

Get feedback on your submissions and print out certificates using the form at <http://www.cipher.maths.soton.ac.uk/feedback.php>

National Cipher Challenge Challenge 8 part A, 12/1/08 9:31

To my dearly beloved wife.

My dear Mary,

At last I am free to write to you of our recent adventures here on the border. My work as Postmaster General has consumed much of my life in the last few months, and the work occasioned by the introduction of a Grand Chiffre by the French has occupied that which is left of me for many days now. The perils faced by our brave troops as they approached the monstrous fort at Badajoz gave me, and many of my fellow officers, cause for deep concern, and drove me to redouble my efforts to break this new cipher.

The actions of the Spanish collaborator from within the fort, who turned to our side all unknown to Phillipon, were of inestimable worth in providing me with many letters written in that new and deeply mysterious code. Many more were provided by the actions of our brave guerilla friends among the Portuguese peasants. Without their daring and ruthless efforts my own ambitions would most certainly have been thwarted.

It appears that all the devices known to the grand master Maret have been used to startling effect in this cipher. Salutations and signatures are disguised to great effect, and the frequency of letters and letter pairs is most cunningly distorted. If it were not for the careless use of a small part of this cipher when it was first introduced I am sure that no easy path to its determination would have been presented. Fortunately Maret's cunning is matched only by the lack of sophistication of Governor Phillipon and by his own hand he wrought a great betrayal on his army.

But then I am being unfair, he was under great pressure when he encrypted his penultimate message, facing the

Get feedback on your submissions and print out certificates using the form at <http://www.cipher.maths.soton.ac.uk/feedback.php>

imminent loss of the fort, and perhaps he was not fully aware of the proper use of such a magnificent cipher.

In any case, my love, my work here is done, at least for a little while. This battle is won, others will be fought, but I have no doubt that we will prevail and the French will be driven from the Peninsula. It is my hope we shall soon walk together along the beautiful boulevards of Lisbon.

Your loving husband, George. XXXXXX

Get feedback on your submissions and print out certificates using the form at <http://www.cipher.maths.soton.ac.uk/feedback.php>

National Cipher Challenge Challenge 8 part B, 12/1/08 9:31

From the secretary to Major General Phillipon, Governor of Badajoz, to the court of King Joseph

Your Majesty,

The following account was dictated to me by Governor Phillipon with instructions to pass it to you with utmost urgency and discretion.

It is with deepest regret that I must report the loss of the fort at Badajoz. For some time now the battle with Wellington has been inevitable, but I had hoped that Marshal Soult and his forces would arrive in time to engage with the enemy and allow us to prepare a counter attack. I am certain that, pinned between the anvil of Badajoz, and the hammer of Soult's army, Wellington would have fallen.

Indeed when I heard that Soult had departed Seville on April first, my spirits were much lifted. It was clear from the activities of the enemy that they too were aware of the approaching army as they redoubled their gunnery and their attempts to breach our massive defences. But on the night of the sixth, before Soult's army arrived to make a difference, the assault finally came.

Approaching by night, two divisions of Wellington's army attacked the breaches in our walls while another, led I understand by Picton, made an attempt to scale the walls. Picton's assault was clearly a diversion from the main thrust of the expedition, as on the western side sappers had undermined the earthworks and the sound of explosions deep within alerted us all to their presence. We duly concentrated our fire on the main force and at first I believed that we might repulse them. A furious, withering fire from our brave artillery left a sea of bodies in

Get feedback on your submissions and print out certificates using the form at <http://www.cipher.maths.soton.ac.uk/feedback.php>

the ditches, and these together with the wicked blades of our chevaux de frise and the broken soil of the ramparts and ditches formed a formidable obstacle. In the dark of the night I could not count the dead, but by midnight two of their divisions had been recalled.

Picton however had managed to scale our walls near to the Guadiana, and this small diversionary attack quickly turned to a full scale assault. As their vicious infantry broke into the citadel, wide scale looting turned to rioting and murder, with a breakdown in discipline that I hope never to see in our own troops.

The British Officers stand outside my door with an offer of safe passage for me and my daughters if I give them my parole. Few women have survived this night, and I have no choice but to go with them.

I wish only to assure you that the loss of Badajoz has been bought at the highest cost you could ask. My officers tell me that over four thousand British soldiers have been killed in this action, and it is my hope that these deaths will hasten the defeat of Wellington.

With regret,

Major General Phillipon