

Her Majesty's Ship Gorgon, Obligado,
SIR, 7th June 1846.

I HAVE the honour to inform you, that the convoy of merchant vessels of all nations, amounting to 110 in number, have passed the enemy's batteries and obstacles in the Parana, in comparative safety.

The severe treatment which Her Majesty's ships *Alecto*, *Lizard*, and *Harpy* experienced from the batteries and infantry stationed on the heights of San Lorenzo, in their respective passages up the Parana (as exemplified in my dispatch of the 20th ultimo), rendered it incumbent upon Admiral Tréhouart and myself to adopt every precaution which might tend to obviate disaster.

The heights or barrancas of San Lorenzo are sixty feet above the river, the face is nearly perpendicular, and the ground, from the edge of the cliff, recedes; a table land, of five or six miles in length, extends from one end to the other, presenting a dead level, with every facility for transporting artillery on travelling carriages to any required point.

At the north end of this barranca, the cliff projects and tends westerly, thus offering a salient point for a battery commanding from N. W. to S. E.

Half a mile to the southward, a position, nearly similar, had been selected for a second battery, and parapets, with embrazures, had been elected for single guns along the remainder of the barranca; the general breadth of the navigable channel is about three quarters of a mile, widening gradually from the north west entrance, with a current of three knots per hour running through.

It was obvious that the nicest gunnery could alone drive the enemy from their guns; the immense thickness of the embrazures and parapets protected them from a flanking fire, and such was the character of the ground that even with a spy glass nothing could be seen but the wheels of a carriage or muzzle of a gun.

Having carefully weighed these difficulties, Admiral Tréhouart and I decided upon the following plan of attack, as best suited to the protection of our convoy.

That the heavy steamers of both squadrons should anchor and engage the batteries during the time the convoy were passing, and that a masked rocket battery should be prepared on the island in front of the second battery, distant about one thousand two hundred yards: the convoy in the mean time passing at allotted distances under cover of the sailing ships and small steamers named in the margin.*

Accordingly, being favoured with a breeze from the northward, at 8:30 A. M., on the 4th instant, I made the general signal for the steamers, *Gorgon*, *Firebrand*, *Alecto*, *Gassendi*, and *Fulton*, to weigh. At 10:20 A. M. the *Gorgon* opened her fire; and the *Firebrand* and *Gassendi*, having

reached their appointed station one thousand yards from the north battery, anchored in an enfilading position.

The three remaining steamers, *Gorgon*, *Fulton*, and *Alecto*, proceeded past the batteries and anchored nine hundred yards from the barrancas abreast, and two thousand from the first battery.

On the first gun being fired from the *Gorgon*, the rocket party unmasked their battery, and opened a heavy and effective fire, which helped to divert the enemy's attention from the three steamers who were passing within grape and musket range.

At 10:40 A. M. the action had fairly commenced between the batteries, field pieces, infantry, and the steamers of the combined force, and the English rocket party; a channel five hundred yards wide was left between the steamers and the islands for the convoy.

At 11:50 A. M. the *Dolphin*, leading the convoy, passed the *Gorgon*, the respective divisions sailed by in their proper order, about twenty only remained, when I was sorry to see the British barque *Caledonia*, uninjured, and with the wind dead aft, run on shore on a small bank off the point of the second island. In so ill assorted and numerous a convoy of all sizes, badly equipped, and lumbered with enormous deck cargoes, I confess I calculated on the loss of some, but I had hoped to have been spared the pain of witnessing a fine English barque handled in a style by no means creditable to those on board, and grounded without any reason under the enemy's fire.

I immediately signalized *Alecto* and *Lizard* to proceed to her assistance. At 12:50, the convoy having all passed, I made the general signal to weigh.

The *Caledonia* still remaining immoveably fixed, she had beaten over one bank, and lay on her port side, with her bottom exposed to the enemy's fire, through which six or seven shot had already been put, and the Officers sent on that service being unanimously of opinion that she could not be got off without discharging her cargo, by my direction she was set on fire to prevent her falling into the enemy's hands, and two coasting vessels, similarly situated, were also destroyed.

This was the only drawback to a most satisfactory day; the arrangements answered even better than my colleague or myself had dared to anticipate. The enemy brought into play from sixteen to twenty guns; during five months they had prepared heated shot and studied every stratagem to secure themselves and punish us, instead of which we dismounted some of their guns, and drove them repeatedly from others.

We selected the steam force in consequence of the advantage which their pivot guns give, and it is difficult to imagine finer gunnery than they displayed. Marvellous to say, that although each of these vessels were hulled and hit repeatedly, and that more than three fourths of the convoy were severally struck, there is not a man killed or wounded amongst us. I have received every assistance and support from the Officers of this

* English.—*Dolphin*, *Fanny*, *Lizard*, *Harpy*.
French.—*San Martin*, *Coquette*, *Procida*.