

DESTRUCTION OF QUALAH BATTOO.

(From the N. Y. Daily Advertiser.

Extract of a letter, dated on board U. S. Frigate Por-tomac, ISLE OF SUMATRA, SOO SO, Feb. 15, 1832.

I designed that you should have heard from me again long ere this. I have already on hand a letter, giving you a brief account of our visit at the Cape of Good Hope, which I thought would have been on its way to the United States long before this; but I did not get it ready in season to send ashore at Cape Town, and strange as it may seem, we have not fallen in with any homeward bound Indiamen, although on their very track. Intelligence of our arrival there may have reached you long ere this, by the way of England. As, however, my letter is written, I have concluded to send it, thinking that it may possibly afford you some small degree of gratification. I suppose now that you would like to hear something about our proceedings and operations at Qualah Battoo, a town distant about five or six miles from this place, and in full sight. There will be unquestionably many statements of the affair in different papers. The official report I suppose will appear in the Washington papers. I have not been favoured with a perusal of that report, but presume it is substantially correct. As there may however be a few items omitted in that report, I will give a brief account of the affair, and as accurately as possible. We arrived at Qualah Battoo on the 5th inst. after a passage of fifty-five days from the Cape of Good Hope. We came in with our ship disguised as a merchantman, and with Danish colours flying. So complete was our disguise, that the enemy was not aware of our character. Shortly after we had dropped our anchors, Commodore Down sent a party on shore for the purpose of reconnoitring the place. This party consisted of our first Lieutenant Mr. Shubrick; first Lieutenant of Marines, Mr. Edson; Lieuts. Pinkham, Hoff, and Russell; Acting Sailing Master Totten, and passed a Phipman Tolly. Mr. Shubrick went as Captain of a ship; Mr. Edson as supercargo. The remainder in "of the crew of common sailors, and were dressed in the manner conformable to their respective characters assumed. Their design was to examine the relative position of the different forts previous to making the intended attack. But they found the beach lined with a large body of men, exhibiting a warlike appearance, and manifesting hostile intentions; consequently they did not deem it prudent to land. They therefore returned to the ship, having obtained but an imperfect idea of the place. During the absence of the party ashore, we took four Malays as prisoners. They were exceedingly terrified as they were brought over the gangway into the ship—clasped their hands—looked up to heaven—and cried out Allah quite lustily. On being interrogated, which were the strongest now, the Americans or the Malays? they replied that they did not know—that they were from Tally-Pow. The commodore kept them on board during the night and the next day released them. They proved to be poor, illiterate fishermen and apparently inoffensive. As soon as the information of the hostile appearance of the Malays ashore was announced, our ship presented a busy scene. An attack upon the town the next morning was determined upon, and every necessary preparation was accordingly made. At 12 o'clock on the morning of the 6th, all hands assigned to take part in the expedition were called, mustered, and received their instructions. At about 2 they left the ship. Here was a moment of interest. All before, in regard to fighting the Malays, had been mere talk, but now was stern reality. The moment had arrived when the grand object of our voyage hither was to be accomplished. The blow was now to be struck, and victory or defeat to ensue. It seemed as though a spell had fallen upon the ship. A silence, like that amid the mournful repositories of the death reigned throughout it: each one's thoughts were busied in contemplation of what might be the probable fate of his companions in arms. The expedition proceeded slowly on their midnight errand in perfect silence, save an occasional whisper from the officer in command, with muffled ears, and nothing but a star to guide them to their place of disembarkment. A landing was effected near the dawn of day, about a mile and a half from the town, and undiscovered by the enemy. The troops, amounting to 260 men in number, were then all drawn up in regular order, and under the chief command of Lieut. Shubrick, took up their line of march against the enemy. They had not proceeded far along the beach, before they were discovered by a native, who appeared at a distance, running with full speed to give intelligence of an approaching foe. As soon as this was perceived, Mr. Shubrick ordered his men to quicken their pace, to press onward, and if possible take possession of the forts ere the enemy should be apprised of his approach.

They accordingly commenced a rapid march, which soon brought them up with the first fort, when a detachment of men under the command of Lieut. Hoff filed off, and commenced an assault upon it. This fort was found to be of very difficult access, in consequence of a deep hedge of thorn bushes and brambles with which it was environed. As the entrance to it was attended with so much difficulty, it gave the enemy time to place himself in a state of preparation, as the whizzing of balls from this fort soon after evinced. The natives now raised their war-whoop, and resisted most manfully. They fought indeed like lions and tigers, just roused from their lair. But they fought in vain, for the fort was stormed and soon carried. Not, however, till almost every individual in it was killed. One of their chiefs, Poo-Mahomet, a man of considerable distinction among them, and who was principally concerned in taking the "Friendship," lost his life at this fort. It is stated, that his mother-in-law was also slain here. Another woman likewise met her death at this fort, but what her rank was has not as yet been ascertained. She was, however, a brave woman, and fought with the spirit of a desperado. A seaman by the name of John L. Dubois, who somewhat distinguished himself on the occasion, had just scaled one of the ramparts, when he was severely wounded by a blow from a sabre in her hand; but her own life was the forfeiture, for she was immediately transfixed by a bayonet in the hands of the same individual, whom she had so severely wounded. Meanwhile, Lieut. Edson, and Terret, accompanied with a corps of Marines, had proceeded onward and boldly attacked a fort in the rear of the town; which, after a spirited resistance on the part of the enemy, surrendered. Both the officers and marines, here, narrowly escaped with their lives, for one of the natives in the fort had trained his gun in such a manner as to take their whole body, when he was shot down by a marine by the name of Houston, in the very act of applying a match to it.

The engagement had now become general. The din of war was heard throughout the town, threatening destruction to every opposer. The scene, indeed, began to be one of fearful interest. The trumpet of alarm had been widely sounded. Men, women and children were seen flying in almost every direction, carrying with them the few articles that they were just able to seize on the moment of peril, and many of these cut down in their flight. Several of the enemy's prows, filled with people, were severely raked by our fires as they were sailing up a river in the rear of the town, and numbers of them were killed. One of these prows were taken by a party of men belonging to Poo-Adam, which was stationed at Pulo-Kig, a place contiguous to Qualah Battoo. Poo-Adam, a chief of considerable importance at that place, a prow was captured from him soon after the retaking of the Friendship, just about a year ago, by order of the King of Acheen. It is probably well known to you, that Poo-Adam is a true friend to the Americans, and that he was instrumental in saving the lives of Messrs. Eddicott and Barry, when the Friendship was captured. In consequence of this, he suffered severely in the loss of a large amount of property. Soon after the Friendship left the coast, the King of Acheen being apprised of what he had done, came down with considerable force, and took from Adam the greater part of what he possessed. The King took this ground that had it not been for Adam the Friendship would not have been retaken. Adam was therefore a sufferer, in consequence of his attachment to the American cause. A third fort was attacked, under the command of Lieut. Shubrick, assisted by Lieut. Pinkham and Rogers, and their respective divisions, together with Acting-Sailing-Master Totten, in command of a six pounder. This proved to be the most formidable; it was the largest and the strongest fortified; but so spirited a fire was poured into it by our troops, that it was soon brought to yield. The American colours were then triumphantly hoisted and appeared proudly waving over its battlements. The town was then in flames—the bazar, the principal place of merchandise, together with most of their private dwellings, was levelled to the dust. A considerable amount of spoils was likewise brought off from the enemy by our men.

Our part was now complete, & thinking frequently, injurious had been taken for the outrages committed upon our countrymen, the bugle sounded that ample satisfaction.

The retreat, and the embarkation on board the ship soon after took place. The action lasted about two hours and a half, and was gallantly sustained, by both our officers and men, from its commencement to its close. The loss on the part of the enemy is not precisely known. It is variously stated by different individuals. Some place the number as high as one hundred and fifty. Others not as high. A large number, however, were undoubtedly killed. Their chief warriors are said to have fallen in the engagement. The cowards fled to the mountains. Poo-Qualah, one of the Rajahs, fled at the commencement of the action. Their other Rajahs, Chadoolah and De Lama, were absent. The loss on our part was two men killed, and several severely wounded. One of the men was shot at one of their forts. The other from the jungles where some of the natives were lying in ambush. It is now a subject of surprise that no more of our men were killed. They were very much exposed to the fire of the enemy, not only from the fort, but also from the jungles, where many of the natives were concealed. I can doubtless be accounted for in no other manner, than by the promptness and decision which followed the execution of every order; and perhaps we might add the correct aim with which every American fired. The Malays themselves afterwards acknowledged that where they would kill but one man, we would kill forty; because we fired with so much the greater rapidity, and the better aim. When we take into consideration the daring outrage committed upon our countrymen, and the general character of the Malays, who can be considered in no other light than a treacherous, deceitful and piratical race, we trust that the chastisement given them at our hands will not appear too severe. It seemed necessary for the future benefit of our commerce, that an impression of our prowess should be made upon this coast; and we believe that such an impression has been made that they will not very soon be guilty of a similar offence.

I have been informed that the official statement is one hundred and fifty killed. I should not wish to say any thing that might militate against the official report. I will however state that I have taken considerable pains to ascertain the truth upon the subject. Two men who came off from Qualah Battoo with a flag of truce, the next day after the engagement, and who were considerably frightened as they came aboard put the number at sixty. I saw several of the from different parts, and asked them what they thought upon the subject? They replied, at

enquired of our men—they say from sixty to seventy, and thirty or forty wounded. I should therefore rather leave the number blank, as it is very difficult to decide. The Malays themselves are said to be notorious liars. I enquired of Poo-Adam about it—he said the man that he sent to enquire about the matter returned, and said thirty, “but,” said he, “when a Malay says ten, he means fifty.” Poo-Adam does not live at Qualah Battoo, but at Pulo-Kio—a place very near. I have no doubt that the official report is made from Adam’s statement. Numbers of the Malays, I have been told by the men, were cut off as they attempted to swim across the river that I spoke of. There must therefore have been a considerable number slain. I think that what I have stated may be relied upon as near the truth. I have taken considerable pains to investigate the whole affair, and believe that I am now correct.

I omitted to state, that the next day after our encounter at Qualah Battoo, the Commodore stood in with his ship near to the town, and cannonaded a couple of forts which remained standing. A flag of truce was, however, soon after hoisted, when he ceased firing. White flags were also hoisted all along the shore. It appeared that the natives wished to be on friendly terms with us. Many donations of fruit from different parts were brought on board, and presented to the Commodore. The natives generally were much pleased with our ship. They exhibited more curiosity than is attributed to them by traders. They were very eager to examine our guns, &c.

NAVY DEPARTMENT.

Extract from a letter to the Secretary of the Navy by Capt. T. W. Downes, dated Feb. 17th, 1832, Soeraboo, on the Coast of Sumatra.

“While lying here a flag of truce has been sent off from Qualah Battoo.” * * * The bearer begged that I would grant them peace. I stated to him that I had been sent here to demand restitution of the property taken from the *Friendship*, and to insist on the punishment of the persons who were concerned in the outrage committed on the individuals of that ship.”

“I assured him, that if forbearance should not be exercised hereafter, from committing piracies and murders upon American citizens, other ships of war would be despatched to inflict upon them further punishment.”

“Several Rajahs from towns in this vicinity have visited my ship, & others who are distant, have sent deputations to me. All of them have declared their friendly disposition toward the Americans, and their desire to obtain our friendship. Corresponding assurances were given on my part, and they left the ship apparently well satisfied.”—*Globe*.

The reader is already apprised of a recent attack by a frigate of the United States on the Malay settlement, and the destruction of a number of lives of those people. The Executive has not thought it proper to publish the official account of that affair; and we avail ourselves therefore of a private letter from an officer on board the frigate, which, with the introductory remarks of the New York Evening Post, will be relied upon, we doubt not, as if it were official. We were informed in the President’s message to Congress at the present Session, that in the case before us, he had “dispatched a frigate with orders to require immediate satisfaction for the injury and indemnity to the sufferers.” We did not suppose that under this general phraseology was veiled a purpose so sanguinary as to punish the whole people without a previous requisition either of satisfaction or indemnity. But we have no question but the Commander of the frigate acted in this business strictly according to his instructions.

The right of this government, under the laws of nations, to seek reparation for, and even to punish, offences such as that of the Malays against our citizens, cannot be doubted. Such a people, committing such outrages, may indeed be considered *hostes humani generis*, whom all nations have a right to join in order to repress, intimidate, chastise, and even put it ever after out of its power to injure them.

Yet, without the least desire to censure the Administration for any thing in its relations with Foreign Powers, we must be allowed to say, that our national pride is not at all raised in the perusal of the history of this transaction. We could wish there had been a parley before a fight; an attempt to obtain a surrender of the immediate authors of the outrage; an opportunity given to spare entirely the non-combatants, if the general assault was unavoidable. We know and value the character of Commodore Downes, and mean, in saying this, no censure of him, but merely to express the absence of all pleasurable sensation on the perusal of the details of this affair.

But there is a more serious consideration arising out of this matter. However undoubted be the right of this Government to punish the Malays by indiscriminate war, we are not so certain of the right of the Executive in this particular. To Congress belongs the right “to declare war, and issue letters of reprisal.” This provision, it appears to us, is of little consequence, if the President can make war without waiting for a declaration of it, at the very moment, too, when Congress is assembling. The right intention of the Executive we do not call in question. But, if the President can direct expeditions with fire and sword against the Malays, we do not see why he may not have the power to do the same in reference to any other power or people. Under this construction, it appears to us, what has been considered a very important provision of the Constitution, may in time become a mere nullity.—*National Intelligencer*.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BOSTON PATRIOT.

It is now several days since the news of the splendid victory, achieved by the frigate *Potomac* at Qualah Battoo, has been received, and the people have as yet no other than the bombastic accounts of the action from the pens of irresponsible officers—nothing official concerning the Massacre—nothing of demands made by Captain Downes, or refusal by the Malays. No doubt the Administration are ashamed of it, and wish to keep the world from farther knowledge of the subject. It appears to be another of the bold, energetic acts of our modern Washington, the greatest and best! Well may they be ashamed of it. As an American, proud of the hitherto untarnished flag of my country, I feel the wound, the stain it has received. What will foreign officers think, who have visited Sumatra, in reading the accounts already published of the affair. “What! they will say, have American officers fallen so low, as to boast of murdering half naked fellow men and even women!—of destroying in the dead of night a village of bamboo huts, and magnifying stockades into forts, and hedges into walls.” They will ask where and of what kind were the two remaining forts which were so gallantly battered after the slaughter. A short description of Qualah Battoo and its defences, may not be unacceptable to your readers: I give it from recollection, subject to correction by any one who has been there. Qualah Battoo is composed of about one hundred bamboo huts, and perhaps twenty houses; some of the houses are enclosed by hedges of bamboo with gates of wood: within the enclosures are huts for servants, & what they call “a fort,” (the idea would excite the risibility of any soldier,) is erected on four stakes or bamboos, ten feet from the ground, about ten feet square resembling in size and shape some of the wheel houses of the western steam-boats; the flooring is of split bamboos, and covered with palm leaves; here they have an old swivel, a blunderbuss or two, a few muskets and pistols of the very

worst quality. The natives (men) go half naked, and wear a large knife, and some a pistol; and I would not consider it boasting to say that the crew of a frigate’s launch, with a party of marines, could surround the place and dictate their own terms to the natives without blood shed! The natives are generally a harmless, inoffensive people, more sinned against than sinning, and very hospitable, one with another; faults they have—but they contracted them in their intercourse with the Americans and European traders, and if they have at last found out, that Dr. Cook’s foot weighed more than a pound, or that Yaukee fifty sixes weigh seventy pounds, they have been a long time in making the discovery—they have many injuries to recount, and the wonder is, that in the lieu of one vessel they have not cut off twenty. Let us hope that the “official account” of the destruction of the settlement on the coast of Sumatra will be less shocking to humanity and more creditable to our Government than now appears! Our gallant officers doubtless acted under very explicit orders, and if cruelty or necessary severity has been exercised, the sin must lie at the door of the Executive.

AN AMERICAN.