

honorable Americans, expressing surprise that they should have come so far across the ocean to this poverty-stricken little group of islands. It had always been the Japanese policy in intercourse with foreigners to convey the impression that the empire was poor and worthless, undeserving the attention of any of them, the better to maintain their seclusion; hence the self-depreciatory tone of the Governor. He was informed that the great American envoy had brought an autograph letter from the most puissant ruler of the United States, and that he must deliver it in person to the Emperor himself at Yedo. This, the official answered, was impossible, since no foreigner was ever permitted to approach the sacred presence of the imperial ruler of Japan, nor were they allowed to even enter the port of Yedo. The Americans were ignorant of the fact that the true capital of the empire was Kioto, a city far into the interior, where lived the Mikado, and that the ruler at Yedo was not the actual Emperor, but a *Taikun* (Tycoon as usually spelled in English), or *Shiagun*, simply the commander-in-chief of the military forces. Betraying this ignorance in their first proposition to the Governor, they were placed at a disadvantage at once, for the wily official seized upon it and thereafter sought to confirm the same impression. The result was that Commodore Perry was completely deceived, and though he supposed, when he finally sailed for home, that he had actually reached the fountain head, the august Mikado himself, he had, in fact, advanced no higher than the *Taikun*, whom he supposed to be the Emperor. Quickly grasping this idea the Governor offered to take charge of the President's letter and convey it as a sacred trust to His Imperial Majesty at Yedo, returning in a few days with the commands of his master. He was informed that the letter was too holy to be intrusted into the hands of anybody but a court dignitary of the highest rank, and that it was the intention to move the ships up to Yedo, where the envoy could communicate directly with the court. At the bare suggestion of such an idea the Governor held up his hands in horror, and, assuming a tone of great indignation, assured the officers that should they attempt such a rash proceeding the fleet would be utterly destroyed. "On the other side of the point beyond," he said, pointing up the bay, "there are numerous heavy batteries. No foreign ship has ever passed them, and if you attempt it you will be completely destroyed." "Tell him," said Perry, who heard the challenge with rising indignation, and sent the message from his stateroom, "Tell him that we will try those batteries to-morrow morning, at eight o'clock sharp." The official retired, being escorted to his boat with great ceremony. The Japanese were playing a game of "bluff," and had they, like the Americans, been backed by war vessels and heavy guns, it is doubtful if Perry had succeeded in reaching even the *Taikun*.

Early the following morning the anchors were lifted, and with the crew at quarters, decks cleared for action and marines under arms, the four vessels proceeded steadily up the bay. As they rounded the point, the Japanese Rubicon which they had been warned not to

pass, a small battery of old, rusty guns appeared in sight, having no carriages, but resting across timbers lying on the beach. It certainly was not a formidable affair, and but for the fact that the shore was lined with soldiers and the gunners stood with lighted torches as if they really meant mischief, would have provoked a laugh of ridicule. As it was, it looked like a serious matter, not that any great injury could be inflicted upon the fleet, but an attack from the battery would have compelled its capture by the vessels, involving considerable loss of life to the natives, a contingency which the Commodore was extremely anxious to avoid. The vessels sailed so close to the shore that every motion of the garrison was plainly visible. A single shot would have been answered by a broadside from every ship and a volley from the marines. This the native officers could easily see, and the result was that as the men on both sides watched each other in breathless silence the ships sailed slowly past the fort without a gun being fired, and the first bloodless victory was won.

The fleet felt its way along the shore for several miles and then came to anchor before the little town of Kanazawa. A boat was sent up to the town to reconnoitre, which returned with several baskets of peaches and casks of water, and the information that the town contained neither guns nor troops to make it a dangerous neighbor. During the night it became evident that something unusual was on foot. Great numbers of lights flitted about, both on shore and water, and the sound of boats was borne to the ears of the sailors continuously. The morning revealed a great fleet of boats filled with armed men, while other soldiers were assembled on the shore. The boats darted hither and thither, gradually drawing nearer to the fleet, whose decks were cleared for action, until, approaching too near, they were sternly warned to maintain a greater distance. Throughout the forenoon the boats thus hovered about the ships, keeping, however, at a respectful distance; but early in the afternoon a junk came sailing round the point and dropped anchor so near the flagship as to arouse suspicions of some evil design connected with her. She was warned off, but paid no attention to the command. A boat was dispatched to investigate her, and as the sailors boarded her on one side the crew scampered over the other into a boat and paddled hastily away. The craft proved to be a fire-ship, loaded with combustibles saturated with pitch and oil. It had been evidently the intention to get her alongside the flagship and then apply a torch to her. This dangerous addition to the fleet was taken in tow by the boat and moved down the bay to a safe distance, where she drifted out to sea, wrapped in crackling flames.

The next move was a descent in force by the fleet of small boats, filled with soldiers armed with swords and spears. On they dashed, heedless of warnings to keep off, until they received a salute of hot water from a hose attached to the ship's boilers. Screams of pain and anger arose in a fearful din, followed by the precipitate retreat of the attacking force beyond the reach of this unknown weapon of war.