

TRANSLATION OF LETTER WRITTEN IN 1808

After the battle of Vimeiro fought and won by Wellington on August 21st 1808 against Junot the residents of this parish wrote an extraordinary letter to the then Sir Arthur Wellesley. We reproduce the letter in its original Portuguese version.

The English Translation by Prof. R. Clive Willis follows:

“Illmo e Exmo Senhor.

Depois que V. Exa fez ir de escantilhão para França o fanfarrão Junot, tendo-o posto em papos de aranha nos campos do Vimeiro; depois que V. Exa fez sair com o vento de baixo o ladino Sault, da cidade do Porto, obrigando-o a fazer vispere e ir com as calças na mão para Castela; depois que V. Exa disse ao zanaga Massena “alto lá, Sr. Macário!” e jogando o jogo dos sisudos lhe mostrou as linhas com que se cosia, fazendo-o dar às trancas e apanhar pés de burro, por ter dado com as ventas num sedeiro; depois que V. Exa fez ir de catrambias a Berrier, da Cidade de Rodrigo, e ao caxola Phillipon limpar as mãos à parede em Badajoz, como quem diz “faça que não me viu”, e tendo-o “tem-te, Maria, não caias”; depois que V. Exa finalmente, nos campos de Arapiles, zás-trás, nó-cego, desasou o macambúzio Marmont e o obrigou a contar a sua derrota p-apá-Santa Justa, tim-tim; foi então, Exmo Senhor, que nós, os pés-de-boi, portugueses velhos, dissemos “este não é general de cá-ca-racá; tem ancoras; não faz cancaburradas nem deixa fazer o ninho atrás da orelha; e, como prudente, umas vezes acomete e outras põe-se de conserva; agora podemos dormir a sono solto; o nosso medo está nas malvas; a vinda do inimigo será no dia de S. Nunca à tarde”. Portanto, só nos resta agradecer a V. Exa a visita que nos fez, que desejamos não seja de médico nem com o pé no estribo, devendo saber V. Exa que estes desejos não são basóflas nem parolas que leve o vento, mas sim ingénuos votos de corações agradecidos e leais, em os quais tem V. Exa erguido com tanta justiça um trono de amor e respeito. De V. Exa etc. Os habitantes do Vimeiro.”

Most Excellent Sir.

When once Your Lordship had sent that swaggering Junot scuttling off back to France after drawing his troops into your web on the fields of Vimeiro; when once Your Lordship had blown sly old Soult out of Oporto with a gale at his backside, forcing him to scurry off, clutching his breeches in his hand, all the way back to Castile; when once Your Lordship had said to that crosseyed villain Massena, "Stop right there, smart alec!", and, by boxing clever, showed him just how neatly stitched up he was, making him shamle off again and end up loafing around because he'd been given a bloody nose; when once Your Lordship had bounced Berrier out of Ciudad Rodrigo and sent that old sardine-head Phillipon blustering oafishly out of Badajoz, like somebody begging, "Just make out you haven't seen me", and getting the answer, "Mind you don't fall, Mary dear", and, last of all, when once, on the fields of Arapiles, crash-bangwallop, get out of that, Your Lordship had clipped the wings of that gloomy devil Marmont and forced him to tell the tale of his defeat in every last piffling detail; then it was, most excellent sir, that all of us, old Portuguese sweats that we are, declared, "This man's no mean general; he's down-to earth; he doesn't fool about nor let the grass grow under his feet; very wisely, he sometimes goes off on the attack amd sometimes lies in wait; now the time has come when we can sleep soundly at night; we've tossed away the last shred of fear; for the enemy will show up on the afternoon of the umpteenth day of Never. So it only remains for us to thank Your Lordship for the visit you paid us, which we trust was no mere doctor's call nor just a stop to change horses; indeed we would point out that such hopes are no empty blather, borne away on the wind, but the straightforward wishes of faithful and thankful hearts, high up in which Your Lordship has so justly placed a throne of love and respect.

Your Lordship's faithful servants, etc.

The People of Vimeiro.