

## A LETTER

OF SIR JOHN CULPEPER TO PRINCE RUPERT, INFORMING HIM OF  
THE STATE OF THE GARRISON OF AYLESBURY,  
DATED AT OXFORD, MARCH 19, 1642.

COMMUNICATED BY REV. F. G. LEE, F.S.A.

S<sup>r</sup>,—According to the intimation I received from your Highnesse I sent severall spyes into Aylesbury; the one of them brought me hither the last night at 10 of the clock this paper enclosed, wch was sent from a very good hand in the towne yesterday at 11 in the morninge. If the tawny regiment should be in the towne I presume the businesse will be full of difficulty: if y<sup>r</sup> forces should fall upon them in their march or [. . . . .] probably both the workes (the breakinge of them, and the reducing of the towne) will be easy. But y<sup>s</sup> Highness will best judge of these particulars neare the place. I shall only presume to offer to y<sup>u</sup> that if you looke upon the towne, a generall offer of a pardon both to officers, soldiers & Burgers, with the promise to the one of the continuance of their enter-tamnt (uppon security of their loyalty by takinge the protestation) and to the other of security from plunderinge (uppon fitt expression of their affections by a summe of money) may much advance the worke in hand, by freeinge them from depaire and dividinge them amongst themselves. I wholly submitt these notions to y<sup>r</sup> Highnesse wisdom, beinge most faithfully

Your Highnesses most humble and obliged Servnt  
Oxford 19<sup>th</sup> March  
1642.

John Culpeper.

10 in the morninge.

I have sent a copie of this note to the goven<sup>r</sup> at Brill. Y<sup>r</sup> designe was publicly talked of here yesterday morninge.

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Endorsed "For Prince Rupert, His Highnes"  
"humbly present these."

The information given in this Letter probably determined Prince Rupert to march on Aylesbury. He quartered his troops near Aylesbury on Monday night, March

20, 1643, and advanced towards the town on Tuesday, but retired in the evening, no engagement having taken place. This expedition must not be confounded with the "Battle of Holman's Bridge," near Aylesbury, fought on the first of November, 1642, and narrated by Archdeacon Bickersteth in *A Brief Historical Sketch of Aylesbury*, RECORDS, VOL. II, PAGE 260. Nor with that affair, commonly known as "The Plot to betray Aylesbury," which occurred ten months later, *i. e.* in January, 164 $\frac{3}{4}$ . A Narrative however of Rupert's appearance before Aylesbury on the 20th of March, 1643, shewing that he intended a reconnaissance rather than a direct attack, and, led by the information contained in Culpeper's letter, possibly expected the easy surrender of the town to him, was printed in *The Perfect Diurnal*, a Parliamentary Newspaper, of the date of March 27, 1643. It is as follows:—

"The certaine relation of the buisnesse at Alesbury was this day, (March 23) fully informed to the House of Commons by letters from Colonell *Goodwin*, and the other chiefe Commanders there to this effect. Sir, wee hold it convenient to give you a true relation of the passages concerning the Kings forces, and their appearing against the Towne. On Saturday last they marched from Oxford and those parts, and on Sunday the greatest part of them came to Thame: on Munday all their forces were drawn neere to this Towne, within one mile or two miles of the place, and shewed as if they would have fallen upon us that day, but they spent that day in viewing of the Town, where to make their best assault, and interposing betwixt us and the Chiltein parts of our Countrey, to hinder their assistance of us, where we had severall skirmishes without any losse; The Earle of Carnarvan commanded a great body of horse, and marched all Sunday night to Wendover, where he hoped to have taken one of our Troops of horse, which we had drawne thence some few hours before, but they plundered that Town, and the adjacent Towns, and committed many outrages besides as we are informed. On Munday night the whole forces quartered within a mile or two of this town, and the next morning their horse drew towards us, almost within Cannon-shot, and we expected every hour when they would fall upon the Town, and our horse drew into the field towards them, and the forlorn hopes fired upon one

another often, but they being much too strong in horse for us, wee drew our horse into the Town, preparing for their assault, but whilst we looked for their approach, they drew away towards evening on Tuesday, and instead of souldiers turned sheep-stealers, for they have plundered all the Towns thereabouts of all their goods and householdstufte; they have taken and driven away all their horses, beasts, and sheep, and in this iniquitie have herein only dealt equally, that they have not spared those who are accounted their own friends: they spoiled and tore in pieces the inside of divers fair houses, and besides the corne they spent upon their horses, they spoiled and spilt very much upon the ground, and threw it about the fields, and what goods they could not cary away, they cut in pieces, and threw about the fields and high wayes as they went: they have uot only taken away the horses which should now plough our grounds for seed, but have cut in pieces their Horseharnesses, and things belonging to the plough, as if they meant to bring the Kingdom to destruction in an instant. And we must be bold to signifie unto you that these cruelties are not acted by mean ones; for the Commanders herein, as we are informed, were Generall *Ruthin*, the Princes *Rupert* and *Maurice*, the Earl of Carnarvan, Lord *Grandison*, Lord *Wentworth*, and Colonell *Garrard*, with many others of their great ones; the forces they came with, were all they could get together, not leaving men enough to relieve the guard in Oxford; their forces were as we collect by all our discoveries, about 6000, who had devoured us in their thoughts before they came neare us; but God discouraged them from assaulting us which if they had done, they wold have found it a hot service; for our Souldiers and Countrey-men within the Towne were very bravely resolved to defend the place, though much inferiour to them in number, besides the great addition of strength sent unto us by his Excellency the Earle of Essex; whose care of us, and consideration of the State in securing this place, is never to be forgotten; for his Forces came to us much sooner than we could expect; and had the enemy stayed a few houres longer we had given them battell in the field: but it was not Gods pleasure the troubles of the time should end so, as yet we must expect his further pleasure. This is all they have to informe you, (and if you shall thinke fit to impart unto the House).” [H. R.]