

I mistook it for the boat's mainsail, and concluded they were trying to escape.

This very improper opportunity of using a flag of truce could not be recognised, and I ordered the telegraph to be cut down, but released the men and their boat.

No time was now to be lost as the signal had been answered from the main; I therefore pushed on with all expedition, and on rounding the E. point of Wasklöt observed the object of our search in the mud, which with little difficulty was got off, and towed out of range of any guns that could be brought to bear. The prize proved to be the *Vides* of 300 tons, with from 200 to 300 casks of tar on board.

At midnight two Russian deserters came on board, and stated the troops have moved off to Wasa, on seeing the boats approaching, thinking an attack was contemplated on that place.

At 8:30 A.M., 2nd August, I returned to the *Firefly*, and immediately got under weigh for Korsoran Fiord, but the navigation was so difficult that it was not until 5:30 P.M., I came along side the prize. At 8:30 P.M., I weighed and proceeded towards Brandon, the seaport of Wasa, and a great ship-building place; it had immense magazines on an island, separated by a very narrow deep water channel from the town, with a custom-house and barracks.

At midnight, anchored within 400 yards of the town, and sprung the broadside to enfilade the channel and protect the boats, which were sent under Lieutenant Ward to examine the magazines. Some of them were opened, and found to be empty; others contained coal, tar, resin, salt, spars, anchors and cables, boats, salt fish, hawsers, and numerous piles of 3-inch deals, but no sails or rigging, as we were led to expect. On a few of the principal inhabitants joining us on the island, they were told that the sails of the barque must be given up, and they immediately sent to Wasa to Mr. Wolf, a wealthy merchant and ship owner, but he refused. I therefore determined to burn the magazines; but as the wind was blowing directly on the town, I agreed to wait a reasonable time until a change took place, and gave the inhabitants notice that they were at liberty to remove anything from the island that belonged to them, except ship's stores; for this forbearance they expressed themselves very grateful.

Towards the afternoon, Lieutenant Burstal brought in a schooner, and reported having discovered two fine barques and two brigs, in a creek a mile and a half distant.

As the wind was still on the shore, and the destruction of the town inevitable had the magazines been fired, I directed the schooner to be hauled close into the island, and a working party to put some casks of tar and deals into her. Everything had the appearance of security; ladies were walking about the beach, parties of pleasure sailing round the ship, and the people employed taking their property from the island.

At 8 P.M., I landed to communicate with the First Lieutenant, and had just visited the sentry placed on a building platform, when a heavy fire of musketry, from different parts of the town, was opened upon the working party and the ship, and was immediately replied to by the latter, with shot and shell, which appears to have done great execution.

The deck of the schooner was so enfiladed, that it was impossible to get on board for the arms, and had it been practicable to do so, not a man

could be seen from her to fire at. Providentially all escaped on board uninjured, and Mr. Bull having returned in the paddle-box boats, with a fine barque in tow, a fire from the four guns and rifles was kept up; so hot, that in about an hour and a half the fusillade from the shore nearly ceased.

At midnight, I moved the ship into a better position for sinking the schooner, and the bows being nearly driven in by the shot, I proceeded to the destruction of the barque and two brigs, before the enemy could rescue them; this was successfully performed with the assistance of the Second Master, Mr. Bull, and Mr. Salter, Gunner.

It was ascertained afterwards, from two different sources, that the enemy had 25 killed and from 4 to 18 wounded; the injury appears to have been inflicted chiefly by the first three shots, whilst the troops were drawn up abreast of the ship.

On our side I am thankful to report that no more serious casualties occurred than a man and a boy being struck with spent balls.

During the 6th and 7th the weather was so wet and boisterous that it was impossible to act against the enemy, but I ascertained during the night, that reinforcements had arrived to the amount of 200 or 300 sharpshooters and cossacks, with several guns.

On the morning of the 8th, the weather being moderate, I took up a position 1500 yards from the magazine, and the same distance from a battery of four guns, and opened fire upon the latter, which not being returned I commenced firing red-hot shot at the magazines.

At 2:30 P.M. smoke began to issue from the houses, and Lieutenant Ward, having volunteered to try and cut out the schooner, pushed in with paddle-box boat, and with great gallantry drove the soldiers three times out of the woods, but ultimately was obliged to retire before an overwhelming force secreted in the Custom-house; the boat was struck in many places, but I am thankful to say not a man hurt.

At 8 P.M., the principal magazines being all in a blaze and their destruction inevitable, I closed the battery to 1000 yards, but still receiving no return (though both guns and soldiers could be seen), and the ammunition nearly expended, I was backing out, when suddenly several heavy guns, from an elevated position masked by trees, opened fire, chiefly with shells, and at the same time the whole force of Riflemen,—and the power of these weapons may be imagined, when I mention that a ball cut through a spar on the bridge, two inches thick at a distance of 1,500 yards.

It is with the greatest pleasure I have to speak of the coolness of the officers and men at this trying juncture; the narrowness of the channel and shoalness of the water (at the most $2\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms), rendered it injudicious to attempt turning the *Firefly* round, and she was slowly backed astern, $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles, before she was out of range, an evolution which, from the lightness of the wind, was not performed under 40 minutes.

I cannot conclude without mentioning how much I am indebted to the First Lieutenant, Mr. Edw. Burstal, who so materially assisted in inflicting this serious blow on the enemy's property.

I have, &c.

(Signed) HENRY C. OFFER,
Captain.

Capt. Fred. Warden, C.B., H.M.S. *Ajax*.