

SIR.

*Messina, February 18, 1803.*

IN Obedience to your Orders, I have the Honour to report the Particulars of what occurred since the first Appearance of the Enemy before Scylla.

After being invested by General Regnier's Army during Seven Weeks, and battered for Six Days by Fourteen Pieces of heavy Ordnance, the little Castle of Scylla has fallen into his Hands: But I have the heartfelt Satisfaction to add, that not one of the gallant Garrison placed under my Orders has become his Prisoner.

In the latter End of December, the Arrival of Troops and Ordnance-Stores at Seminara left me no Room to doubt the Enemy's Intention of besieging Scylla, and Parties of the Infantry were accordingly sent out to render the Passes of Solano impracticable, and to create Obstacles to his Advance, by Cuts across the various Paths which lead from the Heights of Milla down to Scylla. This Work, as well as the levelling of Fences, &c. proceeded rapidly, and effectually under the Direction of Captain Nicholas, Assistant Quarter-Master-General; when, upon the 31st of December, the advanced Workmen, and the Out Posts of the Maffe, were driven in by Three French Battalions, and a Detachment of Cavalry, under General Millet, which took Post upon the Heights above us; and on the following Day Regnier brought up Two more Battalions, and spreading his Out Posts to Favazzina, Bagnara, &c. completed the Investment of the Town. At this Time the Garrison of the Castle consisted of about Two Hundred British, and from Four to Five Hundred Maffe occupied the Town.

The Enemy's Troops were now incessantly employed in forming the Roads necessary for bringing his heavy Ordnance from Seminara, while we laboured to render the Approach to Scylla difficult, and harassed the French by constant Attacks on his Out Posts with Parties of the Maffe, and occasionally with Boats. In some of these partial Actions the Enemy suffered severely; particularly in a Night Attack at Bagnara, where the Voltigeurs of the 23d Light Infantry were cut to Pieces.

Owing to these Checks, the French were retarded until the 6th of February, when they descended the Heights in Force, and came within a distant Range of our Guns; and from this Day they honoured our little Castle with all the detailed Precautions of a regular Siege, in covering his Approaches and Communications. The Skirmishes between the Enemy and the Maffe became very serious: the latter displayed great Gallantry; and enjoying the Support of the Castle Guns, obliged the French to purchase their Advance with heavy Loss; but, on the 9th, were obliged to yield to the Numbers of the Enemy, who assailed the Town on all Sides: our Guns, however covered their Retreat; and I had the Satisfaction of sending off these brave Peasants to Messina without leaving a Man in the Enemy's Hands.

The Force which General Regnier had brought to besiege Scylla, consisted of a Body of Cavalry, the 23d Light Infantry, the 1st, 62d and 101st of the Line, in all about Six Thousand Men; with Five Twenty-four-Pounders, Five Eighteens, and Four Mortars, besides Field-Pieces.

On the Morning of the 11th, he opened his Batteries, directing his Efforts to the Destruction of our upper Works, and the disabling of our Guns;

while under Cover of this Fire, he laboured to establish Two Breaching Batteries, at Three and Four Hundred Yards Distance. It was not, however, till the 14th, that our Parapet and Guns were rendered totally useless; nor till then did the Slaughter abate to which their Parties employed on the Breaching Batteries were exposed from our Grape and Shells.

From this Time our Defence was confined to Musketry, as our Guns lay buried under the Ruins of the Parapet, and the close Fire from Five Twenty-four-Pounders became inefficient. In the mean Time we discovered him attempting to mine the Right Bastion, upon which he continued at work for Three Nights, but I apprehend without the expected Success.

In the Night of the 15th, the French passed round the Foot of the Rock, with the Intention of destroying the Sea Staircase, but we happily discovered them, and beat them off with the Slaughter to which their desperate Situation exposed them.

The Fire from the Breaching Batteries had been variously directed till the Evening of the 16th, when they bent their undivided Fury against the Left Bastion with such Success, that the Breach would probably have been practicable by the following Evening. It was under these Circumstances that I received your Orders to evacuate the Castle, and have the great Satisfaction of reporting, that we accomplished this Yesterday Morning, in full View of the Enemy, and without leaving an Individual behind. The Approach of the Boats from Faro gave the French full Intimation of our Design, but the tempestuous State of the Weather obliged us to seize the short Opportunity of an Hour's Lull. Every Battery poured its utmost Fire upon the Castle, and subsequently upon the Boats; while Infantry with Field Pieces tried the Breach on either Side.

The Garrison was drawn off in Succession, and the Embarkation effected with the greatest Order, notwithstanding the tremendous Fire of Grape, Shells, &c. Our Loss in the Operation was small; and before we were a Musket-Shot distant, the French were in the Fort.

The masterly Arrangement of the Transport Boats and Men of War Launches upon this Occasion, does high Honour to Captain Frolope, of His Majesty's Ship *Electra*, who personally superintended this Service; and the Conduct of the Officers and Men under him was marked with all the Coolness and Dexterity of British Seamen. I regret to add, that One of them was killed in the Operation, and Ten wounded, some of them dangerously. The uniform good Conduct of the Garrison which I have had the good Fortune to command, demands my warmest Gratitude; and their intrepid Spirit during the Siege is hardly more commendable than the Zeal with which they went through the heavy Fatigues that preceded it.

The Detachment of the Royal Artillery was highly conspicuous; the Excellence of their Gunnery was proved by the severe Losses which the Enemy has sustained; and I cannot too strongly express my Sense of the Skill and indefatigable Zeal which Lieutenant Dunn has displayed throughout the Siege.

I feel highly indebted to the Exertions of Captains Cruikshanks of the 62d, Jordan of the 27th,

