long four-pounder field piece, both brass.

Notwithstanding we were without any artillery, the enemy were soon dispersed, with the loss of their guns, and about fifty men killed and wounded. The loss on our side was two killed and four wounded, of His Majesty's 38th regiment.

To the cool intrepidity of our little column on this occasion, much praise is due, as it advanced with the utmost steadiness and alacrity, and without firing a shot, until sufficiently near to make a certainty of carrying both the guns and the town, which was principally done by the bayonet, notwithstanding the advance was made under heavy discharges of grape and musketry.

To the well known gallantry and ability of Colonel Vassal, I feel myself much indebted; and the conduct of every other officer in the field has commanded my thanks.

At day-break yesterday morning, I detached Colonel Vassal to take possession of the heavy batteries on the beach of the harbour, and on the peninsula, which precluded any communication for the enemy between the main land and the strong island and post of Goretti, situated in, and much commanding the bay of Maldonado, and which, in consequence, in the course of the day, surrendered at discretion to a summons sent from Sir Home Popham; and thereby prevented the necessity of carrying it by storm, and the consequent bloodshed that might have ensued. During yesterday and this morning the chief part of the remainder of the troops have been landed, and I have already contrived to mount nearly one half of my cavalry.

The Wellington transport being directed to sail immediately to England, I have taken the liberty of addressing this short account of my proceedings directly to you, Sir Home Popham having represented to me his inability to dispatch a vessel at this time to the Cape of Good Hope, precluding me the power of making my report through the regular channel of Lieutenant-General Sir David Baird.

I ought not to omit to mention the very steady and praise-worthy conduct of a small party of marines and armed seamen, sent on shore by Sir Home Popham, who joined and composed part of our column on its way into the town, and occupied such positions as were allotted to them during the night, in such a correct manner as to reflect the greatest credit both on the officers that commanded them and their own zeal and discipline.

I should also be wanting in justice to my own feelings, if I closed my dispatch without acknowledging the services I have received from Lieutenant Colonel Brownrigg, Deputy Quarter-Master-General, and Major Trotter of the 83d regiment, Acting Deputy Adjutant General to the forces at present under my command. And I also beg leave to acknowledge the assistance afforded me by Major Tucker of the 72d regiment, who, by permission of Lieutenant-General Sir David Baird, is with me on this occasion, and acting in the capacity of military secretary.

I herewith have the honour to inclose the return of such ordnance, ammunition, and stores as have yet been discovered.

I have the honour to be, &c.

J. T. BACKHOUSE
Lieut. Col. 47th Regt.

