

with Lieutenant and Commander Mackenzie of H.M.S. "Whiting," and found them moored head and stern in single line off the south steep-to bank with wire hawsers laid out from each bow and quarter, I arranged as follows:—That the "Fame" should weigh at 2 a.m. followed by the "Whiting" at a distance of about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cables (the distance between the fourth and second destroyers). Each vessel to tow a whaler with a boarding party of 12 men under Lieutenants Tomlinson of H.M.S. "Fame," and Moreton of H.M.S. "Whiting." That we should pass well out in the stream to give them the idea we were proceeding up the river, and when the "Fame's" bow was abreast of No. 4 and the "Whiting's" abreast of No. 2, sheer in and board them over the bow, each whaler boarding the next astern, and each boarding party being covered by a rifle party and the guns.

When the forts commenced the heavy firing about 0.45, both ships being in a very exposed position and the necessity of clearing the river, immediate, I directed the "Whiting" to weigh and proceed as arranged. This was effected most successfully. After a slight resistance and the exchange of a few shots, the crews were driven overboard or below hatches; there were a few killed and wounded; our casualties, nil. No damage was done to the prizes, the "Fame's" bow was slightly bent when we closed to board, and the "Whiting" was struck by a projectile about 4 to 5 inches abreast a coal bunker. This was evidently fired from a mud battery on the bend between Taku and Tongku, which fired in all about 30 shots at us, none of the others striking, though several coming very close. I could not reply for fear of striking the Russian gunvessels lying behind it. There was a good deal of sniping from the dockyard, so I directed all cables of the prizes to be slipped and proceeded to tow them up to Tongku. At this point, Mr. Macrae, the manager of the "Tug and Lighter Company," came to my assistance; I cannot speak too highly of this gentleman's assistance, he took one destroyer off my hands, as did another of the same company's tugs for the "Whiting." In the former case Mr. Macrae had to use force, with the assistance of one of my men, on the Chinese crew, most of whom tried to jump overboard when we came under the fire of the mud battery. In the latter case, Mr. Mayne, Midshipman of the "Barfleur" was in command of a guard of seamen with a maxim, and also did very well. So soon as the destroyers were captured, the "Iltis" and "Lion" passed. The torpedoes were in the tubes, but war heads were not fitted. Ammunition for Q.F. guns in two destroyers was on deck.

By 5 a.m. they were securely berthed at Tongku. It was not a good position, owing to the exposure to shell passing over the bombarding ship, but the best I could find under the circumstances. Fortunately no damage was done.

Mr. Mayne, Midshipman in charge of a tug with despatches and stores for Tientsin informed me that his Chinese crew would not pass a fort 12 miles up the river at Lun Chang. So I proceeded in company with the "Whiting" to force a passage if necessary; finding no opposition I returned as directed by you to Taku.

Lieutenant Commander Mackenzie is forwarding a separate report. I can only say he did most excellently, as did Lieutenant Tomkinson in charge of the whaler boarding party, and Mr. Mascull, gunner, who took charge of the other destroyer. Mr. Knight, engineer, was of the greatest assistance in charge aft when I was

left with a very small crew and no executive officer.

I have, &c.,  
ROGER KEYES,  
Lieutenant and Commander.  
Commander R. H. Johnston Stewart, R.N.,  
H.M.S. "Algerine."

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

H.M.S. "Whiting," Taku,  
17th June, 1900.

SIR,  
I HAVE the honour to report that, having received your order to attack and capture the four Chinese destroyers moored off the dockyard at Taku, acting in conjunction with H.M.S. "Fame" last night, I boarded and captured the two lying down stream at about 1.30 a.m. and as soon as prize crews were got on board and the four wire hawsers, with which each was secured, either cut, or the anchor attached to it weighed, I towed one to Tongku out of reach of the shell-fire of the forts, and was just returning to tow the other up (she had great difficulty in weighing her anchor) when she came in sight, in tow of the tug "Fa Wan."

The capture of the destroyers was effected without any casualties on our side and without much resistance.

In towing one of the prizes to Tongku, a mud fort, hitherto silent, opened a hot fire on us, and the "Whiting" received one 5" shot in the hull just forward of engine-room bulkhead, starboard side, passing through bunker (full), carrying away wing-door of boiler and damaging several tubes and putting No. 4 boiler out of action, otherwise not causing any more damage.

After placing the captured destroyers in a place of safety at Tongku with a skeleton crew in charge, I proceeded in company with the "Fame" to escort the tug "Fa Wan" past the fort at Sheng Shing, meeting with no opposition.

I beg to recommend to your notice Lieut. Moreton of this ship, who carried out the operation of boarding the first destroyer in a very able manner, and succeeded in raising steam and going to quarters for action in about two hours from the time of boarding.

I have, &c.,  
C. MACKENZIE,  
Lieutenant and Commander.  
Commander H. J. Stewart, R.N.,  
H.M.S. "Algerine."

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

North-West Fort, Taku,  
20th June, 1900.

SIR,  
I HAVE the honour to lay before you a further despatch with inclusive details of the operations conducted by the allied forces on shore, when capturing the Taku Forts.

The British Force detailed for the purpose, embarked in the tug from the outer anchorage, and at 3 p.m. on 16th June each man, having been supplied with 100 rounds of ammunition and three days' provisions, proceeded to H.M.S. "Algerine" for the purpose of being berthed, prior to being landed.

Immediately on arrival at Taku on the same evening, a conference was held on board the Russian gunboat "Bobr," among the commanding officers of the several allies, and a plan of attack for the shore forces was prepared.

It was arranged that the British landing party was to land abreast of H.M.S. "Algerine" at a certain hour, and meet the other forces marching from Tongku at the rendezvous on the military road.