

owing to pressure from Boxers, who seemed to be in strength in the locality.

At a conference of the officers commanding, of various nationalities, it was decided on 19th June to desert the trains and withdraw on Tientsin, marching by the left bank of the river and conveying the wounded and necessaries in junks, four of which had been taken by the Germans from some Boxers below Yangtsun on the previous day.

Preparations were rapidly made, and the wounded having been safely embarked and made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, a start was made at 3 p.m. Soon afterwards some delay was caused by the junks grounding in a shallow reach of the river, but when this difficulty had been overcome satisfactory progress was made and we bivouacked for the night $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles down the river without further incident. A six-pounder Q.F. gun of "Centurion" had to be thrown overboard to lighten one of the junks before she would float off.

Early on 20th June the march was resumed, progress being regulated by the speed of the junks with wounded, and none of our men being skilled in handling such craft, and Chinese impossible to get, their movements retarded the advance of the forces on the river bank. At 9.15 the enemy opened fire on our approach to one of the villages; they were driven out after some resistance, falling back on the next in our line of advance. Several villages in succession had to be carried either by rifle fire, or, failing that, at the point of the bayonet. The charge with bayonets was always very effective, the cheers of the men as they advanced appearing to intimidate the Chinese, who without waiting to receive the charge, would fall back immediately. In the afternoon a one-pounder Q.F. gun was brought into action by the enemy for the first time, and although not much damage was actually done by it, the effect of its fire was harassing to those on the march, especially when an exposed space had to be crossed. Its position could not be accurately located as the nature of the country and the use of smokeless powder enabled them to mask its position both on this and subsequent occasions. After fighting during the whole day a suitable place for bivouac was selected at 6 p.m. The distance made good during the day was estimated to be about eight miles.

March was resumed at 7.30 a.m. (June 21st). About an hour later a body of from 150 to 200 cavalry was observed in the distance on our left flank of advanced guard. At first it was hoped they might be Cossacks coming to our relief, but as they approached nearer to reconnoitre it was seen that they were Chinese troops. After satisfying themselves they withdrew, but hovered about the left flank for the remainder of the day, firing when favourable opportunities offered: several well directed shrapnel from the nine-pounder did much to discourage them and to keep them at a distance.

A few minutes after the withdrawal of the cavalry referred to above the enemy opened fire with a field gun and one-pounder Q.F. Their fire was returned by our nine-pounder and machine guns, and the position of their field gun being disclosed by its smoke our fire was successful in checking it; although it was brought into action again during the day from time to time, but with the same result as soon as its position was known.

Fighting was carried on continuously throughout a succession of villages and in the town of Peitsang, which is the chief place be-

tween Tientsin and Yungtsun, and at 6 p.m., the enemy being then in a very strong position from which we were unable to dislodge them during the evening, a halt was made, and further movements considered. It was then decided that after supper and two or three hours' rest the forces should make a night march, starting after midnight as our best chance of getting through.

Our advance during 21st was probably not more than six miles owing to the stubborn resistance of the enemy and their increased gun power.

The field and machine guns had been placed in a junk taken on the previous day, and at 1 a.m. (June 22nd) the march commenced. As we passed along fires were seen at one or two places a little distance off the river bank, evidently signalling our advance, but nothing occurred until about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles had been covered, when heavy fire was opened on the advanced guard from a village about two hundred yards off in the direct line of advance. The marines then fixed bayonets and carried the position without further opposition.

The lighter containing our guns filled and sank about this time, probably owing to the fire of a field piece from ahead of us, and so had to be abandoned, the maxims only being saved.

At 4 a.m. we arrived opposite what proved to be the Imperial Chinese Armoury near Hsiku (on right bank of river). Two unarmed soldiers were seen coming out of a house one hundred yards from the bank, evidently to communicate. A halt was made to hear what they had to say, which was some simple enquiries as to who we were and where going, &c. These advances seemed perfectly friendly, and the men walked leisurely back to the house, which they had no sooner reached than a heavy fire was opened on us from rifles and several guns. Fortunately, good cover was close at hand in a village, and behind the river embankment, which was immediately taken advantage of. The rear columns had not come up, nor the junks with wounded, but the latter were carried down by the river before they could be brought up, and although placed in the best position possible under the circumstances could not be entirely sheltered and were occasionally struck.

Rifle fire was directed to a 47 mm. Hotchkiss gun at the north corner of the armoury, and two 10 cm. guns on the river front. Some of the men at the guns were killed and others driven from them. Major Johnstone, R.M.L.I., of "Centurion," was then sent higher up the river to cross over unobserved with a party of 100 marines and seamen to rush the position at the north corner. There is a village about 150 yards from this which enabled the attacking force to come up without being seen until they emerged from it, when they charged with a cheer joined in by those on the other side of the river, and the Chinese in that part of the armoury fled precipitately. At the same time, lower down the river, a German detachment crossed over and captured two guns (10 cm. Krupp) in their front, and subsequently several others. The marines also took two more guns (47 mm. Krupp). The two detachments then cleared the whole armoury grounds.

In the afternoon the Chinese made a most determined but unsuccessful attempt to retake the armoury, trying to drive us from the place by shell fire and to carry it by assault. Their losses were heavy, but we also suffered severely, losing, amongst others, Commander Bucholtz, Imperial German Navy, a valuable officer whose death was a blow, not only to the Germans, but to the whole force.