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*Admiralty, January 5, 1857.*

**T**HE following Despatches have been received from Rear-Admiral Sir Michael Seymour, K C.B., Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Ships and Vessels on the East India and China Station :

## OPERATIONS AT CANTON.

No. 103. *Niger, at Canton,*  
SIR, *November 14, 1856.*

IN the sixth paragraph of my general letter, No. 91, of the 15th ultimo, I alluded to the Chinese authorities having a few days previously forcibly seized the native crew of a lorch, under English colours, and that I had demanded redress.

2. I have now the honour to report, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that on the 8th of October the lorch Arrow, with a colonial register from the Governor of Hong Kong, was boarded, whilst at anchor at Canton, by a Chinese officer and a party of soldiers, who, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the master, an Englishman, seized 12 of her crew, bound and carried them away, and hauled down the British flag. Her Majesty's Consul afterwards remonstrated with the officer who had seized the men, but without effect.

3. This outrage was immediately brought to the notice of the Imperial High Commissioner by Mr. Parkes, Her Majesty's Consul, who required the 12 men to be returned to the Arrow by the same officer who had carried them away ; that an apology should be made, and an assurance given that the British flag should in future be respected. Their lordships will, however, observe, on perusing the documents which accompany this despatch, that although the 12 men were eventually sent back, it was not in the public manner in which they had been carried away, and all appearance of an apology was pointedly avoided.

4. On the 11th of October this unpleasant occurrence was officially reported to me by Sir John Bowring, Her Majesty's Plenipotentiary in China, and his Excellency suggested that the seizure of an Imperial junk would probably produce the desired reparation. I accordingly directed Commodore the Honourable C. G. J. B. Elliot, of Her Majesty's ship Sybille, senior officer in the Canton river, to carry out Sir John Bowring's suggestion, and I despatched the Barracouta steam sloop and Coromandel tender to afford him the means of doing so. A junk was seized,\* but it led to

\* This vessel was afterwards proved to be private property, and was therefore released.

nothing. I then sent Her Majesty's steam frigates Encounter and Sampson to join the Commodore (the former to lie off the factory), in the hope that the presence of such an imposing force would shew the High Commissioner the prudence of complying with our demands ; but his Excellency appeared determined on resistance.

5. At this period Mr. Parkes proceeded to Hong Kong to consult with Sir John Bowring and myself as to the best measures of compulsion to be adopted, and we all considered that the seizure of the defences of the city of Canton would be the most judicious, both as a display of power without the sacrifice of life and of our determination to enforce redress ;—experience of the Chinese character having proved that moderation is considered by the officials only as an evidence of weakness.

6. I immediately moved the Calcutta above the Bogue Forts, as high up as her draft of water permitted, and, on the morning of the 23rd October, proceeded on board the Coromandel steam tender for Canton, with the Sampson and Barracouta in company, and the detachments of Royal Marines and boats' crews of Her Majesty's ships Calcutta, Winchester, and Bittern, and the boats of the Sybille with the Commodore. On approaching the Blenheim Reach I diverted the Sampson, and a portion of our force up the Macao passage, to prevent the Chinese from stopping up the channel, and to capture the Blenheim Fort. I then went on with the Coromandel and Barracouta to the Four Barrier Forts, about five miles below the city. Anchoring the two steamers above the forts, I despatched the boats and took possession of them. An ill-judged attempt at resistance from two of the forts, which fired on our ships and boats, resulted in the death of five Chinese soldiers. There were about 150 guns, from one foot bore to 4-pounders.

7. I now directed Commander Fortescue, in the Barracouta, to follow the Sampson, and having spiked the guns, destroyed the carriages and ammunition, and burnt the buildings in the forts, I proceeded to Canton, where I arrived at 2 P.M., and learnt that the boats from the Sampson and Barracouta had taken quiet possession of the Blenheim Fort, and also of Macao Fort, a very strong position on an island in the middle of the river, mounting eighty-six guns, which I have garrisoned and shall retain for the present.

8. Her Majesty's Consul, by my direction, immediately informed the High Commissioner of my arrival and of the aggressive measures which