

form the basis of our offensive operations. I pushed forward, therefore, with every exertion to prevent any delay of the Conway from the difficulties we might experience.

At twenty minutes past three in the afternoon Blenheim anchored off Ligen Island, near the Sulphur, and the Atalanta was sent back to tow up the Major-General's Head quarter ship. All the Chinese pilots had fled, and we failed in getting one; but on the morning of the 21st, the light breeze being fair, and the tide answering, Captain Belcher felt no hesitation in taking charge of the Blenheim; and although it had been agreed to collect our force at Wantong, as another stage on our route, I thought it best to proceed with my own ship, and weighed at half past seven, some of the transports collecting around me.

At half past ten we were up to the second bar, where I expected to have found the Chinese bar boats to have buoyed off the channel; but they had all gone. The tide was not more than half expended; Captain Belcher felt confident he could take the ship over the bar after sounding and placing boats, which he did in the most rapid manner, against a tide of great velocity. It was done in a masterly manner, and the Blenheim passed the second bar at noon. At two we were up to the first bar. Leaving it on the right, we entered the passage between Danes Island and the main land, continuing our route past French Island until the fortified heights and walls of Canton were in sight, about eight miles distant; and the ships of the advanced squadron at the Macao Fort were in a direct line about five miles from us. At this position the Blenheim was anchored and moored in five fathoms at low water spring tides, where no line of battle ship of any nation had ever been before, and ready to be the rallying point to our coming force.

By the indefatigable attention of Commander Rogers, of the Honourable East India Company's steam vessel Atalanta, who for three days was in almost constant motion, under the superintendence of Commander Belcher, on whom no fatigue or trouble seemed to have any other effect than to increase his zeal; all the transports and ships of war were assembled, excepting two of the former; and these having grounded, without hope of getting off immediately; the troops were taken out and distributed in other vessels.

No overt act of hostility had taken place to this moment, except remounting the guns in the Shamien battery; but the Chinese appear to have been perfectly ready for attack.

All remained quiet in the river until about ten o'clock P. M. when an attempt was made with fire rafts to burn the advanced vessels.

This attack not only totally failed, but was followed up by a gallant attack on the Shamien battery, and the silencing of it by the vessels of the squadron under the immediate superintendence of Captain Herbert, of the Calliope; and the destruction of a large flotilla of fire vessels which the Chinese had been preparing and brought out of the branch of the river which leads north of the town. For the details of this gallant defence and attack, I beg to refer to Captain Herbert's own letter, of which I have the honour to

annex a copy. About the same time, though later in the night, the Alligator was attacked off Howqua's fort; and to show how necessary it was to have been always on our guard, the fire junks came up with the flood tide in a direction with the merchant vessels at Whampoa, where all seemed to sleep in security.

Captain Kuper's account of his prompt and decisive conduct in repelling the attack I have also the honour to forward.

To form some idea of the difficulties attending the contemplated attack, I must state that the extensive city of Canton, with a population said to be 1,200,000, defended by a strong inclosing wall of great thickness, extending sometimes to the height of thirty feet, with a body of troops assembled within and without it, amounting, at a medium calculation, to 30 or 40,000 men, rests on low ground, except on the north side, where high conical hills extend up to, and rise also within, the walls commanding the whole city. Its front towards the river has extensive suburbs with narrow irregular streets rendering it easily defensible and difficult to attack. Being also surrounded by rice cultivation, which is at this time flooded, and only passable by footpaths about one to two feet broad, it is exceedingly difficult of approach, and the use of guns, except of the lightest calibre, is impossible. The great object was to gain possession of the heights to the northward of the town wall; and a branch of the river, which ran along the west side of the town to the northward, seemed to offer the means of approaching sufficiently near the line of connecting heights to make them accessible.

Opinions were uncertain as to the feasibility of entering this river and of floating at low water. To determine this I availed myself once more of the zeal and great ability of Commander Belcher, who most handsomely volunteered to explore it with his own boats, assisted with three others from the Pylades and Modeste, and Algerine, all placed under the command of that gallant and judicious Officer, Lieutenant Goldsmith, of the Druid, who was attached to the Blenheim, in that ship's launch, and who had orders to protect Commander Belcher in his surveying operations.

The Major-General and myself went to Canton to make a reconnoissance and personal inspection on the same day, the 23d. In our progress, we observed a firing and explosion in the direction of Commander Belcher's party; and Commander Belcher's letter, a copy of which I enclose, gives the detail of a gallant and spirited affair which took place in the creek. At eleven at night Commander Belcher returned with the gratifying intelligence that he had discovered an excellent landing place on a pier, with water enough for the Sulphur close to it at low water. The ground directly around it rose in low hills, and a line of hills appeared to continue to the heights near the city, although there might be swampy grounds in the small vallies dividing them.

About the same time other boats returned, with a collection of Chinese craft, sufficient to transport the whole force. I, therefore, at midnight wrote a note to Sir Hugh, informing him of these favourable circumstances, and asking his opinion as to an immediate landing. The gallant general entered into the suggestion instantly, "to land as soon as possible,"