

No. 45.
SIR,

Vindictive, at Jamaica,
5th March 1848.

WITH reference to my letter, No. 42, of the 1st instant, reporting the departure of Her Majesty's ships *Alarm* and *Vixen* for *Blewfields*, to consult with Her Majesty's Consul General and Agent, as to the best means of obtaining redress from the Nicaraguan Government for the insults and outrages therein mentioned, and to obtain the release of two British subjects, carried off from *San Juan* by Colonel *Salas*, of the Nicaraguan army. I have the honour to transmit herewith, to be laid before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty; a copy of a dispatch, dated the 21st February, which I have this day received from Captain *G. G. Loch*, of the *Alarm*, reporting, that the ships arrived at *Blewfields* on the 5th of that month, and Mr. *Walker* having been embarked, according to his request, they proceeded on the 7th for *San Juan*, where they arrived on the following day.

As the nearest Nicaraguan settlement was at *Serapaqui*, about thirty miles up the river, which, from the strength of the current and various rapids, is generally a four days' journey, Captain *Loch*, accompanied by Mr. *Walker* in his own boat, proceeded to that place at once with a force of 260 men in twelve boats, and after a most fatiguing pull of seventy-two hours, anchored on the evening of the 11th, near the spot.

It was here that the melancholy death of Mr. *Walker* occurred; he was unfortunately drowned, whilst attempting to save the life of a friend who had accompanied him in his boat, and had fallen overboard in the night. They both lost their lives.

On the morning of the 12th, the expedition got under weigh, and proceeded towards the fort, where it had been ascertained Colonel *Salas* was commanding officer. On nearing it, Captain *Loch* and Commander *Ryder* pushed ahead in their gigs, in order to state the object of Her Majesty's forces being in the river, but no sooner were they seen than they were fired at, both by cannon and small arms. As this act effectually prevented any peaceable arrangements, boats were at once brought up, and after an hour and a half's pull against the rapid tide to reach the landing-place, during which the crews were exposed to a very heavy fire from both sides of the river, they effected their object, and the Nicaraguan troops fled at once, when Captain *Loch* totally destroyed the fort, and threw all the arms into the river.

The loss on our side amounted to two killed, and one officer, and 12 seamen, marines, and soldiers wounded; a list of which is inclosed.

I have to express my admiration of the great gallantry, zeal, and perseverance displayed by Captain *Loch* and the officers and men of both services employed under his orders on the occasion. I have, &c.,

(Signed) F. W. AUSTEN, Vice Admiral.

To the Secretary of the Admiralty.

Fort San Carlos, Nicaragua,
February 21, 1848.

SIR,

IN pursuance of your instructions, and in accordance with the wishes of Her Majesty's late Agent and Consul General, Mr. *Walker*, I have the honour to acquaint you, that I proceeded up the river *San Juan de Nicaragua*, in command of Her Majesty's combined forces, consisting of 260 officers and men, contained in twelve boats of H. M. ships *Alarm* and *Vixen*, and captured the post of *Serapaqui*, after a sharp action of one hour and forty minutes, with a loss of two killed and thirteen wounded.

The post is situated on a point projecting into the river very abruptly to the height of fifty feet, is protected in the rear by a dense forest, and in the front by an abattis, formed of large trees felled, with their heads and branches reaching into the river. It was only to be approached by heading a rapid current of nearly five knots an hour, in order to pass the fort and descend towards a steep and narrow landing place above the stockaded batteries.

On Friday the 12th instant, Commander *Ryder* and myself (who were in advance in our gigs) hove in sight of *Serapaqui*, situated at the head of a straight reach, of about a mile and a half long. No sooner did my boat appear, than she was fired upon by two guns, which effectually precluded the possibility of any peaceful arrangement.

I therefore waited to reconnoitre until the heavy boats arrived, when I led them up the river. A spare pinnace, commanded by Lieutenant *Johnston*, of H. M. S. *Alarm*, containing some of H. M. 38th regiment; the *Alarm's* barge, commanded by Lieutenant *Ridge*, and First Lieutenant *Boyle*, of the royal marines, with a part of his detachment, and the *Vixen's* port paddle box boat, with the head quarters of the detachment of that regiment, commanded by Captain *Smith*, owing to their fast pulling, took the lead after the gigs, and on we went, but the current was so strong, that one hour and forty minutes elapsed before we were enabled to pass the batteries sufficiently high to drop down to the landing-place previously mentioned, by which time nearly all the boats were up. I then gave the order to land, which they did with an English cheer, and in ten minutes our flag was hoisted on the fort.

After a chase of thirty minutes into the thick woods, I ordered the recall to be sounded, destroyed the stockades, spiked the guns, broke their trunnions, and threw them into the river, together with musquets, ammunition; and, after embarking the force, set fire to the defences.

I was unable to ascertain accurately the loss of the enemy, owing to the density of the cover into which they retreated; twenty, however, were found dead, and I have reason to believe, that about double the number were wounded. Their force consisted of about two hundred soldiers, besides some boatmen, pressed by Colonel *Salas* into his service.