

# THE ROYALIST ARMY IN YORKSHIRE

William Cavendish (1593–1676), Marquis de Newcastle

and James King (1589–1652), Lord Eythin

to Charles I (1600–1649), King of England and Scotland (1625–1649)

Newcastle, 13 February <sup>1643/1644</sup>

Your Majesty may be pleased to understand that the greatest part of this winter was necessarily spent in suppressing the rebellion in Derbyshire, which otherwise had grown to an irresistible head. And by the time we had reduced that county and put it in a defensible posture, the disorders in Yorkshire, together with the rumour of the Scots' invasion called us back into Yorkshire very much wearied and toiled, both Horse and Foot, where we had hopes to have refreshed and clothed our men, which were discouraged both for want of clothes and money.

We remained there not above a fortnight, but the Scots had invaded the Kingdom with a very great army, although the season of the year and a great snow at the very instant did persuade us that it was impossible for them to march. Yet not trusting to that, my lord Lieutenant-General hastened away with all expedition with such Horse and Foot as were quartered nearest to those parts and, receiving intelligence of the Scots' continuing their march, he hastened to Newcastle in his own person some days before his forces could possibly get thither; where truly he found the town in a very good posture and that the Mayor, who had the charge of it, had performed his part in Your Majesty's service very faithfully, and all the aldermen and best of the town well-disposed for your service.

And though our charge was very tedious, by reason of floods occasioned by the sudden thaw of the snow, yet I came thither the night before the Scots assaulted the town, which was done with such a fury as if the gates had been promised to be set open to them; but they found it otherwise. For the truth is the town soldiers gave them such an entertainment (few of our forces being then come into the town, and those extremely wearied in their march) as persuaded them to retire a mile from the town, where they have remained ever since quartered in strong bodies, and raising the whole country of Northumberland, which is totally lost, all turned to them, so that they daily increase their army and are now striving to pass part of it over the river, so to environ us on every side and cut off all provision from us. But we have hitherto made good the town and river, and shall do our best endeavour still to do so.

But Your Majesty may be pleased to know that the enemy's army consists of at least 14.000 Foot and 2.000 Horse, and daily increase their numbers. And we cannot possibly draw into the field full 5.000 Foot and about 3.000 Horse. And besides, Sir Thomas Fairfax's success in Cheshire<sup>1</sup> has made him capable of drawing from Lancashire a very great force into the West Riding of Yorkshire, which he is ready to do. My Lord Fairfax<sup>2</sup> has sent forth of Hull into the East Riding 2.000 Foot and 500 Horse, all threatening to march towards us, which will make them a great body. And by this Your Majesty may perceive where the seat of the war is likely to be.

And where we have been promised great numbers of men for Your Majesty's service against the Scots, all those feigned promises are come to nothing. And besides, though all possible diligence has been used to procure arms and ammunition by employing Sir William Davenant<sup>3</sup> in Holland solely for that purpose, and by continual representing to him by frequent packets our wants thereof, yet we have received no considerable supply from him, so that our present condition in that respect is more desperate than in the inequality of our forces.

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas Fairfax (1612–1671) had just won the Battle of Nantwich on 25 January 1644, giving Parliament supremacy in Cheshire.

<sup>2</sup> Ferdinando (1584–1648), Baron Fairfax, father of Sir Thomas, commanded Parliamentary forces in Hull, the only city in Yorkshire not under Lord Newcastle's control.

<sup>3</sup> Sir William Davenant (1606–1668), god-son of William Shakespeare and Poet Laureate of England (1638–1668)

Your Majesty may be pleased to remember the humble petition we had to Your Majesty, that my Lord Byron<sup>1</sup> might join with us. But Your Majesty had other counsels that wrought more powerfully with you, though none were delivered more faithfully for your service. For, had we then joined our forces, we should have been able to have done Your Majesty that service which, being decided, could not be expected; but that is past. And now we thought it our duty to represent truly to Your Majesty our present condition and humbly desire Your Majesty's express commands—whether we shall still continue in a defensive posture, and expect some assistance as well of force as ammunition from Your Majesty, or whether, upon this great inequality, so we shall adventure to hazard the loss of this army, and so of all the North, by giving them battle. Either of which we shall obey, as Your Majesty shall please to direct us. And having dispatched this express for Your Majesty's pleasure therein, we beseech Your Majesty to return it so soon as possible may be.

Eliot Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers* (London: Bentley, 1849), II:481–484. [modernized]

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<sup>1</sup> Sir John (c. 1599–1652), Baron Byron, at that time commanding Royalist cavalry in Oxfordshire