

EXTRACT FROM THE DIARY OF MR. WILLIAM HENRY DUTTON, AN OFFICER ON BOARD S.S. SCOTLAND, ENGAGED IN THE ACHEENESE EXPEDITION.

We received orders on the 6th of December to get under weigh and proceed to the place of action, which orders we accordingly carried out. We arrived about noon and found the Dutch Men-of-War formed in a line and bombarding the different forts along the coast. There were 14 engaged, mostly all small corvettes. We commenced cruising about waiting orders from the flagships Zealand where to anchor, as we had the 12th battalion on board, which were the first troops to land. We received orders from a little stuck up Dutchman to anchor inside the s. s. Sumatra. I think I can hear him now speaking to our Captain in this style, "Capitaine, Capitaine, you must drop your anchor inside the storm-schip Sumatra." We did so but were a little astern of the flagships to suit my noble, so the little Dutch devil made us shift our berth again, and you may be sure we blessed him. The Acheenese did not return the fire at all from the forts, on account, I suppose, of having old guns, and they would not reach the ships. The merchant steamers stood a poor chance if they had returned fire from the forts, being so near the shore.

When the first detachment of troops landed, they were met by a volley from the enemy, but were soon repulsed and driven back into the bush. We saw some pretty smart fighting, but the Dutch had the advantage, being armed with breech loading rifles, while the enemy had common muzzle loaders and some no guns at all. I will just give you an idea how they fight. When they are met they fire one volley, throw down their guns, and go in with their spears, knives, or whatever they are armed with. I saw a great many, they are strong, muscular, well-built men, with a look of defiance in their eyes, and they neither received or gave quarter.

Now we see the Dutch Flag floating from some of the forts and hear musketry further inland, and think to ourselves there's many a poor fellow will lose the number of his mess. We went on shore, and to see the dead and wounded was something horrible; some poor fellows with frightful gashes laughing and singing and smoking their pipes. There was one young fellow, no more than 16 years of age, we used to take notice of when he was on board, keeping himself so clean and so respectful to everyone, this young soldier fell in his first engagement, he was the first one I saw on the beach, shot through the eye, of course, dead, perhaps leaving a mother or sisters at home in Holland to mourn his loss. We noticed one Frenchman who was wounded in the back by a musket ball, he was sitting up smoking his pipe and humming the Marseillaise. I asked him if the wound pained him, he laughed and said, "Mon cher ami, I shall get a pension for that." He had been in the Franco-Prussian War, and I daresay had received many a wound before. We got orders to shift our berth every two or three days, especially on a Sunday, which day we all look forward to as a day of rest; it is somewhat provoking to be called out on this day to get under weigh, and either shift further inshore or further out. We had our Christmas Day here, the most miserable Christmas that could be imagined, we were called out three times to shift this day. I suppose the Dutchmen thought we wanted to enjoy ourselves and did it for spite. They made us shift twice on New Year's Day.

Coming down from Batavia to Acheen we had 1,200 troops on board besides about 40 officers and 60 non-commissioned officers, and each officer having about two or three Malay boys for servants. Get about the decks we could not, they would get in the way, and not lend a hand to do anything. I compare them to a parcel of pigs; in fact a pig will get out of your way if you kick him, but these fellows you might play the hose over them and they would not move an inch. We lost 80 men by cholera; we were among sickness all the time. Thank God none of us took it. I shall never forget it as long as I walk in two shoes. We had the bridge only to ourselves, which we had guarded, and we were enlivened by the band playing for two hours every night, but most all the officers of the ship, except the one on watch, cleared off. It was worse than any German brass band, they used to make a horrible row; and we had another pretty piece of music, just as a fellow got off watch and dozing he would be wakened up by the bugle. These fellows used to blow right outside our cabin doors. We went to a small island called Pulo Nassey for water, about 25 miles from Acheen, and a pretty fine time we had down there; all our boats were smashed in the surf, which runs in very heavy. We had the pleasure of being capsized every time we went, our boats being manned by soldiers, with one of the ship's officers in charge. These fellows knew nothing at all about a boat; not so with our English soldiers, some I daresay could manage a boat better than any sailor could. I will just

relate one incident as regards myself. I was ordered by our chief officer to take the 2nd cutter on shore to assist the other boats in towing water off to the ship. Well the boat was manned by soldiers, who took two large boilers of soup in the boat, I suppose, for their comrades dinner on shore. The first thing I knew after I left the ship's side, one of them caught a crab and fell over. This caused a panic amongst them; they all rushed to pick the fellow up or to see what was the matter with him; he was jammed between the thwarts of the boat, and was singing out in this style, "Mein Gott! Mein Gott! ver shall I be?" During the *mélee* they capsized the soup, and a fine old mess the boat was in. When I got about 200 yards from the beach I wanted to back her in stern first, and let go the anchor, on account of the heavy surf which was running in. She came round somehow, and I backed her in and let go the anchor myself, and went aft again. Before I could get my rudder unshipped the boat was broadside on and capsized; the brutes had cut the cable, and of course the boat swung broadside on and we were all in the water; luckily they all could swim. I scrambled on shore myself, and I am not much of a swimmer. The boat was driven on to the rocks and was smashed to pieces; one fellow was insensible when taken out of the water, having been struck on the head with something. He died in hospital afterwards.

Our second officer had a very narrow escape; he was in the starboard lifeboat, and she capsized and everyone scrambled on shore, and they missed the second officer. There was not much surf running, so we all rushed in the water and bodily lifted the boat upright, and there he was quite insensible, having been struck on the head with a thowpin. We sent two companies of native troops on shore at Pulo Nassey, and then proceeded to Acheen. We then had the extreme pleasure of taking about 90 sick men with the cholera to the Island, a hospital having been erected there, and brought back some more who had recovered, and got rid of them at Acheen.

Now we got the ship cleaned up and lay waiting orders, constantly hearing firing ashore, the troops having got well inland before the Kraton, which is the Sultan of Acheen's residence, and is strongly fortified. It is built square, of very thick stone, in this manner:—Four large stone walls outside, and four again inside the first four, and four again inside the second four, the Sultan's Palace being inside the last four. We used to go every day to the camp for water. We went up the river, very narrow, with low, thick bushes on each side, with the sun scorching over our heads. We stood the chance of being picked off by any of the Acheenese who might be in ambush, but we saw nothing of them. I suppose they had all cleared out further inland to the Kraton; we saw nothing in the river but alligators and monkeys on the banks. The alligators would come up and grin at us and then go back again.

Well, we received orders at last from the mouldy-headed old Dutch General to go to Batavia with invalid coolies, and I can assure you we were highly pleased to get clear. We took these coolies from the s.s. Chancellor, fellows who had been worked to death, and were now no good at all. As they were bringing them from the steamer to us they were dying, and being pitched overboard just as they were, most of them had the cholera; in fact we had a cargo of living skeletons to carry to Batavia. There were 140 altogether. Four died after they had been on board two hours. On our passage to Batavia we lost 30 by death, four or five dying every night. It used to be a usual thing every morning to go to the Dutch Sergeant in charge, and ask him, "How many this morning, Sergeant?" He would answer, five, Sir, or perhaps four. They were thrown overboard just as they died—nothing to sink the body, no ceremony—and they would float astern. Well, thank God, we arrived at Batavia, and discharged the coolies that remained, and cleansed the ship from stem to stern, and were highly pleased when we heard we were not going back again to Acheen, the Dutch Government having done with our service without giving us a farthing compensation for risking our lives, because I think we were at the peril of our lives every day while at Acheen, and it is my opinion the Dutch never will take the country; they have got a hardy, brave race of people to contest against. I would not have gone back again to Acheen with so many on board, putting my life in peril amongst so much sickness, for Holland itself. I believe a man, having seen the sights that we saw during our stay in the expedition, could witness anything.