

Enclosure in Letter of Rear-Admiral, China Station, dated 27th June, 1900, No. 24.

To Commander C. Cradock, Commanding the Naval Brigade.

I HAVE the honour to report to you that in the fight of this morning round the Taku forts, no casualty happened among my 24 men. I have also the honour to thank you very much for your kindness, in the same time that I cannot find sufficient words to praise the conduct and direction of your troops, which I tried, though very poorly, to emulate. Hoping that in any other occasion may I have the honour to be put under your orders, and to fight side by side with the gallant British sailors.

I remain, dear sir, with kind regards, yours,  
Lieutenant JOHN TANCA.

On board the "Algerine," 17th June, 1900.

Enclosure in Letter of Rear-Admiral, China Station, dated 27th June, 1900, No. 24.

"Algerine," at Tongku,  
22nd June, 1900.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to submit a full report of the operations for the reduction of the Taku forts, which took place on the morning of the 17th June.

Having, about 6 p.m. on the 16th instant, received your instructions, and a landing party of 350 men, under Commander Cradock, from the ships outside, together with 20 Italians from the "Elba," having arrived, Commander Cradock and I attended a conference on board the Russian ship "Bobr," when it was decided that if the forts were not surrendered by 2 a.m. on the 17th, the allied squadron should bombard them. It was also arranged that the bombardment should commence at 4 a.m., and that the ships should by that hour be in the positions assigned to them. The "Algerine" was at the position next above her the German "Iltis," then the Russian ships "Bobr," "Koreytz," and "Gilyak," the French gunboat "Lion," and the Japanese "Atago," the U.S.S. "Monocacy" remaining at Tongku to look after the railway and the various landing parties.

On my return from the conference at about 8 p.m., I shifted berth to my allotted position, and found there the "Bobr," "Koreytz," and "Gilyak," the forts taking no notice of my movements.

I instructed Lieutenant and Commander Keyes, of H.M.S. "Fame," to take the "Whiting" under his orders and seize the four Chinese torpedo-boat destroyers moored alongside their Government yard, at 1.30 a.m., so that they should not interfere with the passage of the "Iltis" and "Lion" to their allotted positions.

At 12.50 a.m., when all the ships, except the "Iltis" and "Lion," were in position, and I had the landing party on my upper deck, the forts opened an almost simultaneous and heavy fire, which was replied to almost at once by the allied ships. I directed my fire with 4-in. guns on the north-west fort, but finding that much ammunition was being expended, and that the shooting in the moonlight was not very accurate, I simply kept one 4-in. firing. I did not use my searchlight, as I judged that it would only draw the fire of the south fort on the ship.

At 1.30 a.m. the "Iltis" took up her position, followed shortly afterwards by the "Lion." As soon as possible the tug "Fa Wan," which was alongside, shoved off and proceeded up the river to Tientsin, and the landing party were got into the boats, and disembarked at about 2 o'clock at

a previously selected point a short distance below the ship on the north bank of the river.

At about 2.45 a.m. I received a message from Commander Cradock that the landing party were about to assault the north-west fort, and requesting the ships not to fire on it, which message was passed on to the other allied ships by boat, and the fire continued on the south and north forts. At about 3.45 another message was received from Commander Cradock to the effect that the north-west fort was practically untouched and too strong for them to assault. It was now daylight, and I opened fire on the fort with all my starboard 4-in. guns, together with the "Iltis," whose firing was very well directed. By about 4.30 the return fire had practically ceased, and shortly afterwards the fort was carried by assault.

At 5 o'clock I hoisted the pre-arranged signal, and when it had been repeated by the foreign ships, I weighed at about 5.30, and, closely followed by the "Iltis" and the other ships, except the "Gilyak," which had a compartment full of water, and could not move, I led the squadron down the river, firing on the north fort with my fore-castle guns, and engaging the south forts with the remainder of my starboard broadside. The north fort made no return, and had been deserted by the garrison, but the fire from the south fort was very heavy, and it was only by God's mercy that we were not hulled. It was at this period that all our casualties occurred.

At about 6.20 a.m. I anchored in position C, and the "Iltis," which had followed me closely, passed ahead and anchored about a ship's length from us, the remainder of the foreign ships being some way astern. At about 6.55 a magazine blew up, after which there was practically no return to our fire, and at 7.10 I ceased firing.

A list of casualties is attached, and I submit that H.M. ship under my command, though always in the thick of it, was extremely lucky in not suffering more damage, three or four shots through cowls, one through our steam cutter at the davits, and some standing and running rigging shot away, being the extent of the damage.

The behaviour of officers and men was admirable, and where all did their duty it is difficult to particularise, Lieutenants Chambers and Duncan were indefatigable in the performance of their duties and in superintending the firing, while Lieutenant Robinson navigated the ship down the river as coolly as if nothing was going on.

Commander Cradock is sending in a separate report of the operations of the land forces.

The ships engaged were the Russian vessels "Bobr," "Koreytz," and "Gilyak," the German "Iltis," and the French "Lion."

The reports of Lieutenant and Commander Keyes of the "Fame," and Lieutenant and Commander Mackenzie of the "Whiting," have already been submitted, and I have nothing to add to my remarks already made thereon, except cordially to endorse Lieutenant and Commander Keyes' remarks as to the indefatigable manner in which Mr. A. J. Macrae, of the Taku Tug and Lighter Company, assisted us by every means in his power, both before and during the operations, and I respectfully submit that his services are deserving of some recognition.

The ship which suffered most was the Russian "Gilyak," which had 10 men killed, and two officers and 47 men wounded. She was disabled by a shot which severed one of her steam pipes, and most of her casualties were caused by a shell which penetrated one of her