

tenant Smith wisely decided to return, and rejoined at 2.30 p.m.

Major Johnstone, R.M.L.I., was sent forward in the afternoon (June 13th) with sixty men towards Anting, to try to prevent the line being broken up ahead. He was attacked by the Boxers in a village adjoining the railway a few miles on the railway, which had been destroyed for about a mile, and the sleepers, &c., carried away. The "Boxers" lost about twenty-five killed, and there were no casualties on our side. He returned on the evening of 14th.

Langfang.—At about 10.15 a.m. (June 14th) the outposts were seen running in and reported the Boxers close to in great numbers; they were closely followed by the Boxers, who made a most determined rush at the fore part of the train which was then drawn up alongside a well, where many of our men were engaged in watering. They came on in great numbers in loose formation and with the utmost courage under a withering fire, some of them even reaching the train before they were killed. They did not retreat until they had suffered a loss of about one hundred. I regret to say that we have to deplore the loss of five Italians, who formed the picket near a deserted village, which was used by the Boxers to conceal their approach. At 5.30 p.m. a messenger arrived on a trolley from Lofa Station to report that the guard there was being attacked by a large body of the enemy. No. 2 train then being ready, I took it down the line at once to assist the Lofa guard. On arrival it was found that the brunt of the attack was over, the "Boxers" then being on the retreat; they were harassed in their retreat by the reinforcements, and left about 100 killed behind. Two small cannon were taken from them. I regret to say that two seamen belonging to H.M.S. "Endymion" were here wounded, one seriously, and the other dangerously, who has since died.

The trains remained at Langfang (June 15th) while the line ahead was being repaired, a strong guard being detached with the construction train to protect the workers. A train which had been sent back to Lofa returned and reported that the line we had repaired had been much broken up again below that place. Later on, the officer of the station guard at Lofa came up with an engine and reported that he thought an attack in force by Boxers might be expected, as he had seen three large bodies moving about in the distance. They eventually moved off without attacking, being probably only making for the line lower down to break it up towards Yungtsin.

A train left at 4 a.m. (June 16th) to endeavour to get through to Tientsin, but came back at 3 p.m., having found the line too much destroyed to repair with their resources. It being evident that the line was much damaged between Yungtsun and Lofa, I decided to return and investigate, and left Langfang in No. 1 train at 4 p.m. Nos. 2 and 3 remained at Langfang, and No. 4 at Lofa, to follow later on if the development of affairs at those places seemed to render such a course desirable. It appeared to me probable that the attempt to relieve Peking might have to be made by river for the following reasons:—

1. We were so much delayed that more provisions were required by many of the force, and would in a very few days run short. Ammunition was also getting short.

2. That it seemed unlikely we could get nearer Peking than Anting, or a little beyond it; some transport would be needed, and we could not go without it.

3. That we were quite cut off from our base, and ignorant of what was happening there, having had no communication since 13th.

4. It was necessary to take some steps to protect the line in our rear as trains had ceased to run.

On the night of 16th–17th, No. 1 train remained on the line between Lofa and Yangtsun, and in the morning, as soon as repairs were effected, reached the latter place, where the station was found to be entirely demolished, communication with Tientsin by rail impossible to re-establish with the resources at disposal, and, consequently, no possibility of obtaining any supplies or necessaries.

A few days previously I had endeavoured to send down orders to Tientsin for junks, provisions, and ammunition to be sent to Yungtsun with a view to establishing a base there from which to start, if found desirable, by river to Tungchow, marching thence to Peking, as our alternative route. Not one of these couriers reached Tientsin, the surrounding country being at that time overrun with Boxers or hostile Chinese, but had they done so it would have been impossible to have complied with my requisition, owing to the state of affairs at Tientsin which was itself then in a state of siege and being bombarded by the Chinese. Of this I was in complete ignorance at the time, as no news whatever from outside reached me between 13th and 26th June. I had also tried to get messages to the General at Hong-Kong to send immediately all available troops, having at the commencement of the march to Peking, when the hostility of the Chinese authorities and their active support of the Boxers was not known, only asked for the troops (650) then ready, whom it was intended to employ as guards at the railway stations selected to be held against attack by Boxers and for guard at Peking, to enable men of the fleet to return to their ships.

On 17th messages were sent back to Lofa and Langfang to recall Nos. 2, 3, and 4 trains, it being evident that the advance by rail was impossible, and the isolation and separate destruction of the trains a possibility. No. 3 returned on the afternoon of 18th June, and in the evening Nos. 2 and 4 from Langfang. Captain Von Usedom (His Imperial German Majesty's Navy), the senior officer present with Nos. 2 and 4 trains, reported that they had had a severe engagement with the enemy, who unexpectedly attacked them at Langfang about 2.30 p.m. on that day (18th) in great force estimated to be fully 5,000 men (including cavalry), large numbers of whom were armed with magazine rifles of the latest pattern. The banners captured show them to have belonged to the army of General Tung Fu Hsiang, who commands the Chinese troops in the Hunting Park outside Peking, and it was thus definitely known for the first time that Imperial Chinese troops were being employed against us. The attack was made in front and on both flanks, the enemy pouring in a heavy fire on the allied forces coming out to engage them; they were driven off with much loss, but when they saw our forces retiring towards the trains they rallied and made another attack; a halt was then made and the men were once more beaten off with greater loss than before, and then finally retreated. In this action the Chinese lost over 400 killed, the allied forces 6 killed and 48 wounded.

While at Yangtsun we had endeavoured to open friendly relations with the headmen of the town (distant one mile), but their promises to furnish supplies were not fulfilled, probably