

Duke of Northumberland to Col. Mac Mahon

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Alnwick Castle 20<sup>th</sup> October 1872

Most Confidential

My Dear Colonel

I do not know that I was ever so mortified, and dishonoured, in my life, as I am by a late occurrence. So much so, that I have really not been able lately to set pen to paper, except to write to different persons, upon the subject.

It has, I find, been the invariable Privilege enjoyed by the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, from time immemorial, till on the present occasion, never to have any officer appointed to the Reg<sup>t</sup> from any other Corps; but for all Promotions to go in the Reg<sup>t</sup> by seniority; nor has there ever been any Promotion, or appointment, but thro' the Recommendation of the Colonel. Thro' his Recommendation, likewise, have all young gentlemen been appointed Cornets in the Reg<sup>t</sup>, whether by, or without Purchase, excepting when His Majesty has chosen to signify His Pleasure, that one of His own Pages of Honour should be appointed to a vacant Cornetcy, without Purchase. Not even any Exchange between an officer of the Royal Reg<sup>t</sup> of Horse Guards, & any officer of another Reg<sup>t</sup> has taken place, that I can find, but twice. Once, when the late Lord Ligonier, then in the 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoons, was

The Right Honourable  
Colonel Mac-Mahon —

allowed to exchange with Capt: Brown, which was done with  
 the agent of the Officers of the Reg<sup>t</sup>, and recommended by his  
 uncle, Field Marshal Lord Sigonier, at that time Colonel of  
 the Reg<sup>t</sup>; and at another time, when Capt: Harcourt, of the  
 Life Guards, exchanged with Capt: Astor. This last Exchange  
 took place, when the Commanding Officer, & part of the Reg<sup>t</sup>,  
 was abroad upon Service, & created great uneasiness & Displeas-  
 ure in the Reg<sup>t</sup>; and Major General Somers reports me, that in  
 consequence of a strong Memorial presented on that occasion,  
 Appearances were given, that the like should never happen again.

Thus all Promotions went on regularly in the Reg<sup>t</sup>, without  
 the Appointment of an Officer, from any other Corps, till now; when  
 on the Augmentation being ordered, Captain Murray was appointed  
 Capt: from half pay, and Mr. Meyernis a Cornet; and ever Mr. Taylor  
 Adjutant to the Reg<sup>t</sup> was appointed Captain, without waiting  
 for any Recommendation. Indeed, in such a hurry was all this done,  
 that the Appointments appeared in the Gazette the very next  
 Tuesday, after the Order for the Augmentation was issued, without  
 any Communication whatever with me upon the Subject, & before  
 it was possible for me to transmit any Recommendation. For the  
 Order is dated 28<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup>, & was issued on the 29<sup>th</sup>. I received it the  
 2<sup>d</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup> at night, & sent off my Recommendation of the Officers in  
 Succession on the 4<sup>th</sup>, which of course could not reach Lord on till the

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done with of the, & they were already gazetted on the 6<sup>th</sup>. As this happened on the  
by his day after the Regiment was reviewed by the Prince Regent, the officers  
could not conceive, that their being thus deprived of Promotion, by  
the appointment of a Capt: from half pay, contrary to all Custom, & to  
those Privileges which the Regt: had hitherto enjoyed, for 150 years,  
is intended to convey to them, & to the Army in general, His Majesty's  
Displeasure, & Disapprobation, of their Appearance, & Conduct, when  
ordered upon actual Service. As for my own feelings, upon this Occasion,  
they are more easily conceived, than expressed. After upwards of 53  
years Service, as a Commissioned officer, 37 years of which I have been a  
General officer, to leave myself, & the Regiment, whilst under my  
Command, deprived of those Privileges with which my Predecessors  
have been constantly, & invariably indulged, for such a number of  
years, without the least reason assigned, is such a Publick,  
Personal, & severe, (tho' I must warrant) military Stigma, that it is  
impossible, unless better are replaced in their old Courses, for me to  
continue in the Service. I am therefore collecting all the necessary  
& authentic Documents, in order to form a Memorial, which, when  
completed, I shall do myself the honour of laying officially present  
to His Majesty the Prince Regent, thro' the proper Channel, & then desire  
His Majesty's Permission to retire from the Service - I own it is a most cruel  
Situation, to be forced out of the Service, after having spent my  
whole Life in it. But after this Personal, & Publick, Disgrace

affixed upon me, as unworthy to enjoy that Confidence, &  
those Privileges, which have uninterruptedly been possessed  
by my Predecessors, for such a Series of Years, as upwards of a  
Century, it is totally impossible that, consistently with what I  
owe to my own Character, I can remain longer in the Service  
What I can have done to offend H: R: H:, and to draw down  
upon me this publick mark of Rejection, & Disgrace, I cannot  
conceive. You, my dear Colonel, know full well, the Zeal, Attach-  
-ment, & True say Affection, I have always shown for H: R: H:  
and his Interest. You will remember, when I lost, when H: R: H:  
was loaded with his Services, & taken to his Bosom, most basely  
deserted him in his greatest Need, I remained firm, & immovably  
attached to him, and I am sure I have not since failed in my  
Duty towards H: R: H:, nor in my most anxious Desire to give  
Assistance & Support to his Measures, & his Administration. To tell  
me then, my dear Colonel, what is it, that has brought down upon  
me such a mark, & personal Stigma? For it is impossible for  
me to conceive, that any Person would venture to break thro  
every Rule, & Custom, which have led the Reaction, of so many  
Years, & so many Sovereigns, and to deprive at once, without any  
reason assign'd, or Charge brought against them, a Distinguished,  
brave, and meritorious Regt. of Privileges, which they have uninterru-  
-ptedly, till now, enjoyed for such a period of time, without the

Prince Regent's Authority, and Order.

If however I am mistaken, in this Point, & I should have the happiness to learn, that H: R: H: has not sanctioned this Business; or that He was not informed of these Privileges, which have been so long, & constantly enjoyed by the Regt: and its Colonel; the whole may easily be set to rights again, & replaced upon its former ancient footing. Nothing more is required, than what I frequently see in the Gazette, of a similar Nature viz: that the appointments of Capt: Murray, as Capt: of a troop, & Lt: Rogers, as Cornet, in the Royal Regt: of Horse Guards, have not taken place and then to insert, in the next Gazette, the appointments, & Promotions of the several officers &c: according to the Recommendation, & have had the honor to transmit as usual to H: R: H: the Commander in Chief.

Should H: R: H: the Prince Regent, be graciously pleased to give His Orders, that this shall be done, it will call forth the gratefull Energy of the Officers of the Regt:, who are now gone abroad upon Service, with Hearts, & Minds, greatly depressed, by this New, & totally unexpected System, which denies them that certainty of Promotions, they have hitherto enjoyed, <sup>which</sup> has been for the first time adopted upon the present occasion; and I need not

that I shall myself ever entertain the most gratefull sense  
of H: R: H: 's Goodnes, and I might say, Justice

If however the Reg<sup>t</sup>, and myself, have really incurred  
H: R: H: 's Displeasure, & that it has been his Intention  
to inflict this Publick Disgrace, & Jurisdiction, upon us.  
We must submit, and abide the consequences. I can only  
trust, that Nobody in Parliament will take up the matter.  
Although it is hardly to be expected, that a Person, of my  
Rank in life, as well as in the Army, can thus be forced  
out of the Service, without its being pretty strongly  
unintended upon, both by the Army, & the Country in general.

I cannot help however flattering myself, that H: R: H: has  
been surpris'd into giving his Assent to the Business, as it  
was stord, and that thro' his Wisdom, & sense of Justice  
He will order the ancient Priviledges to be restor'd, both to  
the Regiment, & its Colonel.

I have detain'd you so long upon this unfortunate  
occurrence, my dear Colonel, as hardly to justify my taking up  
more of your time, in thanking you for your two last letters.  
I have indeed had a lucky escape at Aldburgh. I find however  
there was a kind of Opposition at New Romney, & a Petition  
to Parliament against the Return is thought; But I fancy it

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I must beg of you to present my most humble Duty  
to Mr: De H: and assure him, that altho' such the death of  
what has happened, nothing can ever shake my Devotion & Dutifull  
Attachment to His Army, My dear Colonel, all have writte  
in compliments to you, & 2<sup>m</sup> have below.

Please the pleasure to be, with the most  
unfeigned regard & esteem

My dear Colonel  
Your ever faithfull Friend  
Northumberland

20<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1812.  
D. of Northumberland