

The Duke of Albemarle's Account of The Attack on The Medway 1667,

The *Duke of Albemarle* gives a very good account in his Narrative of the miscarriages in the Dutch War. 1665, 1666, 1667.



**George Monck,
1st Duke of Albemarle.**

1608 - 1670.

The ill success at Chatham Hath many Circumstances and therefore I shall be more particular, because it is yet fresh in my Memory. His Majesty having intelligence that the Dutch Fleet had with their Cannons beaten those from Sheerness that were to defend it, was pleased on Monday the 10th of June, to Command me to Chatham to take the best order I could to secure and defend the Ships there, and his Majesty gave Order to the Commissioners of the Ordnance to dispatch a Train after me that very day, which that Night I hear came to Deptford, and the next day unto Gravesend, and I myself went from the Tower of London at 4 a clock in the afternoon and came to Gravesend that evening. When I came thither I found the Fort on Kent side with few Guns Mounted and that Essex side had not above one in it mounted. I thereupon gave Orders to Sr John Griffith to mount as many Guns as He could and to repair the Fortifications to make the best resistance We could in case the Dutch Fleet should adventure further upon the River, part of their Fleet being sailed to the Hope. I then appointed Sir Wm. Jennings to Command the Men of War and 5 Ships that lay by the Fort, till his Royal Highness should farther direct in that perticular, and in regard I found the few Guns Mounted in the Fort, and seeing the Dutch Fleet on Tuesday morning with their Topsails loose in sight of Gravesend, I gave order that when the Train of Artillery should come they should stay there till further order, for I was in hopes to find Chatham better provided than it was. After I had made this provision there, I went early on Tuesday Morning to Chatham, where I found scarce a Dozedn of 800 Men, which were there in the Kings Pay in his Majestys Yard and they so distracted with fear, that I could have little of no Service from them.

I had heard of 30 Boats which were provided by the Direction of his Royal Highness, but they were all except 5 or 6 taken away by those of the Yard which went away with them and sent them away by the Example of Commissioner Pett who held the chief Command there, and sent away his own goods in some of them. I found no Ammunition there but what was in the *MONMOUTH* so that I presently sent to Gravesend for the Train to be sent me, which got thither about 2 of the clock the next day I dispatched his Order. I went to Visit the Clayne, where I found no works for the defense of it. I then immediately sent Soldiers to work for the raising 2 Batteries, for there were no other Men to be got, and when I employed them, I found it difficult to get tools for Commissioner Pett would not furnish Us with above 30 till we broke open the Stores, where we found more. I then directed that timber and thick planks to be sent to the batteries, and Guns also, that they might be ready to be planted as soon as the batteries were made and in the next place I sent Capt. Winter to Upnor Castle which I took to be a place very fit to hinder the enemy from coming further if that they should force the Chain. And upon better Consideration (though I had Horse near least the Enemy should land there), I commanded Sr. Edward Scott with his Company for a further strength to that place, and gave him the Charge of it, with Orders to let me know what he wanted for the Security thereof.

Having thus provided for Upnor, I considered where to Sink the Ships without the Chayne next to the Enemy for a farther Security to it. I found 5 Fireships & the "*Unity*" upon the Place, and advising with Commissioner Pett and the Masters Attendances, and a Pilot how to do a Narrow Passage by the Mussel Bank, the Dutch Fleet could not be able to come up, and relying upon their Experience who best knew the River, gave order for doing it, but when it was done they said they wanted 2 ships more, which I directed them to take and sink. After this I order'd Sr. Edward Spragg to tack about and Sound wither the sinking those Ships would secure the Passage, which he did and found another Passage which the Pilot and Master had not Observed to be Deep enough for great Ships, but was great enough for great Ships to come in. I resolved therefore to Sink some Ships within the Chain, and provided some against there occasion, I went then to look after the other Ships and Batteries, and to see Men and all things ready, but I found the Guns which I ordered to be there not yet come down, and in stead of thick oaken Planks, of which there were Stores in the Yards, it appeared the Commissioner would only send their Planks of Deal, Saying he had no other, which proved very prejudicial in their use for they were so Weak, that every Shott the Wheels sunk through the planks, which put us to Continuall trouble. About Noon before one Battery was quite rais'd time, Enemy came the Place where Our first Ships were sunk, I went on board the "*Monmouth*" with 50 Volunteers, and appointed Soldiers in other Ships to make the best defense they could if they proceeded, but they were so incumbered before they could get Clear their way through the Sunk Ships that their Tide was spent, there fore made no further advance that Day. Before We had time what to do against the next Attempt, there were two Ships Ordered to lye within the Chain, to sink when occasion Offered, and wanting one great Ship to sink in the Middle of those two that Night I ordered the "*Sancta Maria*" a Dutch prize in the Deepest place, between the Two aforesaid Ships, and I Judg'd it so fit to be done, that I charged Commisnr. Pett and the Master of Attendance to do it by Morning on Peril of their Lives, they having time enough before the Tide Served to provide things to carry down to it, to Comissioner Pett (who received Orders from His Highness the 16th of March to remove the "*Royal Charles*" above the Dock) had for above 9 or 10 Weeks neglected those Orders. When I was getting all the Boats I could, I wanted many for the Carrying Materials for the ZBatteries and Ammunitions and Soldiers for the defence of Ours, - Comissioner Pett came and told me he could carry Her up that Tide if he might have Boats; which I could not then Spare, for if they were gone all the Batteries, must have been Neglected, And I could not Transport the Timber, Powder, Shot, nor Men to them to resist the Enemy the next day, and besides it was thought advisable

at that instant, if the Dutch should have Landed in the Marsh by the Crane, they might have been useful and have hindred them having Guns aboard. Nevertheless, and upon noticed shortly after that there was neither Spunge Ladle Powdder not Shot enough, I sent Captn. Millet Commander of the "*Mathias*" about 10 in the Morning with Orders to Comissioner Pett to carry her up as High as they could the next Tide, who pretended he could not then do it and he was employ'd aboard Sinking Ships and Seeing She was not removed in the Morning I myself spoke to him the sais Comissioner Pett in the Evening in the presence of Coll. Mackenough asnd Captain Mansfield to fetch her off that Tide, but Notwithstanding these Orders the Ship was not Removed, but there lay till the Evening the Enemy took Her, in the same Morning by break of Day. I went to see what was done by the "*Snacta Maria*" and founf Men towing her along, to the place intended, And they had Tide enough to do their buseness, but soon after I had dispersed Orders with the other Ships I look'd and Saw the "*Sancta Maria*" by the Carelessness of the Pilot and Masters of Attandance was run on ground, at which I was much troubled, for if that Ship had been sunk in the place that I had appointed: the Dutch Ships could not have gotten beyond those of Ours, sunk within the Channell and thereby none of the Kings Ships within could have been destroy'd in regard that our Guardships, within our Batteries, would have hindred them from removing our Sunk Ships.

About Ten of the Clock on Wednesday the Enemy came out with part of their Fleet and two Men of War, and 5 or 6 Fireships, and some other Men of War seconding them; they first attempted the "*Unity*", which was placed On the Right hand Close without the Channel to deffend it, and they took het and one of their Fireships Struck upon the Chain, but it stopt it, then comes another great Fireship and with the Weight of them the Chaine gave way and then the Ships come on in that very Passage where the "*Sancta Maria*" should have been sunk, they burnt the two Guardships and took the "*Charles*" wherein the Boatswain and Gunner did not do their Dutys is firing her, though they say they attempted her twice, but the Fire did not take, this all I observed of the Enemy's Actions on Wednesday, our next Case was to provide against the Tide served the next Day, I enquired what had been done by Sr. Edward Scott at Upnor, and sent as many of those things he needed as I could get Boats to carry to him, and Sent also a Company more then was formerly Ordered to reinforce the place in case of Landing, and then directed the batteries to be made in the Kings Yard, but could not get a Carpenter but Two that were run away. I also planted that Night above Fifty Cannons in Several places, besides those that came with the Train of Artillery which were also Planted. I Stayed all Night in the place by the Men and having no Mooney to pay them, all that I could do or say was little enough for their Encouragement, for I had no Assistance from Commissioner Pett, nor nu Gunners or Men to draw on the Guns, Except the Two Masters of Attendance, of Thursday morning betimes Upnor was in a pretty good Condition; and our Batteries ready, I got some Captains of Ships and the other Officers Volunteers that came with me to ply the Guns, and the other Land Volunteers did assist to draw them on the Batteries, about Nine the Enemy came out with Two Men of War following, the two first Anchored before Upnor and play'd upon it, whilst the Fireships pass'd by to the "*Royal Charles*" the "*Oak*" and the "*London*" the two first Fireships burnt without any effect, but the rest went up and burnt three Ships mentioned, and if we had had but 5 or 6 Boats, to Cut off the Boats of the Fireships, We had prevented the burning of these Ships, but those being burnt as soon as the Tide Turned, the went back and made no Attempt after. I had the morning before this received His Majtie. Command to return to London, but I thought most of his Service to stay till the Attempt was over, and then having left upon the place the Earl of Carlisle, and the Earl of Middleton to Command there till further Order, I came away about 8 in the Evening, and about two in the Morning arrived at London.