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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1857.

ADMIRALTY, January 29, 1857.

DESPATCHES, of which the following are copies, have been received from Rear-Admiral Sir Michael Seymour, K.C.B., Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Ships and Vessels on the East India and China Station:—

No. 116.
SIR,

*Niger, at Canton,
December 14, 1856.*

I HAVE the honour to report proceedings at Canton since my letter, No. 106, of 24th ultimo, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

2. On the 25th the United States' Commissioner informed American citizens that the Imperial High Commissioner having failed to render satisfaction for the recent insult to their flag, Commodore Armstrong would not desist from aggressive measures till ample apology should be made, and a guarantee given that the American flag should be respected for the future.

The Commodore determined on the demolition of the Barrier Forts, the capture of which I have already reported, and commenced blowing them up.

In the afternoon of the same day thirty-seven war junks issued from a creek, and anchored in a line about four miles from the Encounter, in shoal water. Captain O'Callaghan endeavoured to get within range of them the following day, but without effect. The Chinese fired several shot, which fell short. These junks have since retired.

3. Reports having reached me that the Chinese were busily employed in re-arming the Blenheim Fort, I sent the Barracouta down the Macao Passage on the 26th with Captain Twiss, and a party of Royal Artillery, to check any such proceedings, and to destroy the Fort. About 150 soldiers were found there, and 15 guns had been mounted. The troops were driven out, and the guns rendered useless; a few mines under the works completely destroyed them. Commander Fortescue, before leaving, informed the head man of the adjoining village, who had superintended the progress of the works, under promise of reward from the Mandarins, that any further attempt to restore the fort would result in the burning of the place.

4. On the 29th two 10-inch mortars were mounted on the Dutch Folly, and their range was tried on the French Folly Fort.

5. On the 3d instant, a most melancholy occurrence took place. Captain Cowper, R.E., who had been detached for service at Canton, was superintending the pulling down of some Chinese houses outside the factory, when one of them suddenly fell on him, from which he sustained such extensive injuries as to cause his death in less than three hours. Captain Cowper had been of the greatest assistance in strengthening our position, and I cannot too highly express my admiration of the zeal and professional ability he displayed. Her Majesty's Service has sustained a severe loss in his untimely end. I sent the Coromandel to Hong Kong with the remains of the deceased gallant officer.

6. The Chinese authorities having re-armed and strengthened the French Folly Fort, situated near the south-east city gate, having in its rear extensive barracks occupied by troops, and erected flanking sand-bag batteries on either side of it, notwithstanding we had endeavoured to check them by the fire of the guns and mortars in the Dutch Folly, I determined on its destruction, as threatening a hostile concentration of force, and being an obstacle to the free navigation of the river, by the passage through the Barrier Forts. The Encounter and Barracouta accordingly shifted their positions to below the Dutch Folly on the evening of the 3d, and on the following morning I embarked in the Encounter, and dropped down to the fort, accompanied by the boats of the squadron, having on board about 350 small-arm men and Royal Marines, under the command of Captains Wilson and the Honourable A. A. Cochrane, C.B., of the Winchester and Niger, and Captains Penrose and Boyle of the Royal Marines. The ships were anchored about 850 yards from the fort, being as near as the depth of water permitted, and at seven a.m. a heavy and effective fire was opened from them, and from the Dutch Folly; the boats soon after pushed on shore, and our flag was planted on the walls of the fort, amidst the hearty cheers of the assailing parties. The Chinese troops twice attempted to rally, but were quickly driven back, and the affair was over within one hour from the first gun being fired. The fort mounted about 20 heavy guns, with others of various calibre in the sand-bag batteries. Those in the fort were mounted somewhat similar to ships' guns, with breechings secured ^{across} the outside of the embrasures. This gives some colour to the report that many of the ^{guns} ~~guns~~ had served in European ships.

