

Devastation grounding. The enemy took advantage of this circumstance to attempt her destruction by three fire vessels, attended by five row boats; but their object was defeated by the promptitude and gallantry of Captain Alexander, who pushed off with his own boats, and being followed by those of the other ships, chased the boats of the enemy up to the town of Alexandria. The cool and steady conduct of Mr. John Moore, Midshipman of the Seahorse, in towing the nearest fire vessel on shore, whilst the others were removed from the power of doing mischief by the smaller boats of the Devastation, entitles him to my highest commendation.

The Meteor and the Fairy, assisted by the Anna Maria dispatch boat, a prize gun boat, and a boat belonging to the Euryalus, with a howitzer, had greatly impeded the progress of the enemy in their works, notwithstanding which, they were enabled to increase their battery to eleven guns, with a furnace for heating shot. On the 3d, the wind coming to the N. W. the Etna and the Erebus succeeded in getting down to their assistance, and the whole of us with the prizes, were assembled there on the 4th, except the Devastation, which, in spite of our utmost exertion in warping her, still remained five miles higher up the river. This was the moment when the enemy made his greatest efforts to effect our destruction.

The Erebus being judiciously placed by Captain Bartholomew in an admirable position for harassing the workmen employed in the trenches, was attacked by three field pieces, which did her considerable damage before they were beaten off. And, another attempt being made to destroy the Devastation with fire vessels, I sent the boats, under Captain Baker, to her assistance; nothing could exceed the alacrity with which Captain Baker went on this service, to which I attribute the immediate retreat of the boats and fire vessels. His loss, however, was considerable, owing to their having sought refuge under some guns in a narrow creek thickly wooded, from which it was impossible for him to dislodge them.

On the 5th at noon, the wind coming fair, and all my arrangements being made, the Seahorse and Euryalus anchored within short musket shot of the batteries, while the whole of the prizes passed betwixt us and the shoal; the Bombs, the Fairy, and Erebus, firing as they passed, and afterwards anchoring in a favourable position for facilitating by means of their force, the further removal of the frigates. At 3 p. m. having completely silenced the enemy's fire, the Seahorse and Euryalus cut their cables, and the whole of us proceeded to the next position taken up by the troops, where they had two batteries, mounting from fourteen to eighteen guns, on a range of cliffs of about a mile extent, under which we were of necessity obliged to pass very close. I did not intend to make the attack that evening, but the Erebus grounding within range, we were necessarily called into action. On this occasion the fire of the Fairy had the most decisive effect, as well as that of the Erebus, while the Bombs threw their shells with excellent precision, and the guns of the batteries thereby completely silenced by about eight o'clock.

At day-light on the 6th I made signal to weigh,

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and so satisfied were the whole of the parties opposed to us of their opposition being ineffectual, that they allowed us to pass without further molestation. I cannot close this detail of operations, comprising a period of twenty-three days, without begging leave to call your attention to the singular exertion of those, whom I had the honour to command, by which our success was effected. Our hammocks were down only two nights during the whole time; the many laborious duties which we had to perform were executed with a cheerfulness which I shall ever remember with pride, and which will ensure, I hope, to the whole of the detachments, your favourable estimation of their extraordinary zeal and abilities.

To Captain Napier I owe more obligations than I have words to express. The Euryalus lost her bowsprit, the head of her foremast, and the heads of all her topmasts, in a tornado which she encountered on the 25th, just as her sails were clued up, whilst we were passing the Flats of Maryland Point: and yet, after twelve hours work on her refit, she was again under weigh, and advancing up the river. Captain Napier speaks highly of the conduct of Lieutenant Thomas Herbert on this as well as on every other of the many trying occasions which have called his abilities into action. His exertions were also particularly conspicuous in the prizes, many of which, already sunk by the enemy, were weighed, masted, hove down, caulked, rigged, and loaded, by our little squadron, during the three days which we remained at Alexandria.

It is difficult to distinguish amongst officers who had a greater share of duty than often falls to the lot of any, and which each performed with the greatest credit to his professional character. I cannot omit to recommend to your notice the meritorious conduct of Captains Alexander, Bartholomew, Baker, and Kenah, the latter of whom led us through many of the difficulties of the navigation; and particularly to Captain Roberts, of the Meteor, who, besides undergoing the fatigues of the day, employed the night in coming the distance of ten miles to communicate and consult with me upon our further operations, preparatory to our passing the batteries.

So universally good was the conduct of all the officers, seamen, and marines of the detachment, that I cannot particularise with justice to the rest. But I owe it to the long tried experience I have had of Mr. Henry King, First Lieutenant of the Seahorse, to point out to you, that such was his eagerness to take the part to which his abilities would have directed him on this occasion, that he even came out of his sick bed, to command at his quarters, whilst the ship was passing the batteries*; nor can I ever forget how materially the service is indebted to Mr. Alexander Louthain, the Master, for both finding and buoying the channel of a navigation, which no ship of similar draft of water had ever before passed with their guns and stores on board, and which, according to the report of a seaman now in this ship, was not accomplished by the President American frigate, even after taking her guns out, under a period of forty-two days.

* The two best guns pointed by Lieutenant King, disabled each a gun of the enemy.