

thick branches of trees, which opened a heavy fire on them; without a moment's hesitation Lieutenant Symonds cut the tow line, and gallantly dashed right into the battery, driving the enemy before him, and killing several of their number. The Sulphur anchored, and some shot from her completely routed them from the thick underwood in the vicinity in which they had taken shelter; the guns were destroyed, and the magazine and other consumable materiel set on fire. The number of troops was probably two hundred and fifty, and they were of the chosen Tartars; their loss was about fifteen or twenty killed. This well-executed service calls on me strongly to recommend Lieutenant Symonds to their Lordships' notice; our loss is one seaman of the Wellesley mortally wounded (since dead), and the boats were frequently struck by grape shot.

As soon as a cursory survey of the river was made, the Herald, Alligator and Modeste, and the Eagle and Sophia transports were pushed forward within gunshot of Howqua's Fort, and thus for the first time were ships seen from the walls of Canton. On the 2nd the Cruiser joined me, having on board Major-General Sir Hugh Gough, to whom I resigned the command of the land forces; the Pylades and the Conway also joined from Chusan, and the two first named vessels were sent in advance; several of the transports were also collected. On the 4th, in concert with the Major General, an attack was planned for the next morning, but on approaching, the fort was found to be abandoned. The British colours were hoisted, and a garrison of the 26th regiment placed in it. Captain Ellis, with a company of Royal Marines, took possession of a large joss-house on the left bank (which the enemy had begun to fortify), and rendered himself secure, while the seamen soon removed some of the stakes and other impediments, and made a clear passage for ships. I may here describe the position: at the right bank of the river, on the point formed by the mouth of a creek, (which is one passage for boats to Whampoa), was Howqua's fort, a square building mounting thirty guns. From the northern angle the stakes mentioned extended to the opposite bank, the ground on each side being low rice fields cut and intersected by canals in all directions; the joss-house rather projected into the stream, and consequently was a good position. The river here is about five hundred yards wide; two thousand yards in front is a long low island, which divides the river into two branches, and on the extreme eastern point of which stood a fort mounting thirty-five guns, built to commemorate the discomfiture and death of the late Lord Napier: from this fort a line of well constructed and second rafts, forming a bridge, extended to both sides of the river; on its right bank flanking Napier's Fort and the rafts, was a mud battery intended for thirty-five guns; on the left was a battery also flanking Napier's Fort, on which the enemy had forty-four guns, most of which they withdrew on the night of the 4th. In addition to these defences, stone junks were sunk in all parts of the river between the stakes and the raft off Napier's Fort, which raft also rested upon sunken junks secured on either side within piles.

The position seemed formidable, and on the 5th the Major-General and myself prepared to attack it.

He landed at the joss-house, taking with him the Royal Marines and 26th detachment for the purpose of taking the battery on the left bank, and the ships weighed and dropped up with the flood tide. On the approach of the Sulphur, which vessel led, the enemy fired all their guns and fled across the rafts and in boats; the British colours were then hoisted, and the last defence of the Chinese (that we are acquainted with between Canton and the sea), fell into our hands. A paper was issued calling on the people to place confidence in us and avoid hostile movements, in which latter case protection was secured to them. At noon the Quang-choo-foo, or Prefect, accompanied by the Hong merchants, came down, and, after a long discussion with the Plenipotentiary, admitted that Keshen having been degraded, and the new appointed Commissioners not having arrived, there was no Government authorized to treat for peace or make any arrangements; they confessed the truth of the reports we had heard, that the greatest consternation existed in the city, and that every person who could quit it had done so; in fact, that it was at our mercy, and it has so remained, a monument of British magnanimity and forbearance. I fear, however, that the forbearance is misunderstood, and that a further punishment must be resorted to, before this arrogant and perfidious Government is brought to reason, or to a faithful mode of conduct. His Excellency the Plenipotentiary, being however desirous to try the effect of another proclamation, and to shew his desire for an equitable adjustment of affairs, addressed the Major-General and myself, requesting that we would make no further movement towards the city until the disposition of the provincial officers was put to the test as far as regards their non-interference, and we have consequently remained in statu quo; but reports, on which we can rely, are daily reaching us, which state that fire vessels are fitting out about seven miles above Canton; forts in the rear of the city in course of erection; and the people are forbidden to bring us supplies, while the teas and silks, and every other valuable, are removing from it. These proceedings, so directly opposite to the assurances of pacific intentions (which they are ever ready to deal forth in profusion), lead me to the conclusion, that we shall have to proceed, even at the risk of the destruction of the second city of the empire, an event exceedingly likely to occur from its abandonment by the authorities, and the excesses of the lower classes of a community proverbially bad. The responsibility must, however, rest on the heads of those authorities.

The whole of the force from Chusan has joined me, and I this day returned to Wangtung, accompanied by the Major General, in order that the arrangements in that garrison may be completed, and plans devised for our future operations.

I have the honour, &c.

(Signed) J. J. GORDON BREMER,
Commodore First Class, and
Commander-in-Chief.

R. More O'Ferrall, Esq. M. P.
&c. &c. &c. Admiralty.