

ATTACK ON CHINESE PIRATES BY BRITISH SEAMEN.

Captain Robisson, of her Majesty's ship *Rinaldo*, in a report to Colonel Anson, administrator of the Straits Settlements, under date of July 6, 1871, gives details of the punishment recently inflicted on Chinese pirates by a British naval force under his command. He started from Singapore to meet the colonial steamer *Pluto* at the rendezvous arranged by telegraph; then proceeded to Salangore for the purpose of seizing the six pirates, still at large, concerned in the murder of the 34 men, women, and children on board the junk, and to take such measures as might seem best for the punishment of those Malays who resisted the colonial officers and men in their attempt to secure the pirate. On the 2nd the *Rinaldo* met the *Pluto*. At 4 45 on the morning of the 3rd we anchored near the bar of the Salangore River, manned and armed boats, and sent them with field-piece party to the *Pluto*. Our party consisted of 95 men and officers under my personal command (Lieutenant Grosvenor Stopford, senior lieutenant; Acting Lieutenant Eustace D. Maude, Sub-lieutenant Christopher G. Williams, and Acting Sub-lieutenant James A. Ward). At 7 30 the *Pluto* started for the river with boats in tow; at eight stopped to overhaul two prows sailing out of the river; nine grounded on the bar. Commander Grey, your private secretary, who was on board as my guest, then left the steamer in her gig, with the second officer, for the purpose of obtaining information that might be useful to us; 1, floated and proceeded; 2, anchored off the town of Salangore, when Commander Grey returned on board. Sent boats away manned and armed to search both sides of the river and vessels at anchor. Lieutenant Stopford was in charge of the pinnace, with Mr. Skinner and Commander Grey, and that party proceeded to search the houses on the south side of the river. Lieutenant Maude was in charge of the cutter, armed with a rocket, and went to search a few huts on the north side. Mr. Williams, sub-lieutenant, was in charge of the other cutter, and proceeded to search the vessels at anchor; he was accompanied by the owner of the captured junk, and the only survivor of the crew. Maude had with him the second officer of the *Pluto*, who speaks Malay, and one of the *Pluto*'s men, who knows the place. After the lapse of an hour and a half I saw Lieutenant Maude's party return, and immediately afterwards firing began between the natives, surrounding them in houses and jungle, and that party.

Lieutenant Maude's story is as follows:—"On landing he asked for Rajah Mahmood, and was told that he was away, and that no one knew where his house was. He then marched about 200 yards on the path leading from the beach. A native then told him the Rajah would come, so he landed, and waited about ten minutes. Finding he did not arrive he continued his march, and after going about a mile, he met the Rajah [it turned out to be the Rajah Madie], who saluted him and shook hands, and said he would go off to the *Pluto*. They all marched together to the beach, where Maude drew up his men. The Rajah went between the boat and the small arm men, with about 50 men round him. He was told that the boat was ready, when he replied that he would not go now as he wanted to cross over on the other side. Maude told him if he did not come willingly he must force him. Immediately afterwards a shot was fired at our men from the nearest house, at a distance of only ten yards. The Rajah and his men immediately fled into the jungle, and heavy firing immediately followed from huts and jungle. One of our men fell mortally wounded at once; and Maude was obliged to make the best of his way back to the *Pluto*, followed by a continuous fire, which did not cease till he got alongside. As the *Pluto* was only 200 yards off, a return fire was instantly opened by those of our men who remained on board, and from the field-piece which I had ready for use in the bow of the steamer. The other boats returned when they heard the firing. Several Malays fell to the fire of Lieutenant Maude's men, and Rajah Madie was said to be one of them.

I have to deplore the following loss:—Lieutenant Maude, cut on one hand with kris; William Horton, leading seaman, thought to be mortally wounded—shot through the lungs; William M'Gee, ordinary, shot wound in side; James Cole, leading seaman, shot in shoulder; Edward Barnes, ordinary, shot in neck; Charles Bradley, armourer, shot through both legs; Thomas Biddlecombe, smith, shot in hand.

You may imagine how painful it was for me to order the *Pluto*'s anchor to be weighed without inflicting more decided vengeance on the piratical rascals who had fired on Lieutenant Maude's men; but our men, crowded in boats, were at a fearful disadvantage from enemies concealed in the jungle, and we had no medical man to attend to the wounded. However, I called all hands aft, and told them I would land and take the forts at the entrance of the river directly the *Pluto* got close

to them. The jungle there seemed less dense, and it seemed the only revenge open to us at the moment. But Capt. Bradberry, of the *Pluto*, made such a strong remonstrance to me that his vessel had only half-inch plates, and that his boiler was above water, that I reluctantly changed my mind and determined to take the *Rinaldo* in next day if possible. I am very glad now that I did change my mind. Under these circumstances I decided to return to the *Rinaldo*, anchored about six miles off, and to send the *Pluto* to Penang with the wounded, and with a letter to the lieutenant governor asking for a surgeon. I also advised that some troops should be sent to assist in jungle fighting, and desired that a telegram be sent to the Secretary of the Admiralty. It cannot be too strongly or clearly stated that no violence had been offered to Rajah Madie or his men when Lieutenant Maude's party was attacked. On the 4th, at 4 45 a.m., weighed and proceeded alone, under steam, for Salangore River. I knew that it was touch and go whether we could get over the bar (more than two miles in width) at the top of high water; that we had no chart of the river, that we had no surgeon on board, that it would be twelve hours before we could get out again, and that for the whole of that time we might be under fire, yet took the responsibility of incurring all risks for the sake of punishing the pirates for their treacherous attack yesterday, and for the sake of teaching them to respect the flag for the future. According to "Horsburgh's Sailing Directions" this has always been a piratical haunt, and no doubt they felt themselves secure in the strength of their position.

At 6 15, when about 400 yards from the forts on the southern entrance of the river, fire was opened on us from these forts and from those on the northern bank. It was a hot and well-directed fire, and was, of course, immediately answered by the *Rinaldo*. In less than five minutes we had three men wounded, and had suffered severely in hull and rigging, but by steaming past their batteries into the river their position was turned, and before they could get most of their guns round we had either dismounted them or rendered their chief defence untenable. At 6 40 anchored in 3½ fathoms in the centre of the river, off the town of Salangore, and laid out an anchor astern to keep guns bearing on forts. This service was done under fire by Mr. Rickard, the boatswain. About eight o'clock the enemy was driven from all his guns. I then ordered each gun to fire once every quarter of an hour to prevent him from reopening his fire, and this practice was regularly kept up during the day, except when we saw him trying to man a gun, when two guns would fire till he withdrew. A fire of musketry was directed at us from time to time, as the river is barely half a mile broad.

At 10 28 the ship grounded in soft mud, happily with her broadsides bearing in the proper direction. Had the fort on the hill commanding the town possessed powerful guns we should now have presented a fair mark at 700 yards' distance, for they might have sent a plunging fire upon our upper deck, the whole of which must have been visible to them; but they could do nothing against the superior power and accuracy of our guns. At 11 40 the ship was in 11ft. of water, our draught being 15ft. 4in. At 2 30, flood tide making up strong, ship dragged best bower anchor, let go small bower. At 3 5 ship swung to tide, weighed port anchor; 4 30, weighed starboard anchor; 4 40 weighed kedge and steamed out of river; 5 30, ceased firing, having silenced all the forts and partially burnt the town and houses on opposite bank; at six, anchored in roads to wait return of *Pluto* from Penang.

It may be asked why, after silencing the forts, we did not land and destroy the guns. The reply is, that although they were driven from their batteries they remained concealed in the jungle, which surrounded them on all sides, and that I did not feel justified in sending my men to be shot down by a concealed foe.

There were, I am glad to say, but three men wounded on our side, viz., George Lucas, quartermaster; John Haskins, boatswain's mate; and Edwin Bush, A.B.

Enclosed is a report from the boatswain and carpenter, from which it will be seen that the fire was both well-directed and heavy. It was a hard day's work, and it is very gratifying to me to be able to say that every officer and man did his duty well.

The *Pluto* returned yesterday at 4 30 p.m. from Penang with troops.

The Hon. Arthur Birch, Lieutenant-Governor of Penang, had generously sent the whole of his disposable force. These troops were under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Shortland, 19th Madras N.I., whose report upon the proceedings of this day is enclosed.

Shortly after the *Pluto* anchored there was firing from the forts, as if they were getting the range of their guns. We all expected a stubborn resistance this morning, but were mistaken. The punishment we gave them on the 4th proved enough.

P.S.—Five piratical war prows were burnt, three with two 24-pounders and one small gun each. All had arms—viz., spears, muskets, &c. They measured from 80 to 100 tons apiece."