

BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR — Siege at Alexandria
CAMP before ALEXANDRIA

8 August 1801

Entire letter sent by General Richard Ford William Lambert, seventh Earl of Cavan (1763-1836) to Rear Admiral Sir Richard Hussey Bickerton (1759-1832). Cavan was commanding officer of the Brigade of Guards before Alexandria and Bickerton was commanding the blockading fleet.

Camp August 8 - 1801.

Selected from the Papers of
the late Admiral
Sir R. H. Bickerton Bart.

My Dear Sir Rich^d

I fear until you receive this you will
have thought me not only very neglectful but extremely
rude, from ~~my~~ not having returned to you the Paper you
sent enclosed or any answer ~~to your~~ Letter of yesterday -

Capt^r Cochrane's Servant promised to call on me at Gen^l
Stewart's Quarters ~~where~~ I dined previous to his going off
say it was close on the Sea Shore ~~where~~ where he went from
there was no Inconvenience I had ~~my~~ Letter ready in my
Pocket & which I now send with this & I hope the above Expla-
nation will excusate me & obtain me your Pardon

No Person yet knows when Gen^l H comes, but H. has wrote
officially to Coote to say from last night Boats are at the
Service of the Artillery, Engineers, Com^{rs} any &c - There is no
farther News I know of

Believe me most sincerely

Y^{rs} Most Obedt

Rich^d Bickerton Bart

Enclosed

BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

Siege at Alexandria

Entire letter sent by General Richard Ford William Lambert, seventh Earl of Cavan (1763-1836) Commanding Officer of the Brigade of Guards to Rear Admiral Sir Richard Hussey Bickerton (1759-1832).

CAMP

August 8 – 1801

My Dear Sir Richd/

I fear until you receive this you mite have thought me not only very neglectful but extremely rude, from my not having returned to you papers you sent - - - or any answer to your letter of yesterday. Capt. Cochrane's¹ servant promised to call on me at Genl. Stewart's² quarters where I dined previous to his going off & it was clear on he sea I have seen where he went from there was no inconvenience. I had my letter ready in my pocket & which I answered with this & I hope the above explanation will exculpate me & obtain me your pardon.

No person yet knows when Genl H³ comes. Lord K has wrote officially to Coote⁴ to say from last night Boats are at the service of the Artillery, Engineers, Commissary etc. There is no further news I know of.

Believe me most sincerely

Yours much obliged

CAVAN

Sir Richd Bickerton, Bart.

¹ Captain Alexander Cochrane, RN, commanded sloops in Alexandria harbor.

² Possibly meaning Stuart as there were General Charles Stuart and General John Stuart with the expedition. The Stewarts were majors and colonels.

³ General Sir John Hely-Hutchinson, (1757-?) Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in Egypt succeeding Lieutenant General Sir Ralph Abercromby (1734-1801).

⁴ General Sir Eyre Coote (1762-1823).

BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

Entire letter on the web site of Scotia Philately, May 2000.

THIS LETTER IS NOT IN THE COLLECTION BU IS INCLUDED AS A MATTER OF INTEREST.

„To give you an idea of what is in the correspondence, I am illustrating a lovely cover sent from Egypt in 1801 by Thomas Fiott de Havilland to his father in Guernsey. I have transcribed the contents which give a rare insight into life at that time. Thomas was appointed field engineer to the East Indian expeditionary force led by General Baird which was sent to dislodge the French from Egypt. He arrived at Cosseir in July 1800, and his posting lasted two years. „

address panel

Peter de Havilland Esq.

Guernsey

Care of Messrs

Brock & Le Mesurier London

Postal markings

Manuscript 1¼oz, 2/9, 2/8?, 4/1, 11/2?

"(Crown) Ship Lre. PORTSMOUTH" oval (Robertson S8)

Red London arrival datestamp for November 15th 1801

Arrived in Guernsey 19th November 1801

Content:

On the Nile a few miles above Ashmoonein August 17th 1801

Oh! My ever beloved father,

The Polar Star which now shines high above the horizon indicates to me my near approach to the latitude of my native country, & bids me be of good cheer.

Accustomed in my infancy to look aloft for it & to see the never resting Bear revolve round it daily in siderial measure, appearing now below, & then above the center of its orbit. I - in quest of what was it? - Fame or Ambition, was it Patriotism, was it Lucre? Or was it only a moderate Independence to ensure me an happy hereafter, calculated upon as a matter of Course & certainty. Probably the last was the real View with which I (I say) lost sight of that Constellation which presides over my Home & Friends situated in northern civilized climes, & after a tedious voyage, only regained it to contemplate its dejected aspect, immersed in vapours (raised by the rays of a scorching sun) never more than 13 Degrees high, & under its melancholly Influence doomed to tread a Country which tho' it stands high in the Page of Fame, must to every soul inspired with European Ideas, appear comparatively but a scene of Poverty & wretchedness. Thus the 10th year is now passing since the lowered region of that star & its Pointers, first impressed me with a proportionate Idea of the immense distance which has hitherto stood between me & my family & therefore deprived me of every thing that was dear & valuable to me in this transient life; but as it now recovers its exalted situation, so do my hopes revive. But on the other hand, should Leave not be granted me, & I should be obliged to return to India being so near Home & have to make another Tour round the continent of Africa before I could embrace you my dear father! What a stroke of disappointment! What a Blow! My very blood runs cold in my veins at the Idea. I will not think of it:.. But to resume my former subject, what a Phantom, what a Shaddow is it not that we who come out to India run After? We say "I shall remain so many years & during that period slave till I am enabled to return to my Friends & enjoy the rest of my Days in ease, comfort & Pleasure", but how many live even to complete those few proposed years of Slavery? Are they one half? I doubt it, at least not in the military, it needs

therefore no mathematical demonstration to shew that that Portion have slaved the whole of their life - of the remainder some have married & their increased family however inclined they may be, prevents their retiring so soon; others having arrived to a certain Rank & favoured by fortune have flattering prospects in view, & tho' they might then retire perhaps comfortably, have not resolution enough to give up the pursuit; they persist in slavery till death overtakes them. But let me fix a period - suppose 22 years actual residence in India which is the length of Services laid down for us officers before we can retire on our pay... is there more than one in ten that survive that time? I have not looked but it might easily be ascertained. I doubt it, however, & of the survivors are there 2 in 10 who possess 100 a year besides their Pensions. Surely not after paying the expense of their Passage & settling at home, & what is their pension, there are more under a Major than above: Captain Scott, now a Boat Mate of mine, has been 20 years in the Service & has still 7 Captains in the Corps of Artillery above him; but suppose a major's pension £270 a year, that's in its literal sense but a poor Reward for such Services, but let him have that & the £100 a year I mentioned of his own saving; he returns to his country perhaps few of his Relations are living; he finds none of his old acquaintances, or if a few, they don't recognise each other & their manners & views have been so different since they parted, that they are disappointed in not finding that cordiality between them & affinity of sentiment which formerly obtained; - the old Indian then at the age of 40, 45 or 50, returns enervated & worn out, finds himself a stranger in his own Country, has forgotten its manners & customs, for they are different from what they were when he left it, knows not where to look for comfort & has, as it were, to commence a new apprenticeship, this he finds harduous & after passing the first year in the crowd of gaiety, of Plays, Operas, fantoccinis, & Puppet shows, staring at the displayed shops, that seem to vie with each other on both sides the spacious streets of our large cities, visiting painted galleries, & the Tower, waxworks, & speaking dolls etc., all of which are equally novel to him. He finds himself unequal to the Racket of it as his Purse is unable to support it, & destitute of the means of procuring many little comforts which habit alone had made such to him, too old now to reform. The difficulty of managing with a few European servants after having been surrounded by a crowd of Natives in India, he pants to return to it; & the ripping cold with which frosty Christmas now pinches his old Bones whose natural system has been deranged by excessive heat, must complete the measure of his disappointment at the very Time which he expected to enjoy himself. I have not mentioned those who contract incurable diseases, because every country has its share, nor do I believe India is more unwholesome in general than any other, but I shall observe that when thus afflicted, we have when at home relations & friends to take care of, nurse & comfort us; in India we have menial servants who care no more for us than the extent of their wages, or the prospect of plunder prompts them. I should also observe that young men coming out to this Country of too slender an age have frequently not completed a common education, & India affords so little to improve by, & the climate so averse to exertion & application that the consequence is too frequently fatal; they find themselves immersed in a distant garrison, perhaps a lonely European, & give themselves up, from a want of internal resource, to women & wine. I shall only add at present that if a man wishes to live happy by coming to India, he should with him bring his family & determine upon continuing in it the rest of his life, except merely to pay a visit to England if he found an Inclination for it, or that he or his family required a temporary Change of Air for their health. It is upon this Principal that the French, Danes, Dutch & others who colonize in this Country, speaking of India not of Agypt, are so much more happy & comfortable than we are & at a much smaller expense. But ere long, my dear Father, I shall please God, converse with you personally on these topicks fully & at large. It is then that I will prove to you how much happier they are in Europe, who with their family (or not far apart from them) labour from morn till night for their sustenance, in whatever situation they are; let it be the Pen, or the Pencil, the Law or the Counting House, the Plough, the Hook or Scythe; or let it even be he who under the Shade of St. Paul's cries out "Black your shoes, your Honour".

19th Within about 50 miles of Cairo

I have just been binding a willow in the End of the middle finger of my right hand which has been annoying me these six days past. I can now write with less pain.

You expect from me, I doubt not, some account of this Country, as well as the mode of our travelling.

It is by no means a new (sic!) scene to a Person who has sojourned in India. With a few exceptions it is the same as any of the large rivers in India. A tract of low-level country on either side, cultivated with Grain, Sugar Canes &c overflowed at certain seasons of the year, interspersed with Groves of Palms &c; intersected by canals for watering the Lands when the river subsides.

The villages, poor & wretched in appearance, built of sorry materials such as clay or sun-dried bricks & badly covered in either with straw, or a flat terrace supported by beams of the Palm Trees, which are very perishable, no regularity, no taste, no ornament, no cleanliness. The culture of the Ground quite superficial, leaving almost every thing to Nature - viewed however in particular, there are differences, no doubt great ones too, & the Indians in my opinion have greatly the advantage of the Agyptians; they are certainly more Industrious - in ploughing their ground, either of them, scarce go deeper than three inches, consequently the soil is never renewed, & by constant cultivation must of course at length be exhausted in a great measure. The Indians, though they do not go deeper than the Agyptians take much more pains in doing it equally thro' out & they frequently manure which it does not appear the Agyptians do (I have since learned that the Agyptians also improve their Lands some times with manure, 'tis however seldom). The canals cut from the River to water the Fields are very different. In India they are carried in a direction very oblique, approaching parallels to the River, & by giving their beds as little descent as possible for the water to run thro' them, it is thus carried in the Course of a few miles to a great height above the River, or perhaps more strictly speaking the water is thus kept from falling so low as the bed of the River, & thereby commands a much greater extent of country. I have seen water carried in that style almost halfway up a Hill situated at some distance from the River whence the Canal had its source. Here on the contrary I have seen none but small ditches, cut nearly at right angles with the river, & thus carrying the water only as far as the level of the country will admit of conveniently; hence three capital inconveniences arise - first the water must be raised out of these Canals throughout to inundate the Lands on either side, which altho' done in a very easy simple way, still costs much labour; on the contrary in India the water being raised above the level of the fields is let out by sluices or channels cut in the lower bank, & thence runs spontaneously from one field into another until it again reaches the river whence it sprang; the next disadvantage in the mode of conveying the water in Agypt is that it does not water that extent of country which might undoubtedly be practicable by means of the parallel Canals as in India, & lastly that the Agyptian Calishes (their name in the country long ago) are from their Direction required to be much more frequent, hence an evident excess of expense in forming them originally, & since & hereafter in keeping them clear. It may be said that the Valley having in general very little declivity either from the Deserts on both sides towards the River, or from Upper to Lower Agypt, the raising the water as in India might be attended with more difficulty & Labour. A little may be allowed for that no doubt, yet it is equally certain that it might be practical, & that by that means a great portion of what is now a sterile Desert might become a fine cultivated Country.

The Agyptians are a much stouter race of men than the Indians, at least of Lower Indostan where I have been; they are something fairer, tho' I must own from what I had read, I have been disappointed in the fairness of complexion attributed to the Inhabitants of Nile's Banks, as well as many other particulars. The women in Agypt, tho' recluse, are not I think kept so rigid in that particular as those of the same faith in India, alluding only to the followers of Mohamet, for the Gintoo & Hindoos in India never hide or cover their women, on the contrary the female part of the Family abroad & at Home assist in all labours & avocations. The women here are fairer than the men from not being exposed to the Sun's rays, 'tis however an unpleasant sick like fairness to which I think the real jet black far preferable. I have only seen a few of the women in the Villages we have stopped at, & that only a glimpse by surprise, for the moment one of them perceives a stranger, she makes off if she has an opportunity, & if not she covers her face with her Cloth. They seem fond of marking or staining their faces black, particularly the Chin & round the Eyes, which seems to be done by puncture thro' the skin, & the application of Ink, or some other liquid which never comes off again; in the same way as our Sailors generally mark different parts of their Bodies.

The mode of raising water from the Canals to fertilize the fields is the same in general as is practised in India which is the simple lever in the shape of a moving on a Fulchrum at o . They also use the Persian Wheel but it is not so common.

The cattle on the Nile are really very fine, & after being accustomed to see the diminutive tho' hardy race of oxen in India, it was quite a treat to the Eye to contemplate the Agyptian Kind which in size approach so near our English breed, & in figure also. The only horses we saw were a few Brood Mares in every Village however small it might be, there were generally 4 or 6 running about loose in the Farm Yard, if it might be so called, in the finest order imaginable, as well as the rest of the cattle of every sort.

The Natives seem very indifferent about their food; they live upon Pap, or Flower boiled with sugar water, & I believe some times Dates. These last which are the produce of the country, are when ripe pleasant enough to the taste, but

they soon cloy you, they are however a principle article of cultivation & Food among the Egyptians. They eat meat of every kind except pork. I have not seen a hog in the whole country. They are not very particular in what state of Preservation the meat is, or how it is cooked, but they feast on it whenever they can get it. They are filthy to a degree in their Persons, seldom washing themselves from Head to Foot, & their Cloaths I believe never, keeping them on their backs from the Time they first purchase them till they drop in Rags.

Their houses appear equally dirty, no neatness whatever in them, how different with the Gintoos & Hindoos of India, who perform their ablutions daily, & as often wash their Cloaths; & their small habitation, altho' of no other materials than clay & thatch or Tiles, kept clean & neat the whole day long.

Cairo, or Kahera, August 26th

We arrived here three days ago, when it was given out we were immediately to embark again for Alexandria. Our moving has however been put off from day to day & it is now the general opinion that General Hutchison has not yet sent any orders to our Commander in Chief, & that it is not the intention of the former to bring the British & Indian Armies together untill the last extremity, consequently that our moving from this place is yet very uncertain, & that if we do move, it will only be to Rosetta; so that we are I fancy doomed to remain here Idle & be deprived of the opportunity even of assisting our Brother Officers in the final extirpation of the Common Enemy in this Country, & with them of showing our zeal, & acquiring a sprig of laurel & credit, which must be acknowledged a Hard Case, when we have been tossed upon the Red Sea & thro' the Desert 8 long months & then be disappointed in the end.

The Case however is evident; General Hutchison having already taken Cairo, the principal Hold, wishes to complete the service with his own army, without our co-operation, & the awkwardness of our Commissions which literally cannot have force in this or any other part of the world out of India, renders it a matter of political consideration how far prudent it would be to bring both Armies together, particularly when there is so great a difference in the Allowances, tho' employed in the same service. These might become subjects of serious altercations between both Parties which might be prejudicial; consequently he I suppose thinks it under these considerations more prudent to keep us near at hand as a Corps de Reserve to awe the French as well as to support him in case of his finding himself in a critical situation. I learned yesterday that the 20th Regiment, with others, had lately arrived at Alexandria as a reinforcement, & that George Smith commands the 1st Battalion of it; I have lost no time in writing him to try to get news from you all, as it now (seems) an age since I have had any. I have likewise expressed to him my apprehensions of our Army not being ordered there, & that I am extremely anxious to have a pluck at the Laurel Branch, I wish he would contrive some means of getting me with the English Army to act in any capacity whatever as a Volunteer. If it was certain we were not to go there, I could soon manage the business by applying for leave of absence & going thither to offer my services in person, but as on the contrary General Baird has given us to understand that our services would be required, I cannot adopt that measure - however I shall see what Colonel Smith says to it. I long to hear from him.

I have told you in my former letters that I had been superseded by Captain Elphinstone of Royal Engineers from the Cape of Good Hope; he is a pleasant young man; I don't believe I shall lose any pecuniary advantage by it; & as there is no likelihood of our being employed, there is not much Honor & Glory lost; we agree very well together. I am in hope you will have received all my letters, & will have on learning my destination, written me via the Mediterranean which letters I must soon get.

Yesterday going over to Geeza (Giza) on duty where the 89th Regiment is quartered, I found out that the Captain Lieut of that Corps was a Le Mesurier. I therefore concluded he was the son of the Governor of Alderney, & consequently thought it incumbent on me, at least as a matter of civility, to call on him tho' not personally acquainted. Lt. Falla, who recollected having seen him once at school, came with me. He received us politely & seems a very fine young man; he has been indisposed with sore eyes, a prevalent disease which affects most people at certain seasons of the year in Egypt, & particularly at Cairo, but is now well again. The Regiment marches tomorrow for Alexandria which will prevent our further acquaintance at present, we may however meet again soon. I was glad to hear that he had received letters from his Friends & that they were all well.

Hammed about 6 miles to the southward of Rosetta, or Rasheed, August 30th 1801

Early on the 27th in the morning, the Army was ordered to embark that day. The Right Brigade & the Artillery at 1 o'clock, & the left Brigade at sunset. I embarked with the Right Brigade, we did not however sail till sunset, & the left Brigade did not I suppose sail till the next morning. The 89th Regiment left Geeza that morning at sun rise. It being a dark night, when we came to the point of the Delta many of the boats missed their way & went down the East branch

of the Nile instead of the West. The mistake was however soon found out & rectified, we were among the Number. Our Fleet of Boats, I believe, amounted to between 80 & 90 of various dimensions; we arrived here this morning at 7 o'clock & found the 89th Regiment just disembarking. Yesterday we had a report that Alexandria had been taken by storm, but it was not confirmed this morning, on the contrary it was said that our Army has met a check from the Enemy. Orders were issued for disembarking, but at 3 o'clock they were countermanded & every thing to remain in status quo till further orders, this was in consequence of another report prevailing that Alexandria had surrendered this morning at 4 o'clock, these orders however were not of long duration; about 12 hour after they were again countermanded & the disembarkation & encampment to continue as before; it now appears there is no confirmation whatever of any of these reports. The 89th are just going to Rosetta to garrison that place which was left by the 13th Regiment the day before yesterday who marched for Alexandria. We are consequently in great anxiety to know the truth of all this & what is to be our destination.

We are rather inclined to believe that the Place either has surrendered or that they are now making terms; particularly as we have heard no firing tho' we are not more than 30 miles in a straight line from it - 'tis quite dark, I must leave off. Adieu!

1st September 3 miles above Rosetta

We have just learned that Alexandria surrendered yesterday, but we are in a state of anxiety to know is to become of us. My letter to Colonel Smith which was not forwarded in consequence of the 89th not having marched to Alexandria as expected, I am now going to send my own servant with this; we have not learned the particulars of the surrender - I must now request you will remember me very particularly to all my friends, without particularizing any which I have not time to do, & tell them al that I hope personally to assure them of my Regard; in the Course of a few months I intend writing to Mr. P. Le Mesurier to get leave from Home, in case it should be refused me from India. If you should receive this before you hear from me again, you may accelerate the measure by writing or speaking to him on the subject, presenting him my best respects. I am so determined on going home from this place that I shall leave no measure untried to accomplish it. Pray write to me here altho' should be a doubt of my getting your letters. I think some of the Indian Army will be left to garrison these places; if so, I shall apply to remain to give time for my leave to arrive either from India or Europe.

Adieu! Adieu!

Ever most sincerely & affectionately

Your dutiful son Th. F. de Havilland

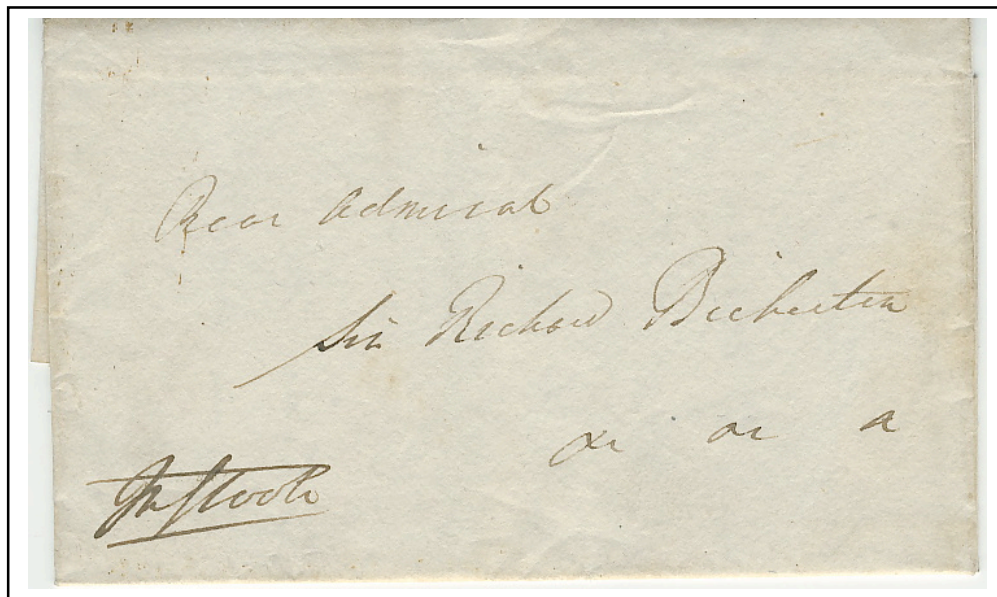
BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

Siege at Alexandria

CAMP before ALEXANDRIA

August the 31st [1801]

Entire letter sent by General Sir Eyre Coote (1762-1823) to Rear Admiral Sir Richard Hussey Bickerton (1759-1832). Coote was commanding officer of the army before Alexandria and Bickerton was commanding the blockading fleet. An armistice between the French and the British was entered into on August 27th which resulted in the capitulation of the French and the British entry into the city on September 2nd.



My dear Sir Richard

I have little at present worthy of communication — The cessation of hostilities still continues — I trust by tomorrow the Articles etc. will be signed. You shall hear from me every occurrence.

*Believe me
ever most faithfully yours*

Eyre Coote

BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

Siege at Alexandria

CAMP before ALEXANDRIA

August the 31st [1801]

Selected from the reports of
the late General
Sir R. B. Smith, by

August 31st - Camp

My dear Sir Richard

I have little at present worthy of
communication — The cessation of hostilities still
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Believe me
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Signet

BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

General Sir Eyre Coote, K.B., K.C. & M. P. — 1762 - 1823



BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

General Sir Eyre Coote, K.B., K.C. & M. P. — 1762 - 1823



BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

General Sir Eyre Coote, K.B., K.C. & M. P. — 1762 - 1823



"His conduct became more and more eccentric, and on 25 Nov. 1815 he was brought up at Mansion House before the lord mayor on a charge of indecent conduct. The case was dismissed, but the Duke of York, the commander-in-chief, heard of these proceedings, and in spite of strong representations from many distinguished officers, he directed Sir John Abercromby, Sir Henry Fane, and Sir George Cooke to report upon the matter. These three generals, after a long inquiry, reported that Coote was eccentric, not mad, and that his conduct had been unworthy of an officer and a gentleman. Coote was removed from his regiment, dismissed from the army, and degraded from the Order of the Bath—severe punishment for a veteran officer, whose brain had been affected by severe wounds and service in tropical climates. Coote lost his seat in Parliament at the dissolution of 1815, and died 10 Dec. 1823.

The Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. IV, Oxford University Press, 1921-1 922

BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

Turmoil in Egypt — 1803 - 1805

The British departure from Egypt in March 1803 created a power vacuum resulting in several years of internal turmoil. This was a period of murder, battle, rioting, pillage and famine. A three-way civil war erupted between the Ottoman Turks, the Egyptian Mamelukes, and the Albanian mercenaries led by Muhammed Ali. Ali was named Governor of Egypt in 1805 and in 1811 solidified his power with the extermination of the Mamelukes.

The two letters on the following pages were sent to Robert Walker Stuart, 11th Lord Blantyre, by an unknown correspondent and describes conditions in Egypt at that time. Both are written in Italian with the first dated 1 October 1803 in Cairo and the second 20 October 1803 from Damietta. Stuart (1777-1830) fought in the Egyptian campaign of 1801 and was a Representative Peer for Scotland in the House of Lords from 4 December 1806 to 29 April 1807.

Entire to Lord Blantyre through the London Two Penny Post, 30 May 1804.



London Two Penny Post marking on reverse of cover.

BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

Turmoil in Egypt — 1803 - 1805

Letter to Robert Walker Stuart, 11th Lord Blantyre. — First October 1803

Cairo fine xbre 1803

Nella prima lettera che ho avuto l'onore di scrivervi dall'Eg. non ho fatto menzione dei quattro partiti esistenti presentemente in Egitto cioè quello d'Abu Haghi Bey, Osman Bey Berdissi, Maumet Bey Elfi, e quello di Osman Bey Aspa, che si trova nell'Egitto superiore — Abu Haghi Bey e Osman Bey Berdissi, li loro partiti sono solo in apparenza, ma negli affari sono assai uniti; — Osman Bey Berdissi si fa giornalmente più forte, e all'opposto il partito di Maumet Bey (Elfi) si indebolisce, e per timore se ne resta in Egitto, avendo messo tutta l'antiquaria della detta piazza, alla villa del Nilo, contro il Cairo vecchio, e l'Isola di Roda, che si trovano in faccia nella parte opposta del Nilo — Minacciando giornalmente gli altri Bey che coll'arrivo di Maumet Bey d'Inghilterra di farsi tutti sottomettere, Maumet Bey Elfi scrisse da Malta al suo partito, di non temere che ben presto sarebbe ritornato, ma che non dovessero sperare assistenza dagli Inglesi e che sapia per certo che li avevano abbandonati, e scrisse che in Malta tutti l'avevano maltrattato, e che lo volevano tenere prigioniero, una simile lettera scrisse a Osman Bey Berdissi che mi ha letto, dicendole, che avea riconosciuto e saputo per certo che gli Inglesi non avrebbero mai pregato la Porta Ottomana per far la pace coi Mamelucchi, e che lo ritenevano a Malta, perchè sapeano che S. M. Britannica avea ricusato di assistere li Mamelucchi, e in prova le disse, che se li Inglesi avessero voluto fare qualche cosa per loro, lo avrebbero fatto prima di Evacuare Alessandria che il General Stuart lo aveva abbandonato per andarsi dicendo in Italia

BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

Turmoil in Egypt —1803 - 1805

Transcript of Letter to Robert Walker Stuart, 11th Lord Blantyre.

CAIRO -First October 1803.

In the first letter which I have had the honour to write to your Excellency I have not mentioned the four parties which exist at present in Egypt. That is, that of Ibraym Bey, Osman Bey Birdissi, Maumet Bey Elfi & that of Osman Bey Assen, the latter is situated in Upper Egypt. Ibraym Bey's & Osman Bey Birdissi's parties are separate in appearance, but in business they are fairly united.

Osman Bey Birdissi is becoming stronger every day & in contrast the party of Maumet Bey l'Elfi is weakening & through fear remains in Gizeh, having put all the artillery of the said place on the bank of the Nile, against Old Cairo & the Island of Roda which are facing on the opposite side of the Nile. As the other Beys were daily threatening that upon the arrival of Maumet Bey from England they will conquer them all, Maumet Bey wrote from Malta to his party not to be afraid for he would soon be back, but that they should not hope for any help from the English and that he knew for certain that they (= English) had abandoned them, and he wrote that in Malta everyone had mistreated him & that they wished to keep him prisoner; he wrote a similar letter to Osman Bey Birdissi which he read to me, saying that he had recognized & known for certain that the English would never have begged the Ottoman Port to make peace with Mamelukes & that they were keeping him in Malta, because they knew that His British Majesty had refused to assist the Mamelukes & in proof he said to them that if the English had wished to do something for them, they would have first evacuated Alexandria, that General Stuart⁵ had abandoned him to go off & enjoy himself in Italy, and that he (General Stuart) had left me to spy on him (Maumet Bey) & that I had never wanted to do anything for the good of the Mamelukes as I had always opposed him, that your Excellency, General Villetes & General Oakes had ever done him justice & that they treated him as a prisoner & a thousand other similar injustices.

Osman Bey Birdissi, after having explained to me the contents of the letter, talked to me about the people who made up the party of Elfi, whom Major Missett⁶ and I knew as a very fine man and began to tell me that Maumet Bey Elfi's lieutenant under the same name has for his Chiaga Bey a certain Zolfogar Aga, & that the latter in the said capacity served Bonaparte & then the other Generals during all the time the French were in Egypt, with two other Kaiiff who belonged to the aforesaid Zolfogar Aga also at the service of the French, and that now all three with their Mamalukes are in Gizeh in the Elfi party. He also told me that the aforesaid Zolfogar, on the arrival of the French Consul, received a letter from Bonaparte but that he did not know its contents, but yet he has learned for certain that the said Aga had sent a copy of it to Maumet Bey Elfi in Malta.

Osman Bey Birdissi told me in another conversation that with (his) forces he would have brought the Elfi party to reason, if were not that he feared the Albanians and moreover that he regretted (i.e.would regret) committing hostilities, as in that party there were three people whom he loved, valued quite highly, and when I asked who they were he told me Osman Aga Kurnardar, Maumet Aga Suvicher and Soliman Kaeiff il Boub. I replied to him that there were other ways he could use without opening hostilities & that in my opinion, I told him, that if he had begun to treat his adversaries with consideration that many would have left the party of Bey Elfi, with which he knew that many were not very happy, and having reported to Major Missett, we decided to pay a visit to the aforementioned Agas by whom we were received in the best way possible & without despising Maumet Bey Elfi, we made them see things as they were back at our house. On the same night, Osman Bey informed them that Olman Aga and Maumet Aga had paid him a visit & that he was very grateful for it.

⁵ General John Stuart who later commanded in Sicily after the British forces left Egypt in 1803.

⁶ Major Missett became the British agent (consul) in Cairo when the British forces left Egypt in March 1803.

Osman Bey Assen, who is in Upper Egypt, has 500 Mamelukes & various tribes of Arabs & with these men takes all the income of Upper Egypt and the Beys of Cairo cannot make any remedy for fear of the Albanians because their forces are not large enough.

The Albanians are behaving in the most infamous way - always threatening the Mamelukes for their wages, and in broad daylight. They rob the shops & the people, and they take the women in the good houses by force and when they are satisfied they rob them and they kill them & they commit many other evils and if Osman Bey begs them not to do these things, they say it is not true, threatening with death all those who want to prove it, and this happens every day in such a way that the Mamelukes and inhabitants must be sacrificed without complaining for fear that they do worse (things).

Ussen Bey the , of whom I have already spoken to you in my previous (letter) is completely given over to the French and almost every day he goes to the French Consul to confer together. This Bey holds presently in his service a thousand & more Greeks & he has written to Morca/Morea & all the Islands of the archipelago, to get Greek recruits and he gave a copy of the letter(s) which he wrote to the French Consul of Cairo so that a copy might be sent to his agents to facilitate the embarkation of the Greeks for Egypt. Ussen Bey is an intriguing man (= an intriguer, not an interesting person) and the most enterprising possible, but still he has got a malicious character and is capable of every evil action.

The Albanians in Egypt number 6000 and in this number there are 2000 among Greeks & slaves, whom the French Consul treats with great partiality & receives them daily at home and on many occasions Ussen Bey is there as well & the aforesaid heads of the Albanians and aforesaid Ussen Bey spend entire days at the house of Ussen Bey,

Major Missett reported everything to Ibrahim Bey and Osman Bey Birdissi, which I reported to the Major. We see the evil intention of the French through the intrigues of the French Consul as much with the party of Elfi as with Ussen Bey and the Albanians but I say now, let them carry on, until we are in a position to sort them out and find a remedy.

The French Consul makes the Mamelukes & the inhabitants think that the English Generals, after having freed them from the hands of the Osmanti, that the latter (= Osmanti) with great sums (of men, forces) conquered the Generals and that they have been sold & sacrificed. Moreover he told them that the intention of the British Majesty was to create war between the Porte and the Mamelukes in order to profit from their circumstances & to take possession of Egypt, and he gives them for proof, that my Lord Elgin⁷ takes the part of the Turks and that the army (takes) that of the Mamelukes but that it was to destroy both of them (both parties) and that they were all in agreement in secret & that they obeyed their sovereign & that without Bonaparte, the English would already at this time have taken possession of Egypt & that they would never have evacuated it, and many ignorant people believed him, and I assure V.S. that Major Missett & I have done everything to destroy these impressions, but as our reasonings are correct and (well) founded, they have persuaded the Mamelukes to believe in them/us.

I received a few days past visits from the principal merchants of this Country and as I had gone to Gemelia to pay them a visit (Gemelia is the place where all the greatest merchants live). I had the displeasure to hear the following conversations telling me that if the English army only planned to deliver the Mamelukes into the hands of the Osmanti to abandon them that it was better for the public good and for humanity to leave them where they were and that all the blood which has been spilled and that the ruin of the Ottoman Porte & of Egypt, that the army was the cause of these things (blood & ruin) & among these a Candioti (?) merchant says that the English have done it on purpose to destroy the Osmanti & the Mamelukes, and to make themselves owners of Egypt. I tried in the best possible way to make them see the opposite & all were convinced but the Candioti still held firm and the next day, which is this morning, the same Candioti called Mostafa Aga - I saw him to my great surprise come out of the French Consul's house and go into the house of a Greek Dragoman of the Consul. I immediately went to Gemelia to tell the other merchants who all told me he was a renegade Greek and completely given over to the French and that I shouldn't heed his words, that they themselves, notwithstanding the fact that he calls himself Mostafa Aga, regard him like a dog.

⁷ Thomas Bruce, Seventh Earl of Elgin, the British ambassador to Turkey.

Your Excellency will see presently the actual state, I assure you that it is even worse than I described it because no one lives in peace but always fearing assassination. No one can leave his house without being insulted, and I assure you they have no respect neither for Consul nor anyone and every time I have to go to the Beys, I myself knowing the language, understand the insults of the Albanians, and it is very true that they are only words but they do worse to the poor inhabitants, they rob them & many times they kill them.

Major Missett gives you details of the most circumstantial things, and Doctor Adrien, who carries the despatches can also tell you something.

But I think it my firm & sacred duty to notify your Excellency that, in the critical state in which Egypt finds herself at present, that the Mamelukes as much as the inhabitants are ready to throw themselves into the arms of the first comer and that a small number from a European nation could in a few weeks form an army of 10,000 men & that we would have trouble in getting rid of them. (It is very true that the Mamelukes and inhabitants love the English, but yet, in the state in which they find themselves, the Mamelukes for fear of being abandoned & the inhabitants for fear that the English might put them (inhabitants) once again into the hands of the Osmanti, both would fight against us.)

At this moment only two regiments could fight not only to win back the confidence of the Mamelukes & of the inhabitants which is wavering in the balance, but also to reunite the parties, to help the most miserable of peoples, to carry the Albanians out of Egypt as they desire & finally to complete the said plan and make the country strong so as to be able to defend themselves against any foreign invasion.

The opportunity presents itself, everyone demands it, and if your Excellency has in your power to send two regiments from Malta at present I can assure you that everything would change its appearance and I am sure that I am not mistaken, because I know these nations too well.

I fear I have spent too long on my details but as I wish to inform you also of the little things so as not to leave anything out, I therefore pray your Excellency to have a little tolerance. Assuring you that if you send an English army to Egypt, that my letters will then be very short & entreating you to continue to give me your protection, I have the honour to be with all esteem and obsequious respect.

D.V.E.

BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

Turmoil in Egypt — 1803– 1805

Letter to Robert Walker Stuart, 11th Lord Blantyre. - 20 October 1803

Damietta li 20 ottobre 1803 A S. E. il Cavaliere Ball

Aggiungo la presente alla lettera che ho avuto l'onore di
scrivere dal Cairo in data del primo corrente, che il giorno dopo
sono partito per Damietta per facilitare il diparto del S. E.
Audier per Matta con dei dispiaceri per V. S.

V. S. è già informata dal Maggiore Maffei, degli affari
legati in Damietta concernenti il Maggiore Hayes
ma trovandosi sul luogo, ho saputo dal S. E. V. S. e
da altre persone degne di fede che la mattina dell'assalto
dei Mamalucchi ai posti del S. R. che vi si trovava nelle
trincee il Sud. M. Hayes vestito alla mamaluca, ma che
vedendo le Mamalucchi entrare per tutte le parti, montò
a cavallo per fuggire verso la città, ma che saltandoci
sotto il cavallo lo gettò stramortito per terra, e il cavallo
se ne è fuggito. Un mamalucco Francesco di Omani rug-
herdissi, vedendo uno vestito alla mamaluca fuggire
cogli Omani, e cadere, lo corse sopra colla spada per
ucciderlo, ma essendo il Maggiore Hayes per terra tenne
poterli muovere per la caduta che fece lo domandò la
vita, il Francesco conosciuto alla pronuncia Araba essere
Europeo lo domandò chi fosse, M. Hayes lo rispose essere un
Inglese, allora il mamalucco Francesco lo trattò malamente
e lo caricò la volta quando l'ebbe disprezzato di ogni cosa
e dopo di averli promesso di pagargli una somma Considerabile
allora il Francese lo sollevò da terra e lo mise dietro il suo
cavallo, e lo portò in casa del S. E. e si fece pagare dopo
lo lasciò, e il medesimo Francese ne fece il rapporto

A. M. de

Letter reduced to 90%

BRITISH ARMY — NAPOLEONIC WAR

Turmoil in Egypt — 1803 - 1805

Transcript of Letter to Robert Walker Stuart, 11th Lord Blantyre.

Damiatta 20th October 1803.

To His Excellency the Sir Ball (?)

I enclose this with the letter which I have had to write to you from Cairo on the 1st instant, for the following day I left for Damiatta to facilitate the departure of Dr. Adrien for Malta with dispatches for your Excellency.

Your Excellency has already been informed by Major Missett⁸ of what has happened in Damiatta concerning Major Hayes⁹ but as I find myself on the spot I have learned from the N.V.C.(?) and from other trustworthy people that on the morning of the assault of the Mamelukes the posts of Ve Re (King V?) that the aforesaid Major Hayes was there in the trenches [front lines?], dressed as a Mameluke, but seeing the Mamelukes enter from all sides, he got on his horse to flee towards the city, but as it jumped over a ditch the horse threw him stunned onto the ground and the horse ran away. A French Mameluke of Osman Bey Birdissi, seeing someone dressed as a Mameluke running away with the Osmanti and falling, ran up with his sabre to kill him, but as Major Hayes was lying on the ground unable to move because of the fall, and asking questions about the city, the Frenchman knew by the Arab pronunciation that he was European and asked him who he was. Major Hayes replied that he was English and then the French Mameluke treated him badly and gave him his life after he had robbed him of everything and after he had promised to pay him a considerable sum. Then the Frenchman lifted him off the ground and put him behind (=on the back of) his horse and brought him to Ve.Ce's house and made him pay after he left him and the same Frenchman reported the matter to Osman Bey Birdissi who was already informed that an English engineer was with Ve Re.

The French V.R. [vice consul?] who is here called Basili Facher, the day after the taking of Damiatta, paid a visit to Osman Bey Birdissi and told him that all the trenches, fortification and ground works that he saw being made against them had been made by the English engineer, and that the same engineer was encouraging the Osmanti and that dressed as a Mameluke he had made sorties against them many times and -that without the aforesaid Major Hayes the Turks would not have held 24.

Here Damiatta is commanded by a young friend of mine called Achmet Bey, a man of honour but nevertheless he finds himself in the same state as in Cairo, being obliged to allow Damiatta to be plundered without being able to do anything to remedy the situation because the Albanians are 400 and the Mamelukes are only 50, and he is very attached to the English and does us great honours.

I learned through Major Missett that in Cairo, 13 became Beys and that Osman Aga of whom I have told you in my first letter of 1st October has been made a Bey by Osman Bey Birdissi. You will also receive an extract of a letter which I received today from Major Missett, and as the ship has not yet arrived and seeing from the Major's letter that you want me to return, I will leave tomorrow for Cairo. But wherever I am, I will always feel glory and honour at being

Yours etc.

D.V.E.

⁸ Major Missett became the British agent (consul) in Cairo when the British forces left Egypt in March 1803.

⁹ Major Hayes was sent by the British Ambassador in Constantinople to attempt to re-establish the authority of the Pasha.